

Communist Actors in African Decolonial Transitions

Dialectics of the Global

Edited by
Matthias Middell

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Communist Actors in African Decolonial Transitions



Comparative Perspectives

Edited by

Helder Adegar Fonseca, Chris Saunders
and Lena Dallywater

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Cover image: Álvaro Cunhal and Jorge de Matos from the Central Committee of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) at the experimental agricultural production cooperative Contuboel (Bafatá) during the first visit of the PCP Secretary General to Guinea-Bissau on 15 May 1980, accompanied by Manuel dos Santos and Otto Schacht. Source: Avante and FMS Archives [Collection H. A. Fonseca]
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On the Series

Ever since the 1990s, “globalization” has been a dominant idea and, indeed, ideology. The metanarratives of Cold War victory by the West, the expansion of the market economy, and the boost in productivity through internationalization, digitization, and the increasing dominance of the finance industry became associated with the promise of a global trickle-down effect that would lead to greater prosperity for ever more people worldwide. Any criticism of this viewpoint was countered with the argument that there was no alternative; globalization was too powerful and thus irreversible. Today, the ideology of “globalization” meets with growing scepticism. An era of exaggerated optimism for global integration has been replaced by an era of doubt and a quest for a return to particularistic sovereignty. However, processes of global integration have not dissipated and the rejection of “globalization” as ideology has not diminished the need to make sense both of the actually existing high level of interdependence and the ideology that gave meaning and justification to it. The following three dialectics of the global are in the focus of this series:

Multiplicity and Co-Presence: “Globalization” is neither a natural occurrence nor a singular process; on the contrary, there are competing projects of globalization, which must be explained in their own right and compared in order to examine their layering and their interactive composition.

Integration and Fragmentation: Global processes result in de- as well as reterritorialization. They go hand in hand with the dissolution of boundaries, while also producing a respatialization of the world.

Universalism and Particularism: Globalization projects are justified and legitimized through universal claims of validity; however, at the same time they reflect the worldview and/or interests of particular actors.

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1 Introduction

The main concern of this edited collection is the role of communist actors in the protracted process of decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa that took the countries of that region from colonial rule to independence.¹ We offer contributions to that topic in rough chronological order. Scholars have long suggested ways in which to periodize the decolonization process in sub-Saharan Africa, with the independence of Ghana in 1957 usually taken to have started it and the South African transition to majority rule in 1994 to have ended it.² This volume focuses on three ‘key moments’ in the process; a ‘beginnings’ phase, which we regard as having lasted roughly a decade from Ghana’s independence (1957–1965); a ‘turning-point’ phase in the decolonization process for southern Africa, from 1975 to 1980; and an ‘endings’ phase, which, we suggest, ran from about 1988 to 1994. In separate introductions to each phase, we elaborate on the significance of each. All three of these phases of evolutionary or revolutionary political transition are worthy of reappraisal and invite comparisons of various kinds. Though individual contributions differ in regional focus and type of comparison, they use an actor-centred approach to zoom into specific networks and the decisions of individual actors and adopt a comparative approach of one kind or another.

1 Though recent ‘decolonial’ theorizing has raised much of importance regarding the structures of knowledge production on a global scale, the approach here will be heavily empirical. Coloniality, Toyin Falola maintains, “refers to the set of values, ideas, and attitudes imposed on other groups/societies as part of the attempt to create a universal system. Decoloniality, therefore, refers to the reversal of this imposition and mindset to integrate the ideas of groups/societies that have been pushed to the margins. [. . .] The concept of decoloniality suggests the process of delinking from established Eurocentric knowledge hierarchies and models”, T. Falola, “Decoloniality”, <https://www.tfinterviews.com/post/panelondecolonization> (accessed 22 May 2024).

2 Writing before the process was complete, the South African sociologist Sam Nolutshungu identified four phases in the decolonization of sub-Saharan Africa, with Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980 marking “the final collapse of the system of white ruled buffer states for South Africa and the final failure of its attempts to influence and contain the transfer of power”: S. C. Nolutshungu, “South Africa and the Transfer of Power in Africa”, in: G. Prosser and W. R. Louis, *Decolonization and African Independence: The Transfers of Power, 1960–1980*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988, pp. 477–503.

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The existing literature in English offers little on the roles of communist actors in African decolonization from a comparative perspective.³ General works often emphasize the decolonizing powers more than the agency of either other external or local actors.⁴ While a few recent publications do shed light on entanglements of communist actors, whether in Africa or outside, with the process of decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa – and examples of these are cited in the notes to the section introductions – studies of the links between external communist actors and decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa tend to be restricted to a limited group of communist states and international communist front organizations, with the activities of non-ruling communist parties, especially those of the colonial empires, occasionally the subject of separate analyses.⁵ This volume, which follows those on *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War 'East'*

3 The limited appeal of comparative historical and political studies of the interrelations between the communist world and Africa during the era of decolonization is evident in the marginal place occupied by them in such academic journals as *Communist Affairs* (1962–1967), *Studies in Comparative Communism* (1968–1992), *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* (1993–2019) and in works such as A. Mazrui, *Africa's International Relations: The Diplomacy of Dependency and Change*, London: Heinemann, 1977; E. Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013; E. Schmidt, “Africa”, in: R. H. Immerman and P. Goedde (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013 (reprint 2016). But cf. A. Hilger, “Communism, Decolonization and the Third World”, in: S. Pons, N. Naimark and S. Quinn-Judge (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Communism*, vol. II, 1941–1960s, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 317–340.

4 From an extensive literature we merely cite R. F. Holland, *European Decolonization 1918–1981: An Introductory Survey*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985; R. F. Holland, *Emergencies and Disorder in the European Empires after 1945*, London: Routledge, 1993; M. Shipway, *Decolonization and Its Impact: A Comparative Approach to the End of the Colonial Empires*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2008; M. B. Jerónimo and A. C. Pinto, *The Ends of European Colonial Empires: Cases and Comparisons*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015; M. Ehler, R. Rollinger, P. Strobl (eds.), *The End of Empires*, Wiesbaden: Springer, 2022. For comparative perspectives of sub-Saharan decolonization, see, e.g., V. B. Khapoya, *The Politics of Decision: A Comparative Study of African Policy toward the Liberation Movements*, Denver: University of Denver, 1975; H. Melber and Ch. Saunders, *Transition in Southern Africa: Comparative Aspects*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2001; C. A. Babou, “Decolonization or National Liberation: Debating the End of the British Colonial Rule in Africa”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 632 (2010), pp. 41–54; A. A. Abdulrahman, “Nationalism and Decolonization in Africa, 1918–1975”, in: T. Falola and M. B. Salau (eds.), *Africa in Global History: A Handbook*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021, pp. 185–202; K. Kalu, “Africa and Cold War”, in: A. M. Shanguhya and T. Falola (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of African Colonial and Postcolonial History*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 643–657; R. M. Maxon, “Decolonization Histories”, in: *ibid.*, p. 661.

5 E.g. F. Blum, M. Di Maggio, G. Siracusano, S. Wolikow (eds.), *Les Partis communistes occidentaux et l'Afrique: une histoire mineure?* [Western communist parties and Africa: a minor history?], Paris: Hémisphères, 2022; F. de Haan, *The Palgrave Handbook of Communist Women Activists*

(2019) and on *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa* (2023), emphasizes the relationships that communists and those sometimes called “progressive” actors had with liberation and anti-colonial movements,⁶ and it extends the frame to include countries such as Cuba, North Korea, and the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

In this volume we have sought to bring together contributions that offer different perspectives, based on new archival and other sources, on the actions of national and transnational actors from the communist world who interacted with sub-Saharan African states and actors in diverse ways in political transitions that involved negotiations between the colonizing state and the colonized as well as the consolidation of new national states. Transitions from colonial rule to a new sovereign state were usually a period of intense political contestation, during which the shape of the new institutional dispensation was established in either a consensual or, more frequently, a violent or authoritarian manner.⁷ This volume takes into account both the transfer of sovereignty and its consolidation, whether by evolutionary or revolutionary means.⁸ In considering external agency on the decolonization process, we try to differentiate “influence”, which we regard as a neutral term, from “assistance”, “engagement”, “involvement”, “intervention”, and “interference”, for such terms have different connotations and are used in

around the World, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023, includes only one woman from the African continent.

6 Cf. E. Smith, “A last stubborn outpost of a past epoch: The Communist Party of Great Britain, national liberation in Zimbabwe and anti-imperialist solidarity”, *Twentieth Century Communism* 18 (2020), pp. 64–92; Blum et al. (eds.), *Les Partis communistes occidentaux et l’Afrique*; G. Siracusano, “La fine di un miraggio politico: lo sguardo del PCI e del PCF sull’Africa subsahariana francofona indipendente (1960–1984): nuove visioni e prospettive africane dei comunisti occidentali” [The end of a political mirage: the PCI and PCF’s view of independent Francophone sub-Saharan Africa (1960–1984): new African visions and perspectives of western communists], Thèse d’Histoire, Paris: Université Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris I and Università degli studi di Roma “Tor Vergata”, 2020; A. Macleod, “Portrait of a Model Ally. The Portuguese Communist Party and the International Communist Movement, 1968–1983”, *Studies in Comparative Communism* 17 (1984) 1, pp. 31–52; F. Blum, H. Kiriakou, M. Mourre et al. (eds.), *Socialismes en Afrique. Socialisms in Africa*, Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 2021; C. Cunha, “The Portuguese Communist Party’s strategy for power, 1921–1986”, PhD thesis, University of Massachusetts, 1987.

7 This definition is adapted from M. Bratton and N. van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 10. See also J. Jansen and J. Osterhammel, *Decolonization: A Short History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017, p. 5.

8 The political jargon of the time sometimes distinguished “reactionary decolonization” from “progressive decolonization”, e.g., “MPLA Position at Summit [Alvor] Detailed [O Século, 13 January 1975]”, *Translations on Africa*, 1564, Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS), Arlington, pp. 1–5.

the literature in different ways, sometimes synonymously, sometimes interchangeably, and often in an ideologically loaded fashion.⁹

Conceptual differences, which may create some tensions between the chapters, need to be put into dialogue, for one of the foundations of cognitive history is debate, not combat. How “communism” is defined, say in contrast to socialism, is contested, and the chapters that follow fall within this field of tension. We proceed pragmatically, letting the sources and actors speak for themselves. We wish to bring out tendencies, changes and conflicting positions. Defining “legitimate representatives” may be a historical-cognitive matter.¹⁰ This book does not avoid these different perspectives and is open to a polyphonic approach. Readers should read the chapters and form their own opinion. But, a basic fact is that the ‘communist world’ grew over time. When the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union took place in Moscow in early 1981, “fraternal delegates

9 While, for example, “intervention” is usually understood as strong interference with major impact on local decision-making, “assistance” suggests softer support. Cf. e.g. J. Fürst, S. Pons, M. Selden (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Communism*, vol. 3, *Endgames? Late Communism in Global Perspective, 1968 to the Present*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 629; Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention*, p. 2.

10 Some have considered, for example, it would be wrong to label the Angolan Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) a communist party, though it called itself Marxist-Leninist from 1977 and some of its leading members identified themselves as communists, or that it was from 1975 a “marxist party without Marxists” but with an ideologically heterogeneous and pragmatic political-military elite (the individual-ideological or ideological-pragmatic approach). The “institutional approach” would emphasise that after the creation of the People’s Republic of Angola (1975), MPLA took the name MPLA-Labour Party and declared itself a Marxist-Leninist party and “the revolutionary vanguard of the working class” (December 1977). This was put into constitutional form, with a view to a “socialist society” under the aegis of a single Marxist-Leninist party, in Angola’s Constitutional Law of 7 February 1978. A similar development followed in both Mozambique and Ethiopia. In spite of substantial variations among them, these new institutional frameworks were different from those of “African Socialist” countries, such as Tanzania. It was only in 1991, with the II Extraordinary Congress of the MPLA and a new Constitutional Law [12/1991], that structural changes were made to the constitutional order in Angola, radically altering its identity “by enshrining a democratic rule of law”, as Bacelar Gouveia noted. Cf. J.-M. Mabeko-Tali, “Angola: Révolution marxiste sans marxistes? Aux racines intellectuelles du ‘socialisme’ angolais sous le parti-État MPLA, 1975–1991” [Angola: Marxist revolution without Marxists? The intellectual roots of Angolan ‘socialism’ under the MPLA party-state, 1975–1991], in: Blum et al. (eds.), *Socialismes en Afrique*, pp. 65–84; J. Bacelar, “O Constitucionalismo de Angola e a sua Constituição de 2010” [Constitutionalism of Angola and its 2010 constitution], *Revista de Estudos Constitucionais, Hermenêutica e Teoria do Direito* (RECHTD) 9 (2017) 3, pp. 221–239; D. and M. Ottaway, *Afrocommunism*, New York: Africana Pub., 1981, pp. 68–156.

represented 109 countries”.¹¹ When he opened the Congress, the Soviet party and state leader, Leonid Brezhnev, claimed that there were communist parties in 94 countries.¹² Besides the Soviet Union, communist parties ruled in Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia, Cuba, China, North Korea, Vietnam, Mongolia, Laos, and Cambodia.¹³ An economic alliance, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, had as members, besides the Soviet Union, the countries of Eastern Europe, Mongolia, Cuba, and Vietnam. Yugoslavia was an associated state, while the states with observer status included Angola (from 1976), later joined by Mozambique (1985) and Ethiopia (1986).¹⁴ This volume cannot possibly deal with all these communist states and parties, let alone the full spectrum of communist actors, in relation to African decolonization. We hope that others will continue developing our theme in other publications.

In conceptualising this book, we had an idea of what we wanted to contribute to the state of research. In selecting the contributors, we proceeded pragmatically, wishing to give space to topics that we believe have received too little attention in the production of knowledge and looking for scholars able to use new sources and offer new interpretations. We sought to juxtapose temporally concentrated considerations with long-term perspectives. Inevitably, the result is a somewhat arbitrary compilation that could have included other case studies from other contexts, but the international composition of our authors has allowed the inclusion of material from many different archives in a variety of languages, including Russian, Polish, German, Czech, and Portuguese as well as Korean and Chinese.

11 R. F. Miller and T. H. Rigby, *26th Congress of the CPSU in Current Political Perspective*, Occasional Paper 16, Canberra: Australian National University (DPS-RSSS), 1982, p. 5.

12 L. I. Brezhnev, *Our Course: Peace and Socialism. A Collection of Speeches and Articles*, Moscow: Novosti Press Agency, 1982, p. 27.

13 Cf. “Worlds Communist Parties Grow by 1 per cent”, *The New York Times*, 16 July, 1972, <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/07/16/archives/worlds-communist-parties-grow-by-1.html>; R. F. Staar (ed.), *1975 Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1976, pp. XI–XII; W. Spaulding, “Checklist of the ‘National Liberation Movement’”, in: *The Role of the Soviet Union, Cuba, and East Germany in Fomenting Terrorism in Southern Africa*, vol. 1, Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1982, pp. 447–452; and R. F. Staar, “Checklist of Communist Parties and Fronts, 1981”, in: *ibid.*, pp. 441–446.

14 A. Calori et al. (eds.), *Between East and South: Spaces of Interaction in the Globalizing Economy*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019; A. Steiner, “The Decline of Soviet-Type Economies”, in: J. Fürst, S. Pons, and M. Selden (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Communism*, vol. 3, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 208–214; R. Bideleux and I. Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe: Crisis and Change*, second ed., London: Routledge, 2007.

As the chapters move from the enthusiasm of the 1960s to the shock of the 1970s and then to the end of the Cold War, the plurality of the global communist world becomes clear. The highly complex and sometimes chaotic nature of what we tend to call “Moscow”, “Beijing”, and “Pretoria” is revealed by comparing the actions of individuals, parties, and states. While some chapters aim for an overview, comparing and contrasting broad trends, others offer specific comparisons at the level of parties and movements. The panoramic photograph, from which our cover image is taken, creates tension and articulation between individual and collective actors. It illustrates that important individuals emerge from the collective. This is something that will come up repeatedly in the individual chapters. In the introductions to the three sections, cross-cutting themes will be highlighted, along with the most pertinent findings of each section. Finally, in some Concluding Reflections, we offer thoughts on the ongoing debate about the role of communist actors in Africa’s decolonization.



Fig. 1.1: Álvaro Cunhal and Jorge de Matos from the Central Committee of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) at the experimental agricultural production cooperative Contuboeil (Bafatá) during the first visit of the PCP Secretary General to Guinea-Bissau on 15 May 1980, accompanied by Manuel dos Santos and Otto Schacht. Source: Avante and FMS Archives [Collection H. A. Fonseca]

Part I: **Beginnings**

Introduction

The first section of this volume deals with issues relating to the agency of communist states, organizations and individuals, and their encounters with the new Sub-Saharan African nationalist elites who came to power during the first stage of decolonization. These chapters show how, in different ways, the process of dismantling the colonial empires, a process seen as an African “Renaissance” or as “liberation”,¹ became increasingly intertwined in the Cold War.

The five chapters in this section reflect, in a differentiated, comparative and substantive way, some of the moments and actions of several non-African communist actors in the long initial phase of complex and cautious interaction and transition in sub-Saharan Africa. In the first chapter, Gabriele Siracusano looks at how the two most important communist parties in Western Europe, those of France and Italy, developed, with similar but also different agendas, perspectives and ways, solidarity and cooperation networks in West Africa (Guinea, Mali, Cameroon, and Congo [Leopoldville]), especially in the first decade after independence. In this period, the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), the Italian Communist Party (PCI), and the French Communist Party (PCF) converged in their political support for the anti-colonial struggle and, in particular, in their recognition of the “self-organization” and autonomy of African struggles for liberation and national Independence, even if the PCP favoured the creation of autonomous, pro-independence Communist parties, as its “African projections”.²

The PCF was not directly involved in the “Balkanization solution” of French West Africa (1956–1957) or Congo-Brazzaville, but, with its associated organisations, as Siracusano’s chapter describes, it contributed to the formation of new African political elites and networks and supported the transfer of power by electoral and constitutional means. In the immediate post-independence period, French communist activists, sympathisers, and organisations provided political, financial, and technical-cultural support to Guinea, Mali, Congo, Cameroon, and Congo-Brazzaville.³ In this, they cooperated and rivalled in doctrine and practice

1 C. Thiam, “Negritude, Eurocentrism, and African Agency: For an Africentered Renaissance of Léopold Sédar Senghor’s Philosophy”, *The French Review* 88 (2014) 1, pp. 149–163.

2 J. P. Pereira, *Álvaro Cunhal. Uma Biografia Política* [Álvaro Cunhal. A political biography], Lisbon: Temas & Debates, vol. III, pp. 337–394, and vol. IV, pp. 118–154; J. Manyà, “Le Parti Communiste Portugais et la question coloniale, 1921–1974”, PhD Thesis, Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV, pp. 440–480.

3 T. Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France’s Successful Decolonization*, Oxford: Berg, 2002, pp. 32, 70, 163–192.

the PCI,⁴ which, unlike its French counterpart, accompanied the radicalisation of the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC) with political and propaganda support, created political and military support networks and placed militant experts in military operations at the service of the Congo-Léopoldville guerrillas. This was a form of involvement that the Belgian Communist Party did not follow, despite its prior moral and civil training support to the Congolese National Movement and Lumumbist heirs.⁵ The PCF and PCB directly supported or sent to the Soviet Union and German Democratic Republic Angolans who received political and academic training before and soon after the formation of the MPLA in 1960. Throughout the 1960s, these links continued, with varying degrees of intensity.⁶ As Pacheco Pereira noted, “relations between the PCP and the nascent liberation

4 Italy was not inside the circle of “Europe” that shared colonialism as a “common European project” (Belgian, British, French, Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish colonizers). See F. Klose, “Europe as a Colonial Project. A critique of its Anti-Liberalism”, in: D. Gosewinkel (ed.), *Anti-liberal Europe: A Neglected Story of Europeanization*, New York: Berghahn, 2014, p. 54; P. Borruso, “The Italian Communist Party and the Horn of Africa”, in: Blum et al. (eds.), *Les Partis communistes occidentaux et l’Afrique: une histoire mineure?*, Paris: Hémisphères, 2022, p. 227.

5 Woodrow Wilson International Center, CUIHP (org.), “The Congo Crisis, 1960–1961: A Critical Oral History Conference”, WWICS, September 2004, 208 p. See: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/The%20Congo%20Crisis%2C%201960-1961.pdf>; CIA Report “Communism in the Congo”, CIA-RDP79R00890A001200070022-3, 20 July 1960; O. I. Natufe, “The Cold War and the Congo Crisis, 1960–1971”, *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell’Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente* 39 (1984) 3, pp. 353–374; R. Cornevin, “Le Congo ex-belge”, *Revue française d’histoire d’outre-mer* 49 (1962) 175, p. 272; B. Verhaegen et al., *Mulele et la Révolution Populaire au Kwilu (République Démocratique du Congo)* [Mulele and the Popular Revolution in Kwilu (Democratic Republic of the Congo)], Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006, p. 331; J. Gotovitch, *Agir à travers un cordon sanitaire. Le Parti Communiste de Belgique et le Congo* [Acting through a cordon sanitaire. The Communist Party of Belgium and the Congo], Bruxelles: CArCoB, 2019].

6 A. Moledo, “The Quest for the Solidarity of the World’s Working Class: Luso-African Liberation Movements and the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) during the 1960s and early 1970s”, in: Ch. Saunders, H. A. Fonseca, and L. Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, The Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era on Decolonisation, 1950s to 1990s*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023, pp. 86–92; H. A. Fonseca, “Choosing Eastern Partners: The First Phase of the “Angolan Revolution” (1960–1964)”, in: *ibid.*, p. 42–43; C. Messiant, “Sur la première génération du MPLA: 1948–1960, Mário de Andrade, entretiens avec Christine Messiant (1982)” [On the first generation of the MPLA: 1948–1960, Mário de Andrade, interviews with Christine Messiant (1982)], *Lusotopie* (1999), pp. 205–207; S. Pons, *I comunisti italiani e gli altri. Visioni e legami internazionali nel mondo del Novecento* [The Italian communists and the others: visions and international links in the 20th century world], Turin: Einaudi, 2021, p. 260; “French Communist Official Explains Guinea’s Problems” [translation of an interview with Jean Suret-Canale by Georges Girard entitled “How Is the Republic of Guinea Doing?”], in *France Nouvelle*, weekly organ of the French Communist Party, n° 1132 (28 June 1967), *Translations on Africa (JPRS)*, 608, 25 July 1967, pp. 49–55; “French Communist Comments on Guinean Party Congress” [interview with Jeannette Thorez-Vermeersch, leader of the

movements, especially the MPLA and the PAIGC, now took place within the framework of Soviet geopolitics, which neither the PCP nor these movements contested and in which, on the contrary, they fully participated”.⁷

Contrary to what happened in Asia, and despite the contacts the communist world established and the ideological influence it exerted on some African nationalists, especially through the communist parties of the imperialist metropolises,⁸ communists did not significantly influence the first phase of the transition processes, that of the transfer of power, in Sub-Saharan Africa. In this phase, which varied in duration and modus operandi from region to region, most African countries were ruled by “a moderate leadership interested in leaving colonialism behind, but doing so in a manner that would not throw the countries into confusion or disturb with the ex-metropolis”.⁹ On the eve of African independence, Soviet policymakers and the general public in the Soviet Union knew precious little about Africa.¹⁰ Though from the early 1960s, the communist world became increasingly divided, there was convergence in a conviction of the proximity (identity) of interests between the Second and Third Worlds: the soft “Khrushchev offensive” faced the competition of Zhou Enlai’s African Tour (1963–1964), while Cuba “launched its first overseas intervention”, establishing a military mission in Alger (1963) in response to the appeal of the leader of the newly independent north-African country, that was a model for the future (Angola).¹¹ The communists sought to take advantage of the immediate period of consolidation of power by offering and promoting to the bourgeois African leaders socialist solutions to the political and economic construction of the newly independent states.¹² In the

French CP delegation to the PDG Congress], *Translations on Africa (JPRS)*, 654, 7 November 1967, pp. 84–105.

7 Pereira, *Alvaro Cunhal*, vol. IV, p. 283.

8 “The influence of Marxism has been stronger in areas that were colonized by ‘romance’ countries”, cf. G. C. Novati, “Communist Party in Sub-Saharan Africa”, in: S. Pons and R. Service (eds.), *A Dictionary of 20th-Century Communism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022, p. 222.

9 For a still useful description of the first processes, see G. Prosser and W. R. Louis, *Decolonization and African Independence: The Transfers of Power, 1960–1980*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

10 M. Matusevich, “Revisiting the Soviet Moment in Sub-Saharan Africa”, *History Compass* 7 (2009) 5, p. 1259.

11 E. George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965–1991: From Che Guevara to Cuito Cuana-vale*, London: Frank Cass, 2005, p. 21.

12 A. Hilger, “Communism, Decolonization and the Third World”, in: S. Pons, N. Naimark and S. Quinn-Judge (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Communism*, vol. II: *The Socialist Camp and World Power 1941–1960s*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 319–325.

official narrative and propaganda of the West, this process was seen as the “communist penetration of Africa”.¹³

During this first phase of decolonization, the Soviet Union’s policies in Africa were limited to supporting anticolonialism from outside. In this initial phase of interest in Africa, the communist effort at multiple and broad cooperation – ideological, political, economic and military – was not very successful.¹⁴ In the second half of the 1960s, thanks to a “process of containment” by the West,¹⁵ the new states of sub-Saharan Africa, with rare exceptions, remained or returned to moderate paths, close to the West, a containment that Marxist and Pan-Africanists saw as neo-colonialism or dependent capitalism.¹⁶ The difficulties encountered in contexts over which they had insufficient influence led the communist states in general, and those of the Brezhnev era in particular, to take a special interest in the still-existing colonial states, seeking to influence them from the outset and to actively support liberation leaders and movements fighting for independence that had ‘a Marxist or communist affiliation’, and were therefore seen as ‘more reliable and suitable partners’.¹⁷

The theme explored from different angles in the next three chapters is that of choosing progressive and/or reliable local partners by the two most important and rival communist state-actors of the 1960s, the Soviet Union and China. Using different angles of analysis, covering the 1960s and early 1970s, Alexander Balezin, Alexander Voevodskiy, and Jodie Yuzhou Sun examine and compare the evolution of perceptions, policies, criteria for partnership, nature of relations (egalitarian, vertical; preferential or secondary), choices and evaluation of results by

13 Archives NATO-INT.C-M_6322_Eng: NHQL711604: “Communist Penetration in Africa”, 23 April 1963; ANTT: SCCIA: “Relatórios de Situação” [Report on situation], nº 66, 21 June 1963, fls 1–2, and nº 120, 29 July 1964, fls. 1–2 and Annex A [Zones of communist influence in Africa]; ADN: SGDN 2RI: Cx 91, Pt 1–3. “Mapa das Actividades e relações da China Comunista e os Estados africanos” (1963) and “Mapa da Infiltração do Bloco Soviético em África” (1965). See also A. Botearis, *Communist Penetration in Africa*, Lisbon: T. Silvas, 1961.

14 In the early 1960s, “Across much of Africa [. . .], political leaders were hostile to communism.” Cf. A. Drew, “Comparing African Experiences of Communism”, in: Pons, Naimark and Quinn-Judge (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Communism*, vol. II, p. 531. See also S. Pons, *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism 1917–1991*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 279.

15 F. Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, second ed., London: Verso, 1984, pp. 81–86.

16 M. Langan, *Neo-Colonialism and the Poverty of ‘Development’ in Africa*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 1–3; K. Nkrumah, *Neocolonialismo. Último Estágio do Imperialismo* [Neo-Colonialism: the last stage of imperialism], Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Civilização Brasileira, 1967 (first edition 1965).

17 Pons, *Global Revolution*, pp. 276–279; Hilger, “Communism, Decolonization and the Third World”, pp. 336–337.

Soviet and Chinese officials in relation to local political leaders. These explorations cover a wide geographical area. Balezin's focus is Zanzibar, Kenya, Tanganyika/Tanzania, and Uganda in the 1960s. Voevodskiy pays attention to two southern African countries, Bechuanaland-Bostwana, a neighbour of South Africa, Basutoland-Lesotho an 'enclaved island' surrounded by South Africa, in the 1960s and early 1970s. Sun's concerns are Congo-Kinshasa and Angola in the first half of the 1960s. These chapters delve into the complex African political world, involving local parties, government and opposition actors, progressive or communist parties, with "national" or "transnational" militancy. They highlight, inter alia, the dynamics of African agency, the Soviets' difficult dialogue with the indigenous path to socialism ("African socialism"), the overestimation or weakness of the progressivism of African political leaders, and the tension between ideological and pragmatic options. They show Moscow's growing disillusionment with and withdrawal from socialist projects, the tension between national and regional interests in southern Africa, and Beijing's criteria for finding friends and establishing links to African political leaders and organisations that exhibited "genuine revolutionary leadership".

The final chapter in this section concerns the African coup wave of the 1960s and early 1970s, in the immediate post-independence political context.¹⁸ Thomas Burnham analyses the different perspectives of Moscow and Beijing in three military coups: those that overthrew the progressive Ben Bella in Algeria in 1965; that which ended the rule of the progressive Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana in February 1966 when a non-progressive junta took over; and a coup in Nigeria with progressive aims that was followed by civil war. Burnham examines the unequal weight the Soviets and Chinese gave to ideological conviction and political pragmatism, the ability of the two communist powers to adapt, and the degree of efficiency of these adaptations to the second generation of post-independence African leaders.

The chapters in this section suggest that in the first generation of power transfers in sub-Saharan Africa, the indirect agency of Western European communist parties was more relevant than that of the communist states. The actions of those states became more visible in the post-independence period, in providing assistance to countries with a perceived progressive course or to various revolutionary organisations or liberation movements that opposed new states considered to be neo-colonial or that demanded further independence.

¹⁸ Of the 41 coups in African countries in the 1960s, 64 per cent were successful: NP Adm, 'Are Military Coups on the Rise Again in Africa?' *Nile Post* 7 September 2021, <http://nilepost.co.ug/2021/09/07/are-military-coups-on-the-rise-again-in-africa> (accessed 30 September 2023), see the attached figure "Military Coups in Africa over the decades (1950–2021)".

Gabriele Siracusano

2 The French and Italian Communist Parties, West Africa, and Congo: Solidarity and Cooperation Networks

This chapter examines the role of communists who, although they were not in government and thus did not represent the foreign policy of a socialist state, contributed to transnational networks linked to the Soviet bloc. In particular, the focus is on the function of the two most important communist parties in Western Europe, the Parti Communiste Français (French Communist Party, PCF) and the Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party, PCI), in the networks of the socialist bloc that operated in francophone sub-Saharan Africa. The two communist parties, acting as representatives of the workers' movement in capitalist countries, looked with interest to Africa as ground for the development of a new socialism. The chapter aims to add a piece to the history of the relations between international communism and African anti-colonialism.

In order to reconstruct the role of French and Italian communists in the cooperation and solidarity networks of the communist movement in West Africa, a long-term perspective is adopted, which finds the roots of the socialist bloc strategy in Africa in the legacy of Leninism. Lenin's anti-colonial thesis proposed a close alliance with nationalist movements in the colonial world to overcome the weakness of the local proletariat in leading a struggle against imperialist oppression.¹

The chapter focuses on countries that presented a socialist image to militants and communist leaders in Italy and France. Sékou Touré's Guinea, the first independent country in French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa, attempted to adopt a socialist approach and approached the Soviets, the Yugoslavs, and the Cubans to circumvent the French embargo and American indifference. In Mali, Modibo Keita's efforts to collectivize the countryside attracted the attention of the communists. At the same time, guerrilla warfare in Cameroon and the former Belgian Congo

1 *Tesi e statuto dell'Internazionale comunista* [Thesis and statute of the Communist International], Milan: Società Editrice Avanti!, 1921, pp. 127–137; S. Wolikow, *L'Internazionale comunista. Il sogno infranto del partito mondiale della rivoluzione (1919–1943)* [The Communist International. The shattered dream of the world party of revolution], Rome: Carocci, 2016, pp. 38–47; R. Gallissot, “L'imperialismo e la questione nazionale e coloniale” [Imperialism and the national and colonial question], in: AA. VV., *Storia del marxismo*, vol. 3/2, *Il marxismo nell'Età della Terza Internazionale dalla crisi del '29 al XX Congresso*, Turin: Einaudi, 1997.

showed the strength of the imperialist reaction. The Congo is worthy of attention due to the impact that dramatic events there had on European public opinion, despite the fact that the anti-colonial political cadres had not previously been in contact with the PCF leadership, like those in Cameroon, Guinea, or Mali. In Congo-Brazzaville, a youth revolution had established a socialist government in 1963, a separate case integrating generational, ideological, and ethnic tensions that is not addressed here.

The different political strategies and visions of the PCF and the PCI often led to rivalry between the two, as was evident both within the international communist movement and in the 1970s framework of cooperation between the two parties that aimed to establish a Western communist pole. The PCF had a doctrinaire reading of Marxian theory and defended a monolithic and orthodox vision of communism, which struggled to break free from Stalinism. Its anti-fascist commitment led the PCF to establish a political network in Africa in the late 1930s. It was the only party in France to fight against colonial exploitation, so African militants close to communist and socialist radicalism were often affiliated to it. The PCI, by contrast, developed its anti-colonial commitment when Mussolini's regime demonstrated its imperialist aggression in Africa. However, Italian communists only acquired concrete anti-colonial awareness after the Bandung Conference and with the denunciation of Stalin at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The struggle of colonial peoples became a cornerstone of the international and internationalist policy of the PCI. The vision of its secretary, Palmiro Togliatti, of a "polycentric" socialism was harshly criticized by the PCF, which accused the PCI of favouring fractionism. However, Togliatti was convinced that building socialism through respect for local particularities was the right way to enlarge and strengthen it. His death in 1964 coincided with the beginning of the war in Vietnam and with what the communists perceived as the end of the first phase of African decolonization.

The following years until 1968 placed the anti-colonial question and relations with African socialism at the centre of internal disagreements within the international communist movement, in particular between the PCI and PCF. In this context, relations with the socialist countries of West Africa became the crux of a doctrinaire discussion on the possibility of setting up a socialist society regardless of the character of its workers. However, the PCI and PCF re-established cordial relations despite their mutual differences. This tended to reaffirm a central role

for the Western European parties in the fight against imperialism,² though the Italians' rapprochement with the more orthodox French was primarily seen as a sign of internal cohesion within the communist movement.³

The events of 1968 and the Soviet repression of the Prague Spring had a strong impact on the French and Italian communist parties. The PCI in particular began a progressive move away from the socialist camp and became increasingly committed to collaboration with other Western European communists. The notion of Western communism as something different from Soviet communism developed from the mid-1970s, in close correlation with the theme of the integration and democratization of Europe and its relationship with the Global South. In this way, African countries were supposed to become the main beneficiaries of a redistribution of resources favoured by a progressive Europe, where communists were to play a key role. The collaboration between the PCI and PCF was therefore expressed in the creation of various networks of solidarity with African peoples and militants, involving activists, lawyers, party leaders, and local political cadres. The experiences of city and provincial governments, especially in the case of the PCI, provided the support bases for these networks.

1 French and Italian Communists and Networks in Africa

After the end of the Second World War, the PCI concentrated on issues concerning Italy and Europe, neglecting the colonial question at least until Stalin's death in 1953. The strategic-political trajectories of the PCI and PCF towards Africa increasingly diverged. The French, who had had direct and personal links with African militants, increasingly lost these connections. The Italians, on the other hand, having come into contact with the West African movements through the PCF, soon contended with them as the main interlocutors and mediators with the socialist bloc.

The mid-1950s represented a turning point for communist anti-colonialism. However, the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggle was framed in the con-

2 S. Pons, *I comunisti italiani e gli altri. Visioni e legami internazionali nel mondo del Novecento* [The Italian communists and the others: visions and international links in the 20th century world], Turin: Einaudi, 2021, p. 194.

3 M. Bracke, *Quale socialismo, quale distensione? Il comunismo europeo e la crisi cecoslovacca del '68* [Which socialism? Whose detente? West European communism and the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968], Rome: Carocci, 2008, pp. 75–76.

text of the Cold War. While Leninist anti-colonialism theorized the anti-colonial revolution as the first spark of a larger world workers' revolution, from the 1950s onwards the liberation of colonial peoples was seen as an opportunity to expand the influence of the socialist camp. The USSR as well as China presented themselves as the repositories of demands for justice, equality, and freedom of the working class and peoples of the world.

After 1956, the international communist movement underwent important changes. The new leader of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU), Nikita Khrushchev, denounced Stalin's crimes and at the same time showed interest in events in Asia and Africa. Decolonization and national independence in the Third World had a disruptive effect among communist parties, favouring a broadening of the socialist camp towards anti-colonial movements. The emergence of Afro-Asian countries on the world political scene forced the adoption of new strategies in the fight against imperialism, as it was no longer possible to ignore the demographic and ideological force of decolonization. The CPSU now seemed to accept the idea that anti-colonial movements should access socialism in their own times and ways (national paths to socialism).⁴ It was in this context that the two most important Western communist parties, the PCI and the PCF, strengthened their political presence in Africa. Their engagement was focused especially where the most interesting political experiments had arisen, merging Marxism, African tradition, and nationalism to give life to new concepts of state and economic construction. The two most important examples were the new republics of Guinea and Mali, led respectively by Sékou Touré and Modibo Keita, who soon became mythologized as heroes of African independence. In 1958, a referendum called by the French president led to the independence of Guinea, the advent of the Sékou Touré regime, and the inauguration of contacts and cooperation between this country and the socialist bloc. Mali's independence followed in 1960.

The Western communists used their pre-existing contacts with the West African republics (as in the case of the PCF) and also created new links with them to aid their socialist development and the constitution of a great global anti-imperialist network.⁵ The Italian communists became the bearers of a new concept of socialist construction, to be implemented according to local needs and

⁴ See A. Hilger, "Communism, Decolonization and the Third World", in: S. Pons, N. Naimark and S. Quinn-Judge (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Communism*, vol. II: *The Socialist Camp and World Power 1941–1960s*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 327–329; J. J. Byrne, "Africa's Cold War", in: R. J. MacMahon (ed.), *The Cold War in the Third World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 101–123.

⁵ S. Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War: The USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1956–1964*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2010.

characteristics. This idea met with some success among the progressive parties of West Africa and made the PCI one of their privileged interlocutors in Western Europe. In 1956, on the occasion of the acceptance of the “national paths” to socialism by the 20th Congress of the CPSU, Togliatti formulated a redirection of party strategies. With the term “polycentrism”, he indicated the possibility of socialist construction in different ways. In this vision, which went well with the idea of an “Italian way to socialism”, the goal of social transformation could only be pursued by respecting local particularities and conditions. Togliatti’s polycentrism proposed a progressive construction of socialism that could arise from different roots than those of Europe but was based on a coincidence of interests. In a society that was not industrialized and that had been subjected to colonial rule for decades, there were no clear class distinctions. Building socialism in such places therefore required political work targeting the masses of the people, who had to acquire the ability and opportunity to participate in political life. The progressive parties in Guinea and Mali, from this point of view, were the people’s instrument to access public affairs, with widespread ramifications. Furthermore, these parties proposed socialist initiatives for agriculture, modernization, and the reconquest of the means of production from the hands of the colonialists. Guinea represented an example of socialism under construction where it had been possible to transform national claims into social claims. The demands for state-building had gradually been replaced by the need to re-appropriate resources.⁶ The African anti-colonial parties and movements appreciated the attitude of the PCI, which aimed to avoid ideological paternalism and impositions to favour the building of a large anti-imperialist camp. Thanks to their role as the privileged interlocutor of anti-colonial movements, the Italian communists called for the European working class to obtain new functions and greater importance in the international communist movement. However, the PCI’s positions were marginalized in the communist movement during the 1960s, causing first a retreat to more classical positions and then a cooling of relations with Moscow. The Soviets began to distrust polycentrism when they came into conflict with the Chinese. The model of socialist development was therefore forced to return to a unitary focus, that of the USSR.

When Togliatti died in 1964, he left the Yalta Memorial as his political testament, emphasizing the short-sightedness of the USSR for failing to understand the need for African movements to develop socialism using their own methods. Togliatti’s Memo-

6 R. Ledda, “Unità dell’Africa e lotta anticoloniale” [African unity and anti-colonial struggle], *Rinascita*, 11 November 1960, pp. 904–908; Pons, *I comunisti italiani*, pp. 166–181.

rial sparked controversy with the French and the Soviets. The new secretary, Luigi Longo, however, chose to commit the PCI to the pursuit of “unity in diversity” and for this reason endeavoured to pursue dialogue with the PCF and the socialist camp. This strategy was also aimed at keeping the socialist camp united, avoiding the expulsion of the Chinese. The PCF rejected the Italian concept of “unity in diversity” and condemned the Chinese drift.⁷

The fall of Khrushchev caused a change in Soviet foreign policy towards Africa. Chinese penetration and the poor performance of African states in implementing socialism convinced the Kremlin to divert its economic cooperation only to those who declared themselves openly Marxist-Leninist. This marginalized the positions of the PCI, which was pressing for the acceptance of African nationalist movements and parties into the assemblies of the communist movement. Pressed from many sides, the PCI once again attempted a rapprochement with the PCF and the socialist camp. This attempt was reflected in a new perception of West African socialisms, which were suddenly judged incomplete. However, their experience is seen as an initial stage for a new revolutionary wave: that of the Portuguese colonies.⁸

The events of 1968 and the shock caused by the Soviet repression of the Prague Spring induced the PCI to further cool its relations with the USSR. These events favoured a new understanding with the PCF that aimed to establish a new central role for the communist parties in so-called “capitalist” Europe. In the 1970s, in fact, the Italian communists committed themselves to the theorization of a new internationalism that would overcome the bipolar divisions, aiming to strengthen relations between Africa and a new social-communist-led Europe. Commitment to the democratization of Europe, in the case of the PCI, went hand in hand with the defence of democracy in Italy from the violence of neo-fascists. In the 1970s, the Italian communists moved closer to the government position and away from the socialist bloc, and this led them to adopt a foreign policy posture geared towards relations between Italy, Africa, and Europe.⁹ This is reflected in the PCI’s local government experiences in some Italian municipalities and provinces, particularly in Emilia Romagna and Tuscany. As early as the 1960s, several

7 M. Di Maggio, *The Rise and Fall of Communist Parties in France and Italy*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, pp. 10–12.

8 G. Siracusano, “*Pronto per la rivoluzione!*” *I comunisti italiani e francesi e la decolonizzazione dell’Africa centro-occidentale (1958–1968)* [‘Ready for Revolution!’ Italian and French communists and the decolonisation of West-Central Africa (1958–1968)], Rome: Carocci, 2022, p. 321.

9 Pons, *I comunisti italiani*, pp. 196–199, 234–261; G. Siracusano, “Il PCI e il processo di indipendenza dell’Africa nera francese (1958–1961)” [The PCI and the French Black African independence process (1958–1961)], *Studi storici* 1 (2016), pp. 190–218.

African militants travelled to these regions to witness the agricultural cooperative experiences led by communists. In the 1970s, the city of Reggio Emilia became the focus of the European left's solidarity with Africa.¹⁰

2 The Workers' University and Trade Union Networks

One of the main vectors of solidarity of the socialist camp in Africa were the trade union networks. The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) was not only a means of political and trade union education, but also an instrument of legitimization. Among the international organizations linked to the socialist camp, the WFTU became important not only for the material aid it provided. From the interwar period, trade unions and labour movements were the vanguard of anti-colonialism in Africa. The WFTU network was well established in French-speaking West Africa due to strong links between African and French trade unionists. Gaining the support of the WFTU would have strengthened the position of the anti-colonial movements and the newly independent states to recruit workers for the liberation struggle or for the construction of a new society.¹¹

The WFTU was also important for the way in which it encouraged a focus on the African trade unionists in terms of ideological formation. The Confédération Générale du travail (CGT) and the Confederazione generale italiana del lavoro (CGIL) were the trade unions linked to the French and Italian communist parties, and members of the WFTU. They played a central role in the spread of Marxist ideas and as vectors for the expansion of socialism in West Africa, becoming representatives of the international communist and worker's movement in Africa. The French trade unionists were very active in Guinea and Mali. Sékou Touré himself – secretary of the Parti démocratique de Guinée (PDG) and of the Union générale des travailleurs de l'Afrique Noire (UGTAN) – began his career as a leader in the ranks of the French CGT, maintaining relations with French militants. How-

¹⁰ C. M. Lanzafame and C. Podaliri, *La stagione della solidarietà sanitaria a Reggio Emilia. Mozambico 1973–1977* [The season of health solidarity in Reggio Emilia: Mozambique 1973–1977], Rome: L'Harmattan Italia, 2004.

¹¹ A. Moledo, "The Quest for the Solidarity of the World's Working Class: Luso-African Liberation Movements and the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) during the 1960s and early 1970s", in: Ch. Saunders, H. A. Fonseca, and L. Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023, pp. 81–102.

ever, he became the bearer of a distinctly African identity of politics and trade unions, which led him to leave the CGT and soon found the UGTAN. The latter was a Pan-African trade union confederation, free of international affiliations and ideological impositions. For this reason, UGTAN adherents, although close to anti-imperialist options, had to abandon their ties with the World Trade Union Federation, although the two organizations did not cease to collaborate. As part of the technical and political cooperation between the communist movement and the Republic of Guinea, the WFTU agreed with UGTAN to found a trade union formation school in Conakry, the Université Ouvrière Africaine (UOA, African Workers' University). The directorship of this institution was entrusted to a French communist, CGT leader, Maurice Gastaud, who moved to the Guinean capital from 1959, remaining there until the end of the UOA, in 1965.¹² The aim was to politically train an extreme minority of the African working class to form a revolutionary vanguard within the governments of the area and to foster structural change.¹³

The teaching was based on materialist historical analysis, which may appear quite rigid but was often mitigated by some courses on African realities. In these lessons it became clear that Africa had not experienced equal social development throughout its territory. This meant that the socialist doctrine could not always be applied in the same way but had to take into account certain original local conditions. The difference between these two visions of history, both referring to historical materialism, encourage reflection on the different positions within the WFTU, where French and Italian leaders coexisted.¹⁴

The CGIL, outside the UOA, also had fruitful relations with the Guinean and Malian trade unions. Grassi himself, together with Bruno Trentin, went to Conakry in 1960 to speak at the WFTU World Conference of Teachers. On this occasion, he assured the CGIL's full cooperation for the political and trade union training of African cadres. Another communist trade unionist, Mario Giovannini from Bologna, travelled to Senegal and Guinea in 1960. He was sent by the WFTU with Pino

12 E. Burton and I. Harisch, "The Missing Link? Western Communists as Mediators Between the East German FDGB, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), and African Trade Unions in the late 1950s and early 1960s", *International Labor and Working Class History* 103 (2023), pp. 292–311.

13 F. Blum, "Une formation syndicale dans la Guinée de Sékou Touré: l'université ouvrière africaine, 1960–1965" [Trade union training in Sékou Touré's Guinea: The African Workers' University, 1960–1965], *Revue Historique* 3 (2013), pp. 661–691; G. Siracusano, "Trade Union Education in Former French Africa (1959–1965): Ideological Transmission and the Role of French and Italian Communists", *Third World Quarterly* 42 (2021) 2, pp. 483–502.

14 Documentation on UOA courses, 1959–1965, 30 CFD 29–32, CGT, FMG (Fonds Maurice Gastaud), IHS (Institut d'histoire sociale).

Tagliazucchi, responsible for African affairs at the CGIL, to initiate collaboration with civil service workers' organizations, which were becoming increasingly important in the newly independent countries. According to Giovannini, contacts and collaboration with the trade unions in this sector were essential for those who wanted to play a central role in the political landscape of West Africa. This category of workers far outnumbered the labourers and was of primary importance in the construction of the new post-colonial society.¹⁵ This issue was also raised by the deputy secretary of the CGIL, Luciano Lama, in his memorandum on the preparatory discussions for the Fifth Congress of the WFTU. Lama openly polemicized with the most important leaders of the trade union federation, including Louis Saillant (leader of the CGT and PCF) and Ibrahim Zakaria. He pointed his finger at their mistrust of African trade unions, which were considered weak, corrupt, and an "instrument of neo-colonialism". The Italian trade unionist accused the leadership of the WFTU of short-sightedness towards "a trade union movement that has rightly collaborated for years with the bourgeoisie in a struggle" and which needed "the continuation of an alliance that must not prevent the struggle for demands and democracy".¹⁶ These Italian theses were categorically rejected by Saillant, who considered them dangerous for the unity of the world's working class and its demands, which he valued above any "articulation" proposed by Lama and any supposed local diversity.¹⁷

Despite such differences, the WFTU continued to send Italian trade unionists to Africa as official representatives to local organizations. An example of this was the trip of trade unionist Vincenzo Galetti, a communist and CGIL leader. Galetti, secretary of the WFTU agricultural and forestry workers' union, was sent to West Africa to establish contacts between European peasant organizations and those in Mali and Guinea. The Italian leaders' attention to the agrarian question made them perfect interlocutors for the construction of a transnational network of

15 *III Conférence mondiale des enseignants, 27 juillet–2 août 1960, Intervention de Bruno Trentin, Secrétaire de la CGIL (Confédération générale des travailleurs italiens)* [III World Teachers' Conference, 27 July–2 August 1960, Speech by Bruno Trentin, Secretary of the CGIL (General Confederation of Italian Workers)], b. 15, 4-PD-3G, FPD (Fonds Paul Delanoue), CHS (Centre d'histoire sociale); Report by M. Giovannini on his trip to Africa, December 1960, series 3, b. 8, f. 32, Confederal Archives (AC), CGIL.

16 "Un movimento sindacale che ha giustamente collaborato per anni con la borghesia in una lotta", "il proseguimento di un'alleanza che non deve impedire la lotta rivendicativa e democratica" ["A trade union movement that has rightly collaborated for years with the bourgeoisie in a struggle", "the continuation of an alliance that must not impede the claim and democratic struggle"]. (*Fifth FSM Congress, Notes on the Work of the Committee for the FSM Congress*, 13–25 March 1961, MF 0484, 1410, APC, FG).

17 *Ibid.*

farm labourers, no longer perceived as conservative elements and a feudal relic, but as a potential revolutionary class in the post-colonial context.¹⁸

The contacts between the CGIL and the trade unions of Mali and Guinea continued throughout the 1960s, also through the Italian leaders in the upper echelons of the WFTU such as Luigi Grassi and Giuseppe Casadei. The former was one of the secretaries of the WFTU and founders of the PCI in 1921; the latter was a former partisan and trade unionist. The CGIL also offered some autonomous trade union training services from the African Workers' University: the Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs de Guinée (CNGT, National Confederation of Guinean Workers) was invited to Turin to attend the World Conference on Professional Training and the International Day on Functional Literacy in February 1968 as well as the Inter-African Seminar organized by the CGIL in Rome in July 1969.¹⁹

3 The Role of the French Communists in Cultural Cooperation

In addition to financial aid, the new West African republics requested cultural cooperation from the socialist countries. Many African students, destined to become cadres of the governing parties in Guinea or Mali, but also leaders of several African liberation movements, went to Moscow or other Eastern European capitals to pursue their studies there. At the same time, the African states themselves requested practical help in building a new school system that would erase the old colonialist concepts. An independent education was to lay the foundation for a truly autonomous ruling class and politics. Many French leaders, usually school and university professors, went to Guinea to make a contribution. The sources of the PCF, however, do not show the Party playing an active role in sending militants to Africa to implement cultural cooperation. On the contrary, the personal initiatives of important leaders like Jean Suret-Canale or militant intellectuals like Yves Benot were most relevant here. Both were very active in teaching and organizing new scholastic and academic institutions, engaging in the

¹⁸ Mali 1960–65, Communiqué, 18 May 1961, 450 J 1014, World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), ADSSD.

¹⁹ *III Conférence mondiale des enseignants, 27 juillet–2 août 1960, Intervention de Luigi Grassi* [III World Teachers' Conference, 27 July–2 August 1960, Speech by Luigi Grassi], b. 15, 4-PD-3G, FPD, CHS; telegram of invitation to the CNTG, 450 J 1008, WFTU, ADSSD; *Sindacalismo mondiale e politica internazionale* [World trade unionism and international politics]. Various interventions and initiatives in Italy and abroad, series 3, b. 8, f. 34, AC, CGIL.

practical and didactic set-up of the new polytechnic in Conakry and the École normale supérieure in Kindia. President Sékou Touré also entrusted a very important role to Jean Suret-Canale: the drafting of a new history textbook for schools to replace the old colonial books, which was written with the Guinean historian Djibril Tamsir Niane. His commitment to the Guinean school and academy did not stop when he left Guinea in 1962. He continued his intermediation to recruit communist teachers, sending them to Conakry until the late 1960s, as requested by Ahmed Sékou Touré.²⁰

The Fédération Internationale des Syndicats des Enseignants (FISE, International Federation of Teachers Unions), linked to the WFTU, was also involved in building networks of solidarity and political relations with African teachers, especially with the Fédération des enseignants d'Afrique noire (FEAN). The FISE sent Paul Delanoue, a French communist teacher and trade unionist, to Guinea and Mali to establish relations with African teachers. Delanoue, who was a member of the PCF, did not always agree with his party's decisions. He established fruitful relations with African students in France through the Fédération des étudiants d'Afrique noire en France (FEANF), often considered too *gauchistes* by French communist leaders, but nevertheless an integral part of a network of knowledge and transnational revolutionary cultures. On the other hand, some FEANF militants, who were in contact with the Union des étudiants communistes (UEC), were politically formed under the wing of the PCF. This was shown by the enrolments of many of these students at the Centre de recherches marxistes (CERM).²¹

20 C. Katsakioris, "Transferts Est-Sud. Echanges éducatifs et formation de cadres africains en Union soviétique pendant les années soixante" [East-South transfers. Educational exchanges and training of African executives in the Soviet Union during the 1960s], *Outre-Mers* 94 (2007) 354–355, pp. 83–106; C. Pauthier, "L'Héritage controversé de Sékou Touré, 'héros' de l'indépendance" [The controversial legacy of independence 'hero' Sékou Touré], *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire* 2 (2013), pp. 31–44; Correspondence, 229 J: 103, Fonds Jean Suret-Canale (FSC), ADSSD; *Guinée – Recrutement de professeurs* [Guinea – Recruitment of teachers] 1967–1969, 229 J/26, FSC, ADSSD; C. C. Vidrovitch, "Jean Suret-Canale (1921–2007)", *Outre-mers. Revue d'histoire* 95 (2008), pp. 395–397; Y. Benot, *Note sur l'évolution de la situation en Guinée* [Note on developments in Guinea], 14/2/1962, 261 J 7/Afrique Noire 52, PCF Archives (APCF), ADSSD. Suret-Canale was also important in mobilizing East German academics to engage with Africa and the training of its future elites. Walter Markov (1909–1993) was in very close contact with him when going to Nsukka in 1960/61 and when creating the research centre on Africa, Asia, and Latin America at Leipzig University in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

21 *Documentation du CERM* [CERM Documentation] (not classified), *Listes des membres APCF*, ADSSD; handwritten letter from the FEANF to P. Delanoue, n.d. [1961], *Correspondance* b. 13, f. 4-PD-1C-3, FPD, CHS; F. Blum, "Ce que les indépendances firent à la FEANF. Des étudiants en diaspora face à leurs Etats" [What independence did to the FEANF. Diaspora students face up to their

Despite Delanoue's heterodox positions, his African stay proved the trust placed in him by the WFTU, which considered him the right man to liaise with African teachers. Delanoue was a major supporter of the policies implemented by progressive African governments for a truly independent national education. These programmes included the rewriting of African history, but also the promotion of teaching in local dialects. This issue was at the core of a lively debate within the two Western communist parties. According to the French communists, the use of indigenous languages in official contexts – although fundamental – had to be accompanied by the French language, which created the cultural glue for the constitution of future Franco-African understanding on socialist bases, to be implemented only after the victory of the left in France. The debate on language teaching in schools was also taken up by the PCI, which in *l'Unità* argued in favour of a school free from colonial constraints. In the debate opened by the PCI, there was no mention of the theme of bilingualism as an instrument of cultural bonding. On the contrary, the rediscovery of indigenous languages was at the basis of a renewal of the structures of progressive African countries. The latter were still too tied to colonial society and would need a further qualitative leap to become truly independent. The phase of national democracy inaugurated by the governments of Conakry or Bamako as well as that of Brazzaville after 1963 required a rethinking of the national or Pan-African cultural foundations in order to ensure a definitive separation from the legacy left by the former rulers.²²

4 Western Communists and Progressive Parties in West Africa

The French communists retained some links with African militants committed to the Rassemblement démocratique africain (RDA). Even when the RDA abandoned the alliance with the PCF, the left wing of this party remained in contact with the communists. Moreover, the independence of Guinea (1958) and then Mali (1960) re-awakened the enthusiasm of many communist militants and intellectuals. Among them, several were close to the student movements and disagreed with the political line of the PCF. The latter were attracted by the socialist projects of Guinea and

states], in: F. Blum, P. Guidi, and O. Rillon (eds.), *Etudiants africains en mouvement: contribution à une histoire des années 1968*, Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2017, pp. 265–279.

²² Guinée, f. 32, 4-PD-1C, b. 13, FPD, CHS; *Etudes et reportages, Chronique de Guinée*, J. Suret Canale [Studies and reports, Chronicle of Guinea], September 1965, 261 J 7/336 (ex Afrique Noire/13), APCF, ADSSD; S. G. De Luca, "L'educazione in Africa" [Education in Africa], *L'Unità*, 4 December 1964.

Mali, which in their eyes represented an original way of fusing Marxism, anti-colonialism and the African collectivist traditions. In addition to the aforementioned Yves Benot, the two economists Samir Amin and Charles Bettelheim travelled to Mali and Guinea, respectively, to help draft a socialist plan for the economy.

Just as the PCF counted on its pre-independence contacts, the PCI also wanted to build a series of political relations with the governments of Guinea and Mali on the strategic basis of the “Italian way to socialism”. The PCI sent numerous delegations to Guinea, Ghana, and Mali, led by the leaders of the party’s foreign section who were most familiar with African affairs. In addition to journalist Dante Cruicchi, who was also co-organizer of the Pan-African Conference of Journalists in Bamako (1961), senator and communist leader Velio Spano was sent to the Pan-African Conference in Accra in 1960. Spano had lived in Tunisia for years and was from Sardinia: his Sardinian identity often led him to compare the social situation in southern Italy to that in Africa.

Another PCI leader, Romano Ledda, was the one who most strengthened contacts with the Malian and Guinean governments. A foreign section leader, journalist, and deputy editor of the theoretical periodical *Critica Marxista*, Ledda travelled to the two African countries on several occasions. His task was to expound the PCI’s strategy in relation to local Italian specificities, showing how it was possible to build socialism in a progressive manner even in Africa, according to the needs of the population. The PCI did not want to be a model of new socialism, but wanted to show there were new ways of achieving socialist society.²³

Ledda, like Spano, had family ties to Africa (he was born in Tunis) and came from a Sardinian family. But he belonged to a later generation of communist leaders. Spano had landed in the Foreign Section after a career in the party’s leading bodies and had been one of the main figures in the underground organization during the years of fascism. His African experience included organizing an anti-fascist propaganda network in North Africa in the late 1930s, bringing together veterans of the Spanish War and members of Italian communities in Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, and Egypt. Ledda, on the other hand, was an intellectual, an expert on Africa and relations with Europe, and one of the leading figures in the party’s foreign section in the 1960s. His activities in the PCI’s international affairs are thus linked to a transformation of the party itself, renewed after de-Stalinization. However, both Ledda and Spano shared a new vision of the relationship between communists and liberation movements, one that stepped outside pre-established

²³ Siracusano, *Pronto*.

ideological frameworks and recognized the leading role of African progressive parties.²⁴

The PCI had countless contacts with the Democratic Party of Guinea, indeed between 1958 and 1968, the Guineans were perhaps the most important sub-Saharan interlocutors for Italian communists. Contacts between the PCI and Guinea became intense as early as 1958. Sékou Touré had broken off relations with France and approached the USSR for technical and economic cooperation.²⁵ Dialogue with old French comrades was often complicated by the dogmatism of the PCF, which pushed for the start of a class struggle in Guinea and the liquidation of the administrative and commercial elites. The PCI, on the other hand, turned its attention to these administrative classes, claiming that only winning them over to an anti-imperialist political stance would lead to socialism.²⁶ Moreover, the PCI favoured diplomatic relations between Guinea and Italy, so much so that the African country's only embassy in Western Europe was in Rome.

The PCI's commitment to an autonomous political space in Africa was part of a redefinition of the priorities of the Italian communists towards the Afro-Asian countries. This policy aimed at making the party's line known outside Europe and gaining support among anticolonial movements. The PCI's goal was also to strengthen their positions within the international communist movement, becoming a symbol of unity and dialogue among anti-imperialist forces. In this sense, the internationalist strategy of the party was also intended to strengthen an anti-imperialist front that would force the West to come to terms and respect peaceful coexistence.²⁷ For this reason, the reports of Italian leaders' trips to Guinea or Mali – as well as the notes about African delegations visiting Rome – urged the leaders to make the Italian Communist Party's positions on ideology and eco-

24 B. Trentin, *Un ricordo di Romano Ledda* [A Memoir of Romano Ledda], in: R. Ledda, *L'Europa fra nord e sud: trent'anni di politica internazionale* [Europe between North and South: thirty years of international politics], Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1989, pp. 9–18.

25 A. Iandolo, *Arrested Development: The Soviet Union in Ghana, Guinea and Mali, 1955–1968*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022.

26 G. Siracusano, “Modernisation, progrès et Guerre Froide: la Guinée et le Mali vus par les partis communistes français et italien (1958–1968)” [Modernisation, progress and the Cold War: Guinea and Mali as seen by the French and Italian communist parties (1958–1968)], *Histoire @ Politique* 38 (2019), <https://journals.openedition.org/histoirepolitique/4019>.

27 S. Pons, “Il PCI nel sistema internazionale della Guerra Fredda” [The PCI in the international Cold War system], in: R. Gualtieri (ed.), *Il PCI nell'Italia repubblicana*, Rome: Carocci, 2001, pp. 3–46; P. Borruso, *Il PCI e l'Africa indipendente* [PCI and independent Africa], Florence: Le Monnier, 2009; M. Galeazzi, *Il PCI e il movimento dei paesi non allineati (1955–1975)* [The PCI and the Non-Aligned Countries Movement (1955–1975)], Rome: Franco Angeli, 2011, p. 219.

nomic and social policy known.²⁸ The travel reports of Romano Ledda and Cruicchi served as a primary source of information for the Party and demonstrated their great confidence in Guineans and Malians. Having a direct presence on the spot was considered the only way to make the PCI's positions known.²⁹ This helped avoid the isolation caused by the criticism of the PCF and the CPSU and to strengthen the role of the Italian communists through the support of the African movements.

The openness of the PCI towards the peasants strengthened the sympathies of the Guinean and Malian leaders for the Italian communists. This worried the PCF militants who had always been concerned with Africa: Jacques Arnault, a member of the foreign policy international section (POLEX) and a journalist for the *Humanité*, the official newspaper of the PCF, reported to his party that "the Italian Communist Party has recently been active and would like to supplant our influence".³⁰ Despite Arnault's fears, the French leadership did not take a particular interest in the sub-Saharan situation, leaving the initiative to the POLEX leaders. The PCF's attentions were mainly focused on domestic policy and the formation of an alliance with the socialists on the basis of a common programme. Relations with Africa were also often slanted towards domestic objectives, especially as they were convinced that the victory of the left in France would also change the face of French foreign policy, eliminating imperialism and inaugurating a season of Franco-African solidarity. This vision was in line with the one that had accompanied the PCF before the African independences, aimed at the creation of a great Franco-African egalitarian community.³¹

28 See Note and Observations on Guinea, Morocco, and Tunisia, 20 May 1960, MF 474, pp. 1618–1625, APC, FG; Notes on some African States, May 1961, MF 484, pp. 324–329, APC, FG; Report on Comrade Romano Ledda's trip to Mali and Guinea, July 1964, MF 520, pp. 1600–1627, APC, FG; R. Ledda, "Nazionalismo africano e neocolonialismo combattono una lotta decisiva per il mondo" [African nationalism and neo-colonialism fight a decisive battle for the world], *L'Unità*, 10 December 1960; M. Galletti, "L'Africa e il suo peso nel mondo" [Africa and its weight in the world], *Rinascita*, November 1958.

29 FG, APC, mf 468, 2364, Minutes of a Discussion of the PCI Foreign Section [1960].

30 "Le parti Communiste Italien est depuis peu actif et voudrait supplanter notre influence" (ADSSD, APCF, 261 J 7/79, 1964, Note de Jacques Arnault sur son séjour dans quelques pays d'Afrique [Note from Jacques Arnault on his visit to several African countries], 23 September 1964).

31 R. Ledda, "Rapporto sul Mali. Sviluppo e contraddizioni di una rivoluzione africana" [Mali Report. Development and contradictions of an African revolution], *Rinascita*, 9 January 1965.

5 Relations with Armed Liberation Movements

A separate case is presented by the relations of the Western communist parties with the armed liberation movements that developed in Cameroon and Congo. The PCF had always had very close ties with the Union des Populations du Cameroun (Union of the Peoples of Cameroun, UPC), a party that had formerly been a member of the RDA and whose leaders were trained in communist intellectual circles. The UPC, a nationalist organization of Marxist and pan-Africanist inspiration, was harshly repressed by the Cameroonian government and – as of 1955 – outlawed. A large-scale press campaign by *l'Humanité* in favour of the UPC shook the base of the French Communist Party, and the government was accused of wanting to operate with the same methods used in Algeria. However, when the UPC decided to engage in partisan guerrilla warfare against the colonial troops, the support of the PCF increasingly waned, partly out of fear of the strong Maoist influences that ran through the Cameroon *guerrilla*. Some messages from UPC President Félix Roland Moumié to Louis Odru³² show how the Cameroonian leader lamented the lack of support from the communists from the beginning of the armed struggle (December 1956) until independence in 1960. With the birth of the Republic of Cameroon, the death of Moumié (poisoned in Geneva in November 1960) and the division of the UPC into pro-Maoist and pro-Soviet, the PCF offered renewed support for the Cameroonian cause in its press organs.³³

The PCI established contacts with the UPC from 1958 onwards, when the Cameroonians tried to form a national democratic front with other political forces. However, when the Cameroonians asked for practical help in the form of money to carry on their struggle, the Italian party refused the request due to their own lack of liquidity, preferring to provide propaganda and political aid. In addition to ensuring visibility for the UPC's independence struggle in *l'Unità* or *Rinascita*, the Italian communists sent several pamphlets on their activities. The Foreign Section also proposed that the Cameroonians should welcome some leaders experienced in political and organizational training to provide concrete help in the

³² Odru was a member of the PCF's POLEX and former member of the Union Française parlement.

³³ R. Joseph, *Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun*, Paris: Khartala, 1986 [English original: *Radical Nationalism in Cameroun: Social Origins of the UPC Rebellion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977]; Letter by F. R. Moumié to Louis Odru, 8 February 1956, 261 J 7/Afrique Noire 32, APCF, ADSSD; G. Siracusano, "Tra partitismo e gallocentrismo: il Partito comunista francese e il movimento indipendente camerunense (1948–1956)" [Between partisanship and gallocentrism: the French Communist Party and the Cameroon independence movement (1948–1956)], *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica* 1 (2016), pp. 189–213.

struggle for independence. This possibility never came to fruition. Finally, the failure of the unitary initiative of the Cameroonian democratic forces and the increasingly visible shift towards pro-Chinese positions by the Union's top leaders led the Italian communists to consider the UPC leaders as unreliable and sectarian.³⁴

Contrary to what happened in Cameroon, the Italian Communist Party tried to concretely help the Congolese guerrillas. The Italian communists believed that the attack of international imperialism (aided by its armed wing, the neofascists) in Congo had to be stopped through aid from the socialist bloc. In this equatorial country, the dynamics of the Cold War were more pressing than in Cameroon, not least because of the direct intervention not only of the Belgians, but also of the American Secret Services.

The Congolese crisis was rooted in the long period of exploitation of the country's population and resources by Belgian colonialism. This policy of oppression persisted even after independence, when the Europeans tried to maintain economic control over Congo.³⁵ Belgian colonialism had also exacerbated ethnic tensions between the Congolese populations (Baluba, Lunda, Bakongo, and others). Thus, parties founded on an ethnic basis were often instrumental in territorial separatisms, as in Kasai or Katanga. The figure of Moïse Tshombe emerged from these ethnic tensions. He was the leader of the Confédération des associations tribales du Katanga (Confederation of Tribal Associations of Katanga, CONAKAT), a party linked to the Lunda ethnic group that demanded independence for Katanga. CONAKAT was supported by the Belgians, first against the political rule of the Balubas and then against Lumumba's plans.³⁶ Numerous European mercenaries also joined the Belgian troops in support of Katanga. The Congolese question thus became central for the independent African states as well. The progressive countries (Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and the United Arab Republic) supported Lumumba, while Rhodesia and South Africa came out in favour of Katanga. The Soviets, who in the meantime were implementing their cooperation projects in West Africa, also took an interest in Congo. Seeing himself isolated, Lumumba requested Soviet help. The USSR and

³⁴ See Giuliano Pajetta's note on his meeting with Ernest Ouandié, Mf 457, pp. 2239–2245, APC, FG; E. Ouandié, "Camerun: 50 mila patrioti in campi di concentramento" [Cameroon: 50,000 patriots in concentration camps], *Rinascita*, November 1958; Note on Cameroon, 12 February 1959, Mf 464, pp. 2722–2725, APC, FG; Giuliano Pajetta to the PCI Directorate (Longo) regarding the meeting with F. R. Moumié and E. Ouandié, 9 February 1960, Mf 474, p. 857, APC, FG.

³⁵ A. O'Malley, *The Diplomacy of Decolonisation: America, Britain and the United Nations during the Congo Crisis, 1960–1964*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018, pp. 12–13.

³⁶ S. E. Rookes, "From the Bay of Pigs to Lake Tanganyika. Non-State Armed Actors in The Congo Crisis, 1960–1967", PhD thesis, Toulouse University, 2018, pp. 136–142.

Czechoslovakia therefore sent military and technical aid to the Congolese government. However, technical intervention and Soviet military aid worried the USA, which led to the American intelligence services and Belgian troops helping Colonel Joseph Désiré Mobutu to organize a coup d'état on 14 September 1960. The diplomatic missions of socialist countries were closed. Lumumba was arrested, handed over to Tshombe, and assassinated.³⁷

According to some historians, the death of Patrice Lumumba was a hard checkmate for Moscow. From then on, the USSR would drastically decrease its financial and technical aid to non-communist countries. This new Soviet strategy, however, took shape especially after the fall of Khrushchev in 1964 (a crucial year for the escalation of tensions in Vietnam, but also for the Congolese crisis, which had reached its peak). This event led to the failure of Moscow's economic aid to the Third World and the hardening of the positions of the socialist bloc and the West in Africa.³⁸

The PCI sent the ex-partisan Isacco Nahoum, known as "Milan", to the Congo to gather information for the press, but he exercised a different role once on the spot: when he stayed in Stanleyville, in the Eastern Province (where Gizenga took refuge with his guerrillas), he provided military training for the Lumumbist partisans. The main task the Party assigned to him was to start the manufacture of homemade Sten machine guns in the Congolese forests. His role as a military adviser was questioned by African militants who rejected lessons from Europeans. However, Milan's partisan experience and his knowledge of local firearms production methods enabled him to be accepted by the Congolese guerrillas and remain in Stanleyville for a few months.³⁹

Nahoum's war experience was put at the service of the Congolese by a party that officially rejected the "Guevarist" or "Maoist" guerrilla approach, in line with the strategy of peaceful coexistence. However, the situation in Congo was a particular exception in the policy of coexistence promoted by the communist movement. In this country, a democratically elected government had been overthrown and its

37 E. Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 60–65.

38 See R. E. Kanet, "The Superpower Quest for Empire: The Cold War and Soviet Support for 'Wars of National Liberation'", *Cold War History* 3 (2006), pp. 331–352; L. Namikas, *Battleground Africa: Cold War in the Congo, 1960–1965*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013; P. Monaville, "The Political Life of the Dead Lumumba: Cold War Histories and the Congolese Student Left", *Africa* 89 (2019), pp. 15–39.

39 R. Ledda, Report on the Trip to the Eastern Province of Congo, 4–25 April 1961. Mf. 483, pp. 2705–2715, APC, FG; Note on Ledda's Trip, n.d. [1961] Mf. 483, pp. 2715, APC, FG; Note of a Return from a Trip to the Congo by Milan (Isacco Nahoum), April–May 1961, Mf. 483, pp. 2717–2733, APC, FG.

president killed, with the complicity of European mercenary troops and American intelligence services. Lumumba's death represented a far from insignificant setback for the prestige of the Kremlin and for the resilience of the anti-imperialist movement. From 1961, in fact, the Soviet Union increased its war assistance towards the Eastern Province of Congo, where the Lumumbists were holding out. However, certain political hesitations – linked to the penetration of Maoist ideas among the ranks of Gizenga's partisans – as well as the isolation of the Stanleyville government from the surrounding world, prevented a sufficient supply of war materials that would have enabled a stand to be made against the Katanga and Leopoldville troops. The latter were financed and supplied by the USA, France, Belgium, and West Germany. The unconditional support of the PCI shows how the Congolese question had a strong impact on Italian public opinion and on the communist militants. In fact, powerful demonstrations enlivened Italian squares in 1961 and 1964 (during Moïse Tshombe's visit to the Vatican). From the perspective of the Italian communists, the Congolese resistance movement was perceived as an essentially unitary anti-imperialist organization. According to this vision, the progressive nationalism of the Lumumbists directed all the democratic forces against Western penetration. At the same time, the support of Western reactionaries and right-wingers for Tshombe's secession superimposed the anti-fascist paradigm on the anti-colonial one. With regard to the united front of the Congolese anti-imperialist movements, therefore, reference was often made to anti-fascist resistance against Nazi occupation during the World War Two.⁴⁰

The Italian communists also helped many Congolese militants to flee the country or go to the socialist bloc for political training. Thanks to the networks and contacts of the PCI and the CGIL, in fact, it was easier to cross the Iron Curtain from Italy. The Italian communists obtained visas and passports for African militants who wanted to travel to Italy. Once they arrived in Rome, the latter could request the necessary documents to travel to Eastern Europe.⁴¹

The Italian communists, however, did not fully understand the real ethnic and social divisions that shook Central Africa and undermined any united struggle. Indeed, this compromised real and concrete collaboration with the Congo movements, jeopardizing the establishment of a network of contacts.

40 S. Mazov, "Soviet Aid to the Gizenga Government in the Former Belgian Congo (1960–61) as Reflected in Russian Archives", *Cold War History* 3 (2007), pp. 425–437; "Da tre giorni Roma grida 'Via Ciombé!'" [For three days Rome has been shouting 'Tshombé out!'], *L'Unità*, 12 December 1964.

41 Congo 1960–65, b. 22, f. 10, AC, CGIL; Mf 520, pp. 716–720, APC, FG.

6 Communist Lawyers and Solidarity Networks in Africa

Communist lawyers, who had been part of International Red Relief and who had animated the defence committees for partisans in the post-war period, approached the colonial liberation movements from the 1950s. Already in the early years of the decade, a collective of French communist lawyers, including Pierre Stibbe, Pierre Kaldor, and others, founded the Comité de défense des libertés démocratiques en Afrique noire (Committee for the Defense of Democratic Liberties in Black Africa, CDLDAN). This committee also printed its own periodical, *Frère d'Afrique*, and was at the forefront of all the trials against African anti-imperialist militants affected by colonial repression. French communist lawyers were engaged both in Madagascar (where in 1947 there had been a bloody reaction by colonial troops against anti-colonial movements) and the Ivory Coast. In the latter country, in particular, between 1949 and 1950, a series of demonstrations and strikes proclaimed by the Rassemblement démocratique africain were bloodily suppressed. Communist lawyers then rushed to the defence of the arrested militants and leaders, albeit noting the coolness of the RDA's leadership bodies. At that time, in fact, the African party was rapidly distancing itself from the PCF in order to ensure its legal political survival and greater decision-making weight in the territory. The decapitation of the party by the authorities helped the moderate leaders to get rid of the most radical and anti-colonial elements, allowing them to redefine their political objectives. The members of this committee, which under another name also dealt with political prisoners in Algeria, continued to deal with African issues even after independence.⁴²

Through the archives of Pierre Kaldor and that of Jean Suret-Canale (who – although not a lawyer – maintained relations with the committees of jurists for

42 F. Koerner, "Le Secours rouge international et le Madagascar (1930–1934)" [International Red Relief and Madagascar], *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire* 269 (1985), pp. 435–444; S. Elbaz, "Les avocats métropolitains dans les procès du Rassemblement démocratique africain (1949–1952): un banc d'essai pour les collectifs d'avocat en guerre d'Algérie?" [Metropolitan lawyers in the trials of the Rassemblement démocratique africain (1949–1952): a testing ground for lawyers' collectives in the Algerian war?], *Bulletin de l'IHTP* 80 (2002), pp. 44–60; G. Siracusano, "I comunisti francesi e il Rassemblement démocratique africain negli archivi del Pcf (1946–1951)" [French Communists and the Rassemblement démocratique africain in the PCF archives (1946–1951)], *Studi storici* 3 (2018), pp. 711–744; M. Terretta, "Cause lawyering et anticolonialisme: activisme politique et état de droit dans l'Afrique française, 1946–1960" [Lawyering and anti-colonialism: political activism and the rule of law in French Africa, 1946–1960], *Politique africaine* 138 (2015), pp. 25–48.

the liberation of African political prisoners), it is possible to retrace the steps and history of the lawyers involved in defending the rights of African militants. Their primary task was to defend and enforce the human rights of those who were imprisoned, who were often tortured or confined in miserable conditions. Some of the key figures in the solidarity committees had themselves been held in prison institutions during the Second World War (such as Pierre Kaldor), which further encouraged them to dedicate their lives to the battle for the civil rights of prisoners. Even in the case of the collectives of communist jurists, it is evident how the anti-fascist heritage was accompanied by anti-colonialism, although this element is much sharper in relation to the Algerian War.⁴³

In the mid-1950s, the CDLDAN took charge of the defence of the imprisoned Cameroonian UPC members, victims of the violent repression by the French authorities. From that moment on, the Cameroon situation became one of the main focuses of engagement for the PCF jurists. The Cameroon militants also turned to the PCI to request the legal aid of Italian jurists already working in Algeria, Egypt, and Congo in defence of political prisoners. Among them were members of a collective of lawyers linked to the communist party who had already defended partisans accused of violence in the immediate post-war period. In this case, unlike the French lawyers, the Italian lawyers acted directly on behalf of the PCI leadership.⁴⁴

The most active member of CDLDAN in the defence of Cameroonian militants was always Kaldor. In his personal archives there are dozens of files relating to the cases of many UPC militants whose defence was taken on by this same communist lawyer. Among the various dossiers it is worth mentioning those relating to two *Upecist* leaders, Michel N'Doh and Jean Marie Tchaptchet. They were both

43 Comité de défense des libertés démocratiques en Afrique Noire, 1949–1959, 503 J/28, Fonds Pierre Kaldor (FPK), ADSSD; File with Personal Dossiers of Clients Defended in Africa, 503 J/14, FPK, ADSSD.

44 R. Ledda, Information Notes on the Congo, 10 January 1961, MF 483, 2694–2696, APC, FG; Foreign Section, Note by M. Rossi to the Secretariat concerning the conversation with E. Ouandié, 24 August 1959, MF 464, 2726, APC, FG; M. Galeazzi, “Il PCI e i paesi non allineati. La questione algerina (1957–1965)” [The PCI and the non-aligned countries. The Algerian question (1957–1965)], *Studi storici* 3 (2008), pp. 793–848; G. Siracusano, “La lutte armée au Congo et au Cameroun. Un acteur inattendu: le Parti communiste italien” [The armed struggle in Congo and Cameroon. An unexpected player: the Italian Communist Party], *Monde(s). Histoires, espaces et relations* 21 (2022) 1, pp. 139–160; on the Democratic Solidarity Committee, see S. Del Prete, “Il Comitato di Solidarietà Democratica tra difesa processuale e recupero politico nel processo alla Resistenza: il caso giudiziario dell’eccidio di Oderzo” [The Democratic Solidarity Committee between trial defence and political recovery in the Resistance trial: the judicial case of the Oderzo massacre], *Italia contemporanea* 228 (2022), pp. 114–143.

expelled from France (where they were enrolled at university) in 1961, then while in exile in Ghana, they were imprisoned by the authorities after the coup d'état against Kwame Nkrumah in 1966. Kaldor intervened to demand their release, invoking international law and the Declaration of Human Rights, thus preventing their extradition to Cameroon. N'Doh, once expelled from Ghana, left Accra for Rome, where he was received by the Italian government in 1971, mainly thanks to pressure from the PCI.⁴⁵ Kaldor was also the key figure of a large international collective of lawyers, directly linked to the International Committee for Democratic Solidarity, engaged in the defence of the leader of the UPC, Ernest Ouandié, captured in the Maquis in August 1970. A famous Italian anti-colonial lawyer, Lucio Mario Luzzatto, was also part of this collective. He was an important leader of the Partito socialista Italiano di unità proletaria (Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity, PSIUP), an ally of the PCI, and a member of the Italian Anti-Colonial Committee from the late 1950s, but he joined the communist party in 1972, becoming its expert on African issues. He took part in the defence of N'Doh and Tchaptchet and played an important role in their transfer to Italy and France. He was a member of the Solidarity Committee for Congo and Algeria with the communist lawyer Mario Palermo, the French jurists Pierre Braun, Pierre Stibbe, and Pierre Kaldor, and the Guinean teacher Samba Lamine Traoré. Luzzatto was called to organize Lumumba's defence, but the Congolese leader was murdered before anything could be done. However, the Committee defended Antoine Gizenga in 1962, helping him avoid the death penalty.⁴⁶ Luzzatto also directed the Defence Committee of Ouandié, attempting to solve the countless bureaucratic problems suffered by their lawyers. Among the most pressing issues was the difficulty in obtaining entry visas for European lawyers to visit Cameroon. To obtain the necessary travel documents, which were denied by the Cameroonian authorities, Luzzatto even resorted to diplomatic intervention by the Italian embassy in Paris. However, the intervention of French and Italian lawyers could not avoid the conviction and execution of Ouandié, who was shot in Yaoundé in January 1971.⁴⁷

Another solidarity campaign carried out by Kaldor, Luzzatto, and other anti-colonial lawyers was dedicated to safeguarding the rights of the former Malian

45 Nдох & Tchaptchet file, 1966–1971, 503 J/4, FPK, ADSSD; Letter from Michel Nдох (UPC) to the PCI, Accra, 26 May 1971, 1971/CI/225, CI and Nc, APC, FG; Telegram of Reply from the PCI to Michel Nдох, 8 June 1971, 1971/CI/225, CI and Nc, APC, FG; Letter from M. Nдох to the PCI, 25 October 1971, 1971/CI/225, CI and Nc, APC, FG; Letter from M. Nдох to the Italian Ambassador in Accra and Foreign Minister Aldo Moro (Copy to Foreign Section), 14 June 1971, 1971/CI/225, CI and Nc, APC, FG.

46 Documents on Lumumba's defense, 1961, b. 63, f. 260, Luzzatto Fund (FL), FG; Gizenga Trial, 1962, b. 70, f. 286, FL, FG.

47 Ouandié Trial Correspondence, 1970–71 f. 436, FL, FG.

president, Modibo Keita. He was overthrown in 1968 by a military coup and imprisoned in a desert prison, where he died in 1977. Again, the intervention of the communist lawyers failed to save the defendant. Nevertheless, these lawyers symbolically spoke out against the violations of human rights by African dictatorships, which were perceived as expressions of neo-colonialism.⁴⁸ The issue was gaining importance at the time of the Helsinki European Security Conference in 1975. It was in the Finnish capital that individual human rights became the main bone of contention against the socialist countries and their treatment of political opponents.⁴⁹ The commitment of Western communists to human rights in Africa showed how much this issue was considered part of communist political culture in Western Europe. On the other hand, it highlighted not only the differences within the socialist camp, but also the violations carried out by the West's allies in the name of anti-communism.⁵⁰

7 Conclusion

The interest of the two largest Western communist parties in building political relations between the international communist movement, progressive states, and movements in French-speaking Africa was pursued through relevant political contacts, but also and above all through concrete technical and cultural cooperation and active militant solidarity. Both parties not only played a central role in the complex network of relations woven by the communist movement, but also pursued their own autonomous strategies. The PCF presented itself as the privileged interlocutor of the African militants with whom it had been in contact since colonial times. The aim of the French communists was to come to power in France through an alliance with the socialists and then to transform and democratize the neo-colonial relations of Paris in Africa, thus changing the balance of power between France and Africa. This perspective not only favoured a coincidence between the class and national interests of the proletariat, but also over-

⁴⁸ Procédure Touré Mali, correspondance générale, 1969–70, 503 J/4, FPK, ADSSD; Ouandié trial correspondence, *Appel du Comité de défense des détenus politiques de la République du Mali* [Appeal by the Committee for the Defence of Political Prisoners in the Republic of Mali], n.d., f. 436, FL, FG.

⁴⁹ S. B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

⁵⁰ G. Siracusano, "From the Rights of People to Individual Rights: the PCI in Africa, Decolonisation and North-South Cooperation", in: S. Pons (ed.), *Gorbachev, Italian Communism and Human Rights*, Rome: Viella, 2022, pp. 113–138.

turned Leninist anti-colonial precepts. In this sense, belief in prioritizing an anti-imperialist struggle in the colonies to destroy the imperial balance of capitalism was replaced by a Eurocentric vision, according to which only revolution in Europe could liberate the dominated peoples. The PCI, on the other hand, was committed to the construction of the “Italian way to socialism” and wanted to strengthen its position in the eyes of the other communist parties. The PCI defended itself against attacks and established relations with African governments and movements, making them understand the importance of Italian choices and securing a consensus on a broad Afro-Asian platform. Despite their cooperation, the relationship between the PCI and the PCF was also marked by rivalry. Their different visions of socialism seemed incompatible, not only in Western Europe but also in Africa, where both sought to be the main interlocutors of African movements.

Indeed, both parties wanted to strengthen their positions within international communism through the support of anti-colonial movements. The misunderstandings remained even in the 1970s, when the two parties moved closer together to create a Western communist pole. The aim of the Italians at that time was to transform Europe into an entity of solidarity, a beacon of equality and dialogue between North, South, East, and West. For the French, on the other hand, the role of “bridge” between East and South was to be played by France, which would change the balance of power between Africa and Europe.

French and Italian communists’ relations with West-Central Africa were perhaps more important to the PCF and the PCI than to the Africans themselves. Probably, the failure of Soviet cooperation also contributed to the ineffectiveness of communist solidarity and political initiatives in African countries. The Guinean and Malian experiences had interested the PCI and PCF, both of whom wanted to position themselves as the main representatives of the European workers’ movement, in addition to acting as mediators for the socialist bloc. However, neither the French nor the Italian model was ever really considered by Sékou Touré or Modibo Keita. They preferred Yugoslavian, Cuban, Chinese, or even Algerian socialism. Compared to European or Soviet communism, these examples seemed to more closely reflect the political and developmental ideas of African leaders. The Congolese situation, which was closely followed in Europe and particularly in Italy, remained thorny ground for European communists, just as Cameroon had been. After suffering political defeats in West/Central Africa, the two parties addressed the problems of the Portuguese colonies and Southern Africa in a more autonomous and incisive manner.

Alexander S. Balezin

3 The USSR and Socialist Projects in East Africa in the 1960s

1 Introduction

Based on archival materials, including recently declassified ones, this chapter examines the attitude of the USSR to socialist projects in East Africa. The author does not aim at a detailed analysis either of the socialist ideas themselves or of interstate relations between the USSR and the newly independent countries under consideration. The purpose of the study is to show the nature of and reasons for the official Soviet attitude to socialist ideas formed by the ruling elites or the opposition in Zanzibar, Kenya, Tanganyika/Tanzania, and Uganda in the 1960s.

While there is a large literature on socialist ideas in these countries, especially on Tanzanian Ujamaa,¹ little has been written on the official attitude of the USSR to those ideas in Zanzibar, Kenya, Tanganyika/Tanzania, and Uganda. Work on Soviet views of African socialism is often based only on official Soviet sources.² Though in recent years Soviet foreign policy documents have been declassified and research based on these sources has appeared, it deals with other African countries and the focus is not on Moscow's attitude to socialist ideas in these countries.³ This is also the case with the recent monograph by George Roberts de-

1 See, for example, A. S. Balezin, "Partijny'e svyazi SSSR-Tanzaniya: svidetel'stva ochevidtstva" [USSR-Tanzania party ties: eyewitness accounts], *Novaja i novejšaja istorija* 3 (2017), pp. 218–231; A. S. Balezin, "K istorii ustanovleniya diplomaticheskikh otnoshenij SSSR so stranami Vostočnoj Afriki – Keniej, Ugandoj i Tanzaniej. Po materialam arkhiva MID RF" [On the history of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and the countries of East Africa – Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Based on the materials of the archive of the Russian Foreign Ministry], *Afrika v sud'be Rossii. Rossiya v sud'be Afriki*, Moscow: Rosspen, 2019, pp. 290–317.

2 E.g. Z. Brzezinski (ed.), *Africa and the Communist World*, London: Stanford University Press, 1964; A. J. Klinghoffer, "The Soviet View of African Socialism", *African Affairs* 67 (1968), 268, pp. 197–208; M. Ottoway, "Soviet Marxism and African Socialism", *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 16 (1978) 3, pp. 477–485.

3 N. Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation: The Soviet Union and the Collapse of the Portuguese Empire in Africa, 1961–1975*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021; S. V. Mazov *Kholodnaja vojna v 'Serdce Afriki'. SSSR i kongolezskij krizis 1960–1964* [The Cold War in the "Heart of Africa". The USSR and the Congolese Crisis 1960–1964], Moscow: Dmitry Pozharski University, 2015; I. Filatova, A. Davidson, *The Hidden Thread: Russia and South Africa in the Soviet Era*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2013.

voted to Tanzanian politics in the context of the global Cold War.⁴ A recent short article concludes that the failure of the Soviet model of socialism on the African continent is explained by its inconsistency with African realities as well as the mistakes and misconceptions of the Soviet leadership, in particular about how African students in the USSR could help spread Soviet ideas on the continent and in underestimating the cultural influence of former metropolitan countries.⁵ While these conclusions are generally correct, they are, as the sources used here show, far from sufficient.

This chapter uses recently declassified sources from the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (AVP RF), the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), and the Russian State Archive of Modern History (RGANI). In the Foreign Policy archive, there are records of talks between Soviet diplomats and local officials and public figures of various ranks. The GARF houses the papers of the Soviet Committee for Solidarity with the Countries of Asia and Africa (SKSSAA), through which mainly informal relations with East African countries were conducted. In the RGANI, the collection “The Apparatus of the Central Committee of the CPSU” includes documents from all departments connected with African countries. A few years ago, these documents were declassified until 1966; more recently, those from the late 1960s and early 1970s have been made accessible.

2 Why the USSR was Keen on Socialist Construction in Africa

On the eve of the independence of African countries, the Soviets saw the national liberation movements in Africa as a fully-fledged and integral part of the world revolutionary process. Achieving an alliance with the new African states was important for the USSR in the conditions of the Cold War, for they were seen as an important reserve for the expansion of the socialist camp. In these circumstances, proclamations by the young African states that they would follow a path of building socialism were welcomed.

4 G. Roberts, *Revolutionary State-Making in Dar es Salaam: African Liberation in the Global Cold War, 1961–1974*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

5 J. J. Roland and E. P. Martynova, “Soviet Socialism vs. African Socialism: the promotion of socialist ideas in African States in the 1960s–1970s”, *Vestnik NVGU (Proceedings of the Nizhnevartovsk State University)* 58 (2022) 2, p. 15.

But what did “socialism” mean? As a Ugandan told the Soviet ambassador to that country in 1964:

Characteristic of African countries and new governments coming to power is that they all immediately declare their desire to build socialism in their countries, although their idea of this socialism is vague and unclear [. . .]. For an African, socialism is a society where he could have good living conditions. If such conditions are created for him under capitalism, he will immediately forget about socialism. He is little interested in the problems of state and social structure as such, especially since he is often unable to understand these issues if they do not give him a concrete improvement in living conditions. In Africa, we have many different concepts about socialism, even among representatives of the ruling circles, and these concepts, as a rule, have nothing to do with the socialism that is being built or has already been built in European socialist countries.⁶

In the USSR at the end of the 1950s, Ivan Potekhin, director of the newly established Institute of African Studies and the main Soviet expert of the “non-capitalist path” in relation to Africa, stressed: “In Africa, many people talk and dream of socialism. But everyone puts their own content into this concept.”⁷ Potekhin criticized the various “non-Marxist” and therefore “unscientific” versions of “African socialism” that existed at that time. His main objections boil down to a reassessment of the African community as a ready-made cell of socialism: proponents of various theories of African socialism idealize the community, downplaying the degree of class differentiation of African society.⁸ But having foreseen the “pitfalls” of African socialism, even before these ideas were formulated specifically in the countries of East Africa, Potekhin expressed confidence that with all the originality of the historical development of the peoples of Africa, that continent, “like the whole world, obeys certain laws of historical development”.⁹ Consequently, it was possible to build socialism there, because the external conditions for it existed. Potekhin liked to repeat that under his leadership, “the Institute of African Studies will become the lever that will turn Africa onto socialist tracks”.¹⁰

The Soviet theory of the non-capitalist path of development made it possible to include a large number of countries in this category. The main provisions of

⁶ Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (hereafter AVP RF). F. 582. Op. 7. P. 3. D. 2, pp. 37–38.

⁷ I. I. Potekhin, *Afrika smotrit v budushcheje* [Africa looks into the future] (The plan of the book. Typewritten manuscript), p. 1, from the personal archive of Academician Apollon Davidson.

⁸ I. I. Potekhin, *Afrika smotrit v budushcheje* [Africa looks into the future], Moscow: Oriental literature Publishers, 1960, p. 18.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁰ The testimony of Apollon Davidson, who worked with Potekhin at that time.

the theory of the “non-capitalist way of development” had, by the end of the 1950s, several postulates. As noted by one of the authors of this theory, Georgi Mirskij, these were: the need for a strong state and a unified state collectivist ideology, the creation of an avant-garde party leading a united front with a general democratic programme, which, as it is implemented, inevitably takes the country beyond the framework of world capitalism. Great importance was attached to the “external factor” – the world system of socialism, whose tasks included “compensation” for the underdeveloped economy of Asian and African countries.¹¹

For a long time, the Soviet leadership counted on the formation of “correct” socialist ideas in African countries. Socialist projects in Ghana, Guinea, and Mali were considered by official Moscow as most “correct”. It was these countries that *Pravda*, the main newspaper of the Central Committee of the CPSU, said were building socialism on the African continent, though the coup in Ghana in 1966 made it look at “African socialism” more sceptically.¹² In Ghana, scientific socialism was declared the ideological base of the Convention People’s Party, and Kwame Nkrumah considered the main principles of the economic policy of socialism to be state management of the economy, planning, development of the public sector, and restriction of the activities of foreign capital.¹³ In Guinea, the Democratic Party emphasized the leading role of the party in all areas of life, planning as the basis for economic and cultural construction, and the key role of the working class in the development of the country.¹⁴ In Mali, the Sudanese Union Party in 1962 proclaimed scientific socialism as the theoretical and ideological basis of the party’s activities. The study of Marxist theory and the practical experience of socialist countries was declared the responsibility of every member of the party, and it was announced that industrial production would be managed by the workers themselves, management committees established at the enterprises and measures taken to limit foreign capital.¹⁵ For Moscow, scientific, i.e. Marxist-Leninist socialism, recognized the leading role of the working class and the Marxist-

11 G. I. Mirskij, “Polveka v mire vostokovedeniya” [Half a century in the world of Oriental Studies], *Vostok* 6 (1996), pp. 131–132.

12 A. S. Balezin, “Gazeta ‘Pravda’ kak istochnik po istorii Chernoj Afriki i sovetско-afrikanskikh otnoshenij v 1960-e gg.” [The Pravda newspaper as a source on the history of Black Africa and Soviet-African relations in the 1960s], in: A. Balezin (ed.), *Stochniki po istorii Afriki: problemy, tendencii, perspektivy izucheniya i ispol’zovaniya*, Moscow: Institute of World History, 2023, pp. 112–124.

13 *Istorija stran Azii i Afriki v noveishee vremia* [The contemporary history of Asian and African countries], Moscow: MGU, 1979, pp. 336–337.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 351.

15 S. Novikov and D. Ursu, *Istorija Mali v novoye i noveishee vremia* [Modern and contemporary history of Mali], Moscow: Oriental Literature, 1994, pp. 160, 173.

Leninist party, and not just the restriction of foreign capital, but the nationalization of basic enterprises. The fact that in East African countries before independence there were Marxist-orientated friends of the USSR helped give Moscow hope for “proper” socialism in these countries in the “second phase” of independence.

3 Zanzibar

Moscow's first hope for “proper” socialism in the East African region was Zanzibar. Its independence was proclaimed on 10 December 1963, and on 12 January 1964, a revolution took place. Among the leaders of the revolution were outspoken Marxists, in particular Abdul Rahman Mohammed, known as Babu. The charter of the Umma (people) party, created by him on the eve of Zanzibar's independence, stated that its goal was “the development of Zanzibar on the basis of socialism and the building of a socialist society”.¹⁶ The future prime minister of the Zanzibar Republic, Abdullah Kassim Hanga, studied at the Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University before the revolution. That Africans studied in Soviet universities did not necessarily mean they were committed to Marxism-Leninism,¹⁷ but Hanga was. He bequeathed to his daughter, whose mother was the Soviet citizen Lily Golden, a chest with works of classics of Marxism-Leninism. Zanzibari historian Amir Mohammed writes that the leaders of the revolution “tried to infuse the society with radical socialist ideology and to bring about national solidarity rather than racial conflicts”.¹⁸ The ideologists of the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) emphasized:

The new government took immediate and effective steps to end capitalism, feudalism and racism so as to build a new nation free from exploitation of any kind. The first step in that direction was to nationalize all the land and then to engage in land reform, that resulted in numerous peasants receiving substantial holdings. Such progressive steps taken by the revolutionary government did not please the enemies of the workers and peasants.¹⁹

The assessment of the USSR embassy was that:

¹⁶ O. I. Teterin, “Abdoul Rahman Muhammed Babu”, *Istoriya Afriki v biografijakh* [African history in biographies], Moscow: Russian State University for the Humanities, 2012, p. 783.

¹⁷ See, for example, S. Marung, “Out of Empire into Socialist Modernity”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 41 (2021) 1, pp. 56–70.

¹⁸ A. A. Mohammed, *A Guide to a History of Zanzibar*, Zanzibar: Good Luck Publishers, 2014, p. 87.

¹⁹ *Information of the A. S. P. House. The Party Political College-Zanzibar*, Zanzibar 1972 (?), p. 20.

The new government of Zanzibar announced that it would build socialism, relying on the help of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. The Government has carried out a number of socio-economic transformations in the country, nationalized large plantations and foreign property, eliminated debt receipts, and set fixed prices for basic necessities and food [. . .]. This Government has set a course to establish broad economic, cultural and other ties and to develop close friendship with socialist countries and especially with the Soviet Union.²⁰

A contemporary noted:

Rapid steps were taken by the new regime to establish a socialist economy. The clove export industry has been nationalized together with almost all other export-import operations. Large estates have been expropriated and in the main redistributed to peasants. Most large businesses have been transferred to state control [. . .]. In some cases, fishermen and peasants have been brought together in cooperatives and communes. In the days following the Revolution, East German and Communist Chinese emissaries were of great help to the new regime, providing advice and much-needed technical assistance to the new leaders. Coupled with the hostility of Western powers, indicated by their long withholding of recognition, this gave Zanzibar an even more revolutionary, distinctly anti-Western bias.²¹

The USSR strongly supported the new government of Zanzibar. On 27 January 1964, when the threat of Western intervention was real, the USSR Foreign Ministry issued an official statement of support for the young republic, which eliminated the external threat to its achievements.²² In March 1964, a group of Soviet military specialists was sent to train Zanzibar soldiers and officers at the Chukwani camp. The Zanzibarians acquired Soviet armoured personnel carriers, Kalashnikovs, machine guns, grenade launchers, anti-aircraft guns, and other artillery weapons.²³ The USSR also bought a large batch of cloves, the main export item of Zanzibar.²⁴

However, in April 1964, Zanzibar became part of the United Republic of Tanzania and lost its independence in many matters. Nevertheless, Moscow continued to hope for the socialist choice of Zanzibar, especially since the new Charter of the Afro-Shirazi Party in 1966 clearly stated that Zanzibar aimed to “build a society that completely excludes the exploitation of man by man or one group

²⁰ AVP RF. F. 591. Op. 7. P. 3. D. 5, p. 18.

²¹ A. J. Hughes, *East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969, pp. 243–244.

²² *Pravda*, 27 January 1964.

²³ O. I. Teterin, “Na Zanzibare, nemnogo o sebe i drugikh” [In Zanzibar, a little bit about myself and others], in: *V Yegipte i na Zanzibare: Memuary’ sovetskikh voennykh perevodchikov (1960–1966)*, Moscow: I. B. Bely, 2011, p. 118.

²⁴ Mohammed, *A Guide to a History*, p. 88.

from inside or outside the country to exploit another in their interests”.²⁵ But the leaders of the Zanzibar revolution, with whom Moscow’s hopes for the socialist future of the island were linked, were gradually eliminated from the political arena or killed. Hanga was removed from the Cabinet of Ministers of the United Republic in 1967, arrested, then released from prison. In August 1969, he was arrested again, transferred to Zanzibar and later that year shot on charges of anti-government conspiracy. Babu was arrested in 1972. Having escaped the death penalty, he remained in prison until 1978.²⁶ Karume, the leader of the revolution, was killed in April 1972.

Yet, as recently declassified documents show, Moscow did not stop trying to exert ideological influence on the leadership of Zanzibar. Thus, the Soviet consul in Zanzibar, S. M. Rogov, in an interview with Karume in February 1970, conveyed an invitation to visit the USSR from the Central Committee of the CPSU to a delegation of five senior officials of the Afro-Shirazi Party. Karume reacted positively and confirmed the readiness of the party leadership to organize events in honour of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Vladimir Lenin, and accepted the works of Lenin and books about him as presents, though he informed the Soviet consul that a decision to install a bust of Lenin in Zanzibar had not yet been made by the party leadership.²⁷ A two-person delegation from the Afro-Shirazi Party attended the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Lenin’s birth in Moscow. Upon their return to their homeland in May 1970 they were received by the Soviet consul. They spoke with great warmth about the reception they had received in the USSR and noted that Zanzibar could learn a lot from the Soviet Union in the field of agricultural development and especially in the use and application of agricultural machinery in the conditions of Zanzibar.²⁸ In July 1970, items for the exhibition dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Lenin were donated to the Central Committee of the Afro-Shirazi Party. At the ceremony, the general secretary of the party “expressed the wish for further strengthening of friendship, for strengthening contacts both along state and party lines, and through public organizations”.²⁹

But increasing Chinese influence was important for changes in Moscow’s attitude to Zanzibarian socialism in the mid- and late 1960s. In the mid-1960s, six of ten members of the Council of Ministers were pro-Chinese, three pro-Soviet, and one

25 B. F. Mrina, W. T. Mattoke, *Mapambano ya ukombozi Zanzibar* [Liberation struggle in Zanzibar], Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, n.d., p. 108.

26 Teterin, “Abdoul Rahman Muhammed Babu”, p. 786.

27 Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI). F. 5. Op. 61. D. 539, pp. 33–34.

28 RGANI. F. 50. Op. 62. D. 539, pp. 35–36.

29 RGANI. F. 50. Op. 62. D. 539, p. 37.

was not a communist. Of the 22 members of the Revolutionary Council, 15 were pro-Chinese, 4 pro-Soviet and 3 were not communists.³⁰ According to some reports, there were 150 Chinese military instructors in the Migombani and Chukwani military camps. The only loan the government of Zanzibar received in 1966 was from the People's Republic of China.³¹ A report of the USSR embassy on Tanzanian-Chinese relations of March 1968 stated: "The Chinese continue to train about half of the Zanzibar Army (2 companies) at Mtoni camp (the other half are trained by Soviet military specialists)."³² In 1969, Karume declared that he would follow Mao Zedong's methods in building socialism, and Zanzibar's cooperation with the USSR and the GDR was curtailed. For the Soviets, now in sharp ideological confrontation with China,³³ such pro-Chinese positions were unacceptable. In sum, a socialist course of Zanzibar was thwarted as a result of unification with Tanganyika, the withdrawal of "socialist" leaders from the political arena, and strong Chinese influence. Moscow's hopes for an "African Cuba" did not materialize.

4 Kenya

Moscow's hopes for socialist choices in Kenya were linked to Oginga Odinga, the KANU vice-president. In 1962, before Kenya gained independence, he published in the Kenyan press an article "On the Attitude towards Assistance provided to Kenya by Socialist Countries". This article was sent to the USSR Foreign Ministry by the Soviet embassy in Tanganyika with a statement: "The article is written in a fighting spirit. In it, in particular, Odinga exposes attempts to portray communism as the enemy of the peoples of Africa and shows that their real enemy is 'big business', this is Anglo-American imperialism."³⁴ During his visit as head of the Kenyan government delegation to the USSR in April-May 1964, Odinga repeatedly made statements attesting to his commitment to socialism. In particular, "that he would like to see his son become a communist and asked if there was a commu-

30 S. K. Ahmed, *Zanzibar: Africa's First Cuba*, Richmond: Foreign Affairs Publishing Co, 1967. p. 18.

31 Mrina, Mattoke, *Mapambano*, p. 120.

32 RGANI. F. 5. Op. 60. D. 468. p. 28.

33 See, for example, A. Voevodskiy, "The Sino-Soviet Split and Soviet Policy towards Southern African Liberation Movements in the early 1960s", in: Ch. Saunders, H. A. Fonseca, and L. Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023, pp. 179–197.

34 AVP RF. F. 577. Op. 5. P. 1. D. 1, p. 20.

nist party organization at the Peoples' Friendship University", where his son studied. Odinga said that "he would be proud if his son possessed the qualities that communists usually possess".³⁵

Moscow pinned great hopes for educating Kenyans in the socialist spirit on an Institute for Party Cadres Training named after Patrice Lumumba that was opened in December 1964 in Nairobi. The USSR took part in the construction and financing of the institute. When Soviet instructors arrived in Nairobi, the institute was not ready to receive students, and they had to make up a schedule of classes and curricula for the course they were supposed to teach – "General Principles of Socialism" (which was given six hours a week) and one on "Party Building".³⁶ In addition to these courses, the institute taught "Africa's Way to Socialism".³⁷ However, in July 1965, the institute was closed, due to a change in the political course of the Kenyan leadership and, as a result, a sharp deterioration in Soviet–Kenyan relations.³⁸

Moscow's hopes for the victory of the socialist course in Kenya did not, however, all fade away and remained connected with Odinga. Having been ousted from the leadership of the country, he created an opposition party, Kenya People's Union, which, under his leadership, actively fought for a change in the government's course. The party's policy document, published on 20 May 1966, stated that the party

condemns the capitalist policy of the government and KANU, it [. . .] will pursue a truly socialist policy for the benefit of the people. It will distribute the wealth of the country more evenly among the people, expand national control over the means of production, it will eliminate the power of foreigners over the economy [. . .] The only immediate solution to the problem of unemployment is to allocate more land to the unemployed, who are often also landless. Along with this, the rapid development of industrial enterprises in cities is necessary in order to increase employment.³⁹

The party's 1968 election manifesto stated:

³⁵ AVP RF. F. 577. Op. 7. P. 3. D. 2, p. 31.

³⁶ Report of A. Bogdanov and A. Zdravomyslov on their work at the Lumumba institute. 6 June 1965. AVP. RF. F. 577. Op. 8. P. 4. D. 7, p. 36.

³⁷ AVP. RF. F. 577. Op. 8. P. 4. D. 7. pp. 36–37.

³⁸ See, for example, A. S. Balezin, "SSSR – nezavisimaya Keniya. Korotkij medovij mesiats" [USSR – independent Kenya: a short honeymoon], *Novaya i noveishaya istoriya* 2 (2019), pp. 93–99.

³⁹ Kenya People's Union Programme. Cited from P. Vladimirov, *Keniya: vibor puti* [Kenya: the choice of the way], Moscow: Politizdat, 1979, pp. 189–190.

Our most important task – rapid industrialization and strengthening the agricultural base of our economy – do not contradict each other. These tasks complement each other. If that agriculture increasingly provides for our own industry, rather than supplying raw materials for foreign industry, we will be able to expand both sectors in parallel. With the help of centralized planning and the right use of resources, we will be able to cope with urbanization, while simultaneously connecting more and more rural populations to the urban economy. In order to coordinate the development of cities and rural areas in a democratic spirit, the Government of the Kenya People's Union will establish a development advisory body. This organization will feature workers, peasants, former freedom fighters, the landless, the unemployed and representatives of those areas that were deliberately delayed by the colonizers and their followers in their development, such as, for example, Masailand, the Northern and Coastal Provinces. Only a proper income distribution system will help break the vicious circle that occurs when the majority of the population is engaged in subsistence farming and, consequently, there are no monetary incentives for economic activity. The transfer of labor to cash settlement conditions immediately opens up wide opportunities for industry. The best way to transfer 95 per cent of the population tied to agriculture to a new track is to create a government-supported cooperative with broad social and economic functions. Cooperatives are the slogan that we must adopt in order to survive as a nation.⁴⁰

As the programme of the Kenya People's Union corresponded to the ideas of building "correct" socialism, it is not surprising that the USSR provided significant financial assistance to the Odinga party through the International Trade Union Fund for Assistance to Left-Wing Workers' Organizations. In 1965, 164 thousand dollars were allocated for Odinga and his party.⁴¹ In 1966, 200 thousand dollars were allocated to his party marked in parentheses "Oginga Odinga".⁴² However, the opposition, operating under increasingly harsh conditions, was eventually defeated in 1969, the Kenya People's Union was banned and Odinga and a number of his associates were arrested.

The ruling circles of Kenya talked about building socialism. Their ideas about "Kenyan socialism" were reflected in "African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya", published in 1965.⁴³ In his preface, President Kenyatta said that Kenya "would develop on the basis of the concepts and philosophy of Democratic African Socialism. We rejected both Western Capitalism and Eastern Communism and chose for ourselves a policy of positive non-alignment." Though "Marx's criticism of the society of his time and place was a valid one", said Kenyatta, "it bears

⁴⁰ Report of the USSR embassy in Kenya. RGANI. F. 5. Op. 60. D. 450, pp. 86–87.

⁴¹ The Report of B. Ponomarev to the CC of the CPSU. 16 December 1965, in: A. B. Davidson, S. V. Mazov, and A. S. Balizin (eds.), *Rossija i Afrika. Dokumenty i materialy. 1961–nachalo 1970-ch* [Russia and Africa. Documents and materials. 1961–early 1970s], Moscow: Politicheskaja entsiklopedija, 2021, p. 109.

⁴² The Report of B. Ponomarev to the CC of the CPSU. 26 December 1966, *ibid.*, p. 128.

⁴³ *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*, n.p., 1965.

little similarity to Kenya today [. . .]. The problems of today are not the problems of a century ago.” He continued: “African Socialism is designed to be a working system in a modern setting, fully prepared to adapt itself to changing circumstances and new problems.” The “African Socialism” document noted that African socialism was based on two African traditions – political democracy and mutual social responsibility – and emphasized that non-alignment does not imply either economic or political isolationism. It talked about various forms of ownership – state, cooperative, corporate, and individual – and about cooperation with international financial organizations, in particular, with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The first Soviet ambassador to Kenya emphasized: “Scientific socialism was strongly rejected in this document”, which, he said, can be used “in order to counteract the spread of scientific socialism in Africa”, and he quoted a snide assessment of the document by the Tanzanian newspaper *The Nationalist*: “It seems that it was not prepared by an African or a socialist.”⁴⁴ Two Soviet instructors at the Lumumba Institute found:

In its theoretical foundations, the version of “African socialism” formulated in the analyzed document is a motley mixture of ideas of Labour socialism, nationalism and pragmatism, with a pronounced bias towards anti-communism. The authors of the document took care to dissociate themselves primarily from Marxism, which is repeatedly declared outdated and inapplicable to Kenya’s conditions. The very term “African” socialism is presented as an antithesis to scientific socialism [. . .]. Socialism itself is declared a foreign ideology, which is opposed by African socialism, which expresses the traditional foundations and principles of African society [. . .]. In their criticism of Marxism, the authors [. . .] constantly talk about Marx’s views, pretending that they know nothing about the existence of Marxism, a scientific theory of social development developed after the death of Marx and Engels in the writings of Lenin, in documents of the international communist movement analysing the modern era and the features of modern monopolistic capitalism [. . .]. The authors do their best to emphasize the classless nature of African society, idealizing the pre-colonial period of African history.⁴⁵

Official Moscow could not approve such anti-Marxist socialism, and Kenya was firmly labelled a capitalist-oriented country.

⁴⁴ Vladimirov, *Kenya: vibor puti*, pp. 144, 149.

⁴⁵ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 50. D. 697, pp. 196–199.

5 Tanzanian Socialism – Ujamaa

In the USSR in the mid-1960s, Tanzania's desire to build socialism was strongly emphasized at the official level, expressed repeatedly in various forms by the country's top officials. In 1966, *Pravda* published a statement by Nyerere:

Socialism, with its principle of collective ownership of the means of production, is the only system that meets the economic goals of our country [. . .]. I believe in socialism because it provides the broad masses with the opportunity to become owners of the means of production. Socialism is the only alternative for developing countries in their struggle for economic independence.⁴⁶

And at the beginning of 1967, the Tanzanian foreign minister, Oscar Kambona, said: "Our ultimate goal is to create a socialist Tanzania [. . .]. 1967 will be the year in which TANU will make every effort to teach the people socialist politics."⁴⁷

But good relations between the USSR and Tanzania became complicated: in 1967, President Nyerere, unlike the USSR, supported the Republic of Biafra and in 1968 condemned the invasion of the Warsaw Pact troops into Czechoslovakia. The complications were not removed by the adoption in 1967 of the Arusha Declaration, which contains the concept of African socialism – Ujamaa, a model for the development of society based on traditional social organization.⁴⁸ In April of the same year, the Soviet journalist Mikhail Domogatskikh's assessment of the transformations carried out in the country no longer contains the word "socialist": "The adoption of the Arusha Declaration, according to which foreign banks and companies were nationalized in the country, indicates the desire of the Tanzanian government to move, according to Nyerere, to the second stage of the revolution – the stage of winning a genuine economic independence."⁴⁹

The greeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU to the Congress of TANU said nothing about socialist construction in Tanzania. The Arusha Declaration is assessed as "the most important programme document of the party", aimed at "implementing deep progressive transformations",⁵⁰ and this formulation is repeated in

⁴⁶ *Pravda*, 2 September 1966.

⁴⁷ *Pravda*, 22 January 1967.

⁴⁸ For analysis of the historiography of Ujamaa see, for example, I. E. Sinitsyna, *Tanzaniya: partiya i gosudarstvo* [Tanzania: the party and the state], Moscow: Nauka, 1972, pp. 56–64; V. G. Solodovnikov, "Djulius Nyerere – teoretik socialisticheskoi orientatsii" [Julius Nyerere: A Theorist of Socialist Orientation], in: *Djulius Nyerere: gumanist, politik, myslitel*, Moscow: Institut Afriki RAN, 2002, pp. 21–31.

⁴⁹ *Pravda*, 28 April 1967.

⁵⁰ *Pravda*, 16 October 1967.

the information about the congress itself and the subsequent steps taken by the country's leadership.⁵¹ Nyerere in his congratulations on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution, addressed to N. V. Podgorny, does not mention socialism, only stating that the revolution "put an end to oppression and exploitation" and that the 50 years that have passed since then "have been years of outstanding development and progress for the Soviet people in all areas of human activity".⁵²

Nyerere and Kambona delivered most of their speeches in Swahili and used, of course, the word "Ujamaa", which in English translation sounded like "socialism" and thus got into the Russian language. In an interview, Nyerere said that it was the same thing, but for Moscow this was not quite the case. As Svetlana Shlenskaya explains:

Nyerere, in his theory of Ujamaa, recognizes the existence of classes and class struggle in African society, but rejects its crucial importance in shaping social relations. As the driving forces of building socialism, he points to the moral and ethical improvement of people and their acceptance of socialist views and norms of behaviour, the Peasantry is considered the main subject and object of socialist transformations in Nyerere theory and practice [. . .]. Nyerere believed that "in order for a country to become socialist, it is necessary that its government be elected and headed by peasants and workers".⁵³

For Vladimir Shubin, one of the creators of the USSR's practical African policy in the 1970s (first in the Soviet Committee of Solidarity with the Countries of Asia and Africa, and then in the Africa Sector of the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU), "self-reliance" was one of the reasons for the USSR's cool attitude towards Ujamaa:

At that time, Moscow criticized the principle of self-reliance, seeing in it the desire to tear African countries away from the USSR and its allies, although in fact it was important as at least an attempt to get rid not only of external dependence, but also of dependency. However, this principle did not prevent Nyerere and the CCM [Chama Cha Mapinduzi, Revolutionary State Party] from maintaining active contacts with social democratic parties and governments of Western European countries and receiving assistance from them.⁵⁴

51 *Pravda*, 17 October and 28 October 1967.

52 *Pravda*. 8 November 1967.

53 S. M. Shlenskaya, "Dzh. Nyerere – teoretik i praktik afrikanskogo socializma" [J. Nyerere, a theorist and practitioner of African socialism], in: *Kazhdyj grazhdanin – neot'emlemaya chast' nacii. K 100-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya osnovopolozhnika nezavisimoj Tanzanii Dzhuliusa Kambarage Nyerere*, Moscow: Institut Afriki RAN, 2022, p. 38.

54 V. G. Shubin, *Ot Kaira do Keiptauna. Africa glazami russkogo cheloveka* [From Cairo to Cape Town. Africa as seen by a Russian], Moscow: Institut Afriki RAN, 2022, p. 193.

Andrei Urnov, another creator of African politics in the USSR, notes that “When visiting the USSR, representatives of TANU and CCM did not insist that the word ‘Ujamaa’ be used when translating their speeches and publications into Russian. When communicating with foreign partners and audiences, the word ‘socialism’ was quite acceptable to them.”⁵⁵ Nevertheless, Urnov adds: “Tanzania was not among the African countries closest to the USSR. Economic, trade and cultural co-operation were carried out, but in rather modest volumes.”⁵⁶ “From my conversations with Tanzanian figures coming to the USSR and trips to Tanzania, I still got the impression that Tanzanians gravitated more towards China.”⁵⁷

Already at the end of 1963, J. Pombea, Secretary General of the Committee of African Organizations in London, when received at the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee stressed:

The embassy of the People’s Republic of China is much more active than yours [. . .] and in February 1964 Nyerere will go to China. This will be his first visit to a socialist country [. . .]. This trip to China creates new difficulties and problems, because you know Nyerere’s way of thinking and his views that the world is divided into rich and poor countries, not socialist and capitalist ones [. . .]. Tanganyikan officials (the Speaker of the House, ministers) travel to China all the time, and this is the result of the active activity of the Chinese embassy.⁵⁸

The USSR embassy in Tanzania, commenting on Nyerere’s trip to China in February 1965, said:

The Chinese, in negotiations with Nyerere, persistently pursued the idea that the peoples of China and Tanzania have much in common in their historical development, that they were subjected to prolonged foreign exploitation by European and American colonizers, that in both countries there are the same problems – overcoming economic backwardness, the struggle against imperialism and neocolonialism. The Chinese stressed that both countries should “rely on their own strength” in achieving economic independence. Moreover, as it turned out later, the Tanzanians and the Chinese understood the slogan “self-reliance” differently.⁵⁹ Unlike the Chinese isolationist interpretation of this slogan, Nyerere sees it as a means to mobilize resources and awaken national consciousness in the people. Tanzanians do not exclude the development of the national economy “based on their own strength”, but

⁵⁵ A. Y. Urnov, *Vneshnyaya politika SSSR v gody ‘kholodnoj vojny’ i ‘novogo myshleniya’* [The foreign policy of the USSR during the Cold War and New Thinking], Moscow: RFK-Imidzh Lab, 2014, p. 305.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 60. D. 642, pp. 5–6.

⁵⁹ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 60. D. 458, p. 20.

this presupposes the widespread use of foreign economic assistance, including from capitalist countries, as explicitly stated in the Arusha Declaration.⁶⁰

A report on Tanzanian-Chinese relations, prepared for the Central Committee of the CPSU on 30 July 1968, stated:

The Chinese manage to exert significant influence on the foreign and domestic policy of the Tanzanian government, and on some international issues, the leading figures of Tanzania take clearly pro-Chinese positions. For example, Tanzania's speech against the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, Tanzania's position in the Nigerian crisis (recognition of Biafra). Inside the country, the strengthening of Nyerere's personal power, following the example of Mao Tse-tung. At the same time, on a number of domestic and international issues, the Tanzanian leaders do not share the views of the Chinese leadership. Tanzania shows restraint regarding the assessment of the "cultural revolution" in China, the Tanzanians have the opposite opinion of the Chinese leadership about the role of the United Nations in peaceful coexistence.⁶¹

And further continues:

An analysis of Tanzania's relations with China shows that President Nyerere, in his quest to take a leading position in Africa, especially in its central and southern parts, relies on the adventurous policy of the Mao Tse-tung faction and goes for the comprehensive development of these relations. Tanzania also derives certain economic benefits from its relations with China by receiving financial and technical assistance on preferential terms. Friendly relations with the People's Republic of China are necessary for Nyerere to resolve issues in relations with Western countries, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in a beneficial way.⁶²

In October 1969, Nyerere finally paid a visit to the USSR, which was first scheduled for August 1967, but then postponed by Moscow. In his speech at the breakfast in his honour with the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR Nikolai Podgorny, Nyerere resorted to socialist rhetoric: "We decided to build a socialist Tanzania, realizing that only in this way will the entire people of our country be able to benefit from the freedom for which they fought. There are many people in the world who believe that Africa is not yet ripe for socialism. But there are those in Africa who are convinced that they have no other way."⁶³ At the same time, Nyerere tried to emphasize the peculiarities of Tanzanian socialism:

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 71–72.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 76–77.

⁶³ *Pravda*, 9 October 1969.

[. . .] the choice of socialism among the alternatives that we have stems to a large extent from the communal traditions of Africa. We strive to preserve the traditional equality of our people. To develop new forms of political and economic unification that will allow us to increase national wealth and completely eliminate economic and social exploitation. In other words, we are trying to build socialism on the foundations that correspond to our past, our current conditions and our aspirations for equality between people and human dignity in all spheres of life.⁶⁴

Such features of “Tanzanian socialism” forced official Moscow to treat the theory and practice of Ujamaa with restraint.

6 Uganda

Moscow did not consider Uganda, which gained independence in November 1962, potentially socialist. A hereditary monarch of Buganda, Mutesa II, a “representative of feudal circles”, became its first president. And statements by the country’s prime minister, A. M. Obote, contributed to this. In 1963, he stated in the Ugandan parliament:

There is one camp called the Eastern bloc and there is another called the Western Bloc; and their quarrels, their intentions are certainly not our intentions, and therefore to try to follow a policy that would please either the West or the East would mean that we are in one of two camps [. . .]. We are in Africa, and although Africa has had and has the greatest contact mainly with the West, Africa cannot and Uganda certainly cannot shut its eyes and pretend that the East does not exist. The East is there, they exist and they compete favourably with the West. We have therefore to try and examine the nature of their quarrel in the context of our own policy. We have therefore to pick up sufficient courage to stable our own mind irrespective of the wrath we are likely to have from anyone of them.⁶⁵

In the article in the *Pravda*, which preceded Prime-Minister Obote’s visit to the USSR in July 1965 and was accompanied by his portrait it was stated: “He consistently advocates Uganda’s policy of non-alignment with the blocs, strengthening Afro-Asian solidarity, and developing friendly relations with all countries.”⁶⁶ When he visited Moscow, Obote was taken to Lenin’s apartment in the Kremlin and left the following entry: “A highly touching museum about the most important part of the USSR, where a great man lived and worked in order to lay the

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Quoted from G. Vijay, *Obote: Second Liberation*, Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1983, pp. 170–171.

⁶⁶ *Pravda*, 21 July 1965.

foundations of great science for a great international movement.”⁶⁷ No mention of “socialism”!

Shortly after the coup of 1966, as a result of which Obote became president of Uganda, in November 1968, he announced the upcoming “move to the left” in Ugandan politics. And in October 1969, an official document was published – the Common Man’s Charter. This document, adopted on 19 December 1969, was assessed by the correspondent of *Pravda* in East Africa as “a programme of socio-economic transformations that orients the country towards the way of socialist development”.⁶⁸ However, in Moscow, Obote’s “move to the left” did not cause much enthusiasm. In particular, because, as Obote himself stated, “the Common Man’s Charter is not a copy of the teachings of Marx and Lenin [. . .]. It would be wrong to interpret the primarily economic motives of ‘African Socialism’ in Kenya, the ‘Arusha Declaration’ in Tanzania and the ‘Common Man’s Charter’ in Uganda as Marxist, pro-capitalist or anti-capitalist.”⁶⁹ The attitude of official Moscow to the Common Man’s Charter is illustrated by a letter from a former USSR ambassador to Uganda to his successor I. Kurdyukov in January 1971:

The Charter is rather declarative in nature, without outlining specific measures to implement the proclaimed programme, leaving many important issues in the shade, including the question of the socio-economic formation, which is the ultimate goal of the National Assembly [. . .]. It is possible that Obote, with the support of the progressive part of the country’s population, seriously chose the line of “move to the left” [. . .]. At the same time, it is impossible to exclude the possibility that the proclaimed policy may be a tactical device of the president, the purpose of which is to increase personal prestige in the country and strengthen the authority of the Uganda People’s Congress before the upcoming parliamentary elections in the country.⁷⁰

Vladimir Pankratiev, a former employee of the USSR embassy in Uganda, assessed the Charter in a 1984 book as follows:

The Charter highlighted the tasks of nation-building, achieving unity, strengthening republican institutions, defended the rights of the working person, condemned the exploitation of the poor by the rich. At the same time, such an important question, in whose hands the means of production will be concentrated, was not formulated clearly enough. It was not clear who should be classified as a “common man”. The document did not disclose how the UPC would implement socialist principles, although article 30 mentioned that the “move to the left” provides for the participation of citizens in all sectors of the economy on the basis of collective ownership of property in cooperatives and state-owned enterprises. The right

⁶⁷ *Pravda*, 23 July 1965.

⁶⁸ *Pravda*, 20 December 1969.

⁶⁹ AVP RF. F. 582. Op. 12. P. 8. D. 7, p. 4.

⁷⁰ AVP RF. F. 582. Op. 13. P. 9. D. 7, p. 13.

of the Government to nationalize any private enterprise or private property [. . .] in the interests of the people was emphasized.⁷¹

Any hopes Moscow had that it could exploit Obote's "move to the left" were dashed when in January 1971, as a result of a military coup, Idi Amin Dada, later nicknamed "Africa's Hitler", came to power.

7 General Considerations and Conclusions

Thus, the countries of East Africa, which proclaimed the tasks of building socialism in the 1960s, failed to meet Moscow's expectations for the "correctness" of this course. In the West, the illusory nature of hopes that African countries would make a "true" socialist choice had already been recognized in the early 1960s. The Sovietologist A. Dallin wrote back in 1964: "It is most doubtful whether African Communism would be identified with the USSR."⁷² And Z. Brzezinski noted at the same time:

The disintegration of Communist universalism may in turn further encourage and legitimize the already strong inclination of African leaders to formulate their own African versions of socialism, borrowing liberally from Communist and non-Communist experience [. . .]. As long as Communism presented a homogenous front, its claims to possess the key to the future and to have solved the problem of social development had a certain ring of authenticity. Internal discord and the appearance of Yugoslav, Soviet, Chinese and Albanian ways to Communism increasingly means that there is no single way. The desperate Soviet efforts to formulate new general principles, and to tolerate some measure of national diversity are even likely to strengthen the conviction of Africans in the correctness of their own particular methods.⁷³

More and more work on the "non-capitalist way" appeared, the authors of which tried to look at this problem more broadly. Shubin writes with sarcasm about these Soviet authors who developed the theory of the "non-capitalist way", later known as the "socialist orientation":

71 N. Ksenofontova, Yu. Lukonin, V. Pankratyev, *Istoriya Ugandi v novoye i noveishee vremia* [Modern and Contemporary History of Uganda], Moscow: Nauka, 1984, p. 187.

72 A. Dallin, "The Soviet Union: Political Activity", in: Z. Brzezinski (ed.), *Africa and the Communist World*, London: Stanford University Press, 1964, p. 48.

73 Z. Brzezinski, "Conclusion: The African Challenge", in: Brzezinski (ed.), *Africa and the Communist World*, pp. 214–215.

The very existence of this concept made it possible for researchers who followed the situation (later calling themselves political scientists) to write many opuses with arguments about the categories of national democratic, national revolutionary and other parties in these countries. But those who were actually involved in the African Sector in relations with political structures usually treated these investigations with a healthy sense of humour.⁷⁴

Shubin is talking about employees of the Africa Sector of the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU, who, according to Telepneva's fair assessment, "forged personal relations with African revolutionaries".⁷⁵ However, they came to this understanding later, not before the 1970s, when the very life and logic of the development of young African states showed the illusory nature of hopes for a socialist Africa. One of these employees since the 1960s and deputy head of the International Department in the 1980s, was to write:

Moscow was well aware that the implementation of the declared goals by the countries of social orientation is, at best, a matter of the distant future. In the Soviet Union, socialist-oriented states, unlike the Commonwealth countries, did not pass through the register of "fraternal" ones. There was a kinship, but a more distant one, something like in-laws. The countries of socialist orientation remained in the system of the world capitalist economy. The USSR did not have the opportunity to provide them with assistance in the amount that would ensure their economic independence from the West. All these states, even the most leftist ones, simply could not help but pursue a policy of balancing between opposing blocs. Their friendly relations with the USSR did not mean a relationship of subordination. Moscow could influence the policy of these states to one degree or another, but it could not determine it.⁷⁶

For Shubin:

The theory of socialist orientation . . . did not express the desire to push anyone towards socialism, but rather, on the contrary, the desire to keep from "getting ahead of themselves", from "building socialism" or even its proclamation in those countries where there were no real conditions for this [. . .]. The position expressed by Y. V. Andropov in 1983 was much closer to us: "After all, it is one thing to proclaim socialism as a goal and another to build it. This requires a certain level of productive forces, culture and social consciousness. Socialist countries stand in solidarity with these progressive states, provide them with assistance in the field of politics and culture, and help strengthen their defence. We help them to the best of our ability in their economic development. But basically, like social progress of these

⁷⁴ Shubin, *Ot Kaira do Keiptauna*, p. 195.

⁷⁵ Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation*, p. 7.

⁷⁶ Urnov, *Vneshnyaya politika*, p. 202.

countries as such, their development can, of course, be only the result of the work of their peoples and the correct policy of their leadership.”⁷⁷

Moscow did not immediately understand this. In the 1960s, there was still hope for “real” (Marxist) socialist projects in Africa. But even in the countries of the “socialist camp” there was by the mid-1960s a more realistic understanding of the possibilities of building socialism on the African continent. So, Gonzalez, Cuba’s Chargé d’affaires in Tanzania, said to Soviet Ambassador Timoshchenko in November 1966:

The experience of working in Africa shows that there cannot be a consistent socialist party here and the masses, being in the conditions of the African community, are not ripe for socialist transformations. The backwardness and savagery of the Stone Age period persists, which cannot be quickly overcome. The ruling parties spontaneously follow the capitalist path of development, although they talk about socialism.⁷⁸

In the same conversation, Gonzalez discussed mistakes in the policy of socialist countries towards African countries:

African countries require serious study. Socialist countries need to accumulate facts, gain experience and gradually try to generalize this experience theoretically. In socialist countries, African leaders are often overestimated, and progressive views are attributed to them, because they are able to make loud speeches at the UN and in conversations with representatives of socialist countries. Overestimation of political leaders and their progressivity leads to miscalculations in relations with African countries.⁷⁹

This fully applies to Moscow’s official relations to socialist doctrines in the countries of East Africa in the 1960s. Among the important external factors to be taken into consideration is the multiplicity of variants of “scientific socialism” in the “socialist camp”. A key role was played by the Chinese in planting one of the variants recognized by official Moscow as erroneous and revisionist, though the ideological confrontation with China in Africa, which constantly increased during the period under review, was officially hushed up in the USSR – the common cliché was: “Africa is at the crossroad of two systems, capitalist and socialist”. We can conclude that Moscow’s increasing disillusionment with socialist projects in East African countries was facilitated by both internal and external factors in the life of these countries and the USSR itself. Internal ones include the pluralist under-

⁷⁷ Shubin, *Ot Kaira do Keiptauna*, pp. 194–195.

⁷⁸ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 58. D. 305, p. 270.

⁷⁹ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 58. D. 305, pp. 270–271.

standing of socialism by African leaders and their tendency to populism in the public sphere, the peculiarities of the social structure of young states, economic and social problems inherited from colonial society and arising in the course of independent development, and the political instability of new regimes. External factors include the limited capabilities of the USSR and its allies to understand African realities and to provide material assistance to the young states of Africa, and the active opposition of Western powers as well as China to the strengthening of Moscow's position with the countries of the region.

Alexander Voevodskiy

4 Moscow in Search of Political Alliances and Partners: Botswana and Lesotho in the 1960s and Early 1970s

1 Introduction

This chapter explores Moscow's policy towards two newly independent states in Southern Africa, Botswana and Lesotho, for three main reasons.

Firstly, they were of great strategic importance for the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), Moscow's main and most consistent allies in the region, who led the fight against the apartheid regime in South Africa. These countries enabled communication with the underground in South Africa and represented the main route for refugees leaving South Africa.¹

Secondly, Botswana and Lesotho were not part of Moscow's circle of allies. The ruling regimes in these countries were rather pro-Western and anti-communist, which made it difficult for Moscow and the ANC-SACP to use the territories of these countries for their own purposes. It was important for the Soviet Union and its allies in Southern Africa to win these countries over to their side in the fight against the apartheid regime due to their important strategic location. In this chapter, I try to analyse the strategies that were used by Moscow and its allies to achieve these goals.

Thirdly, using the examples of these two countries, I consider how the foreign policy of the Soviet Union was influenced by the interests of the ANC and SACP. The nature of this relationship is still a matter of academic discussion.²

In this chapter, I focus primarily on the role of the ANC and SACP in determining Soviet strategy towards Botswana and Lesotho. This is explained by the fact that Moscow developed particularly close relationships with these political organizations, while other liberation movements, primarily the South West Africa

1 See Ch. J. Makgala, "The BNF and BDP's 'Fight' for the Attention of the ANC, 1912–2004: A Historical Perspective", *Botswana Notes and Records* 38 (2006), p. 118; N. Parsons, "The Pipeline: Botswana's reception of Refugees, 1958–1968", *Social Dynamics* 34 (2008) 1, pp. 17–32.

2 See S. Ellis, *External Mission: ANC in Exile, 1960–1990*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; I. Filatova and A. Davidson, *The Hidden Thread: Russia and South Africa in the Soviet Era*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Dall Publishers, 2013; V. G. Shubin, *ANC: A View from Moscow*, Bellville: Mayibuye Books, 1999.

People's Organisation (SWAPO) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), had less influence in Moscow in the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s.³ Also, the interests of the ANC and SACP were concentrated in the two countries of Botswana and Lesotho, while Lesotho's geographic position prevented it from playing a significant role in the liberation struggles waged by SWAPO and ZAPU.

2 Politics of Botswana and Lesotho on the Eve of the Declaration of Independence in 1966

Until 1966, Botswana and Lesotho were the British High Commission territories of Bechuanaland and Basutoland. In the early 1960s, the British authorities initiated constitutional reforms in both territories, expanding local government rights and allowing the formation of political parties. In Botswana, the Bechuanaland People's Party (BPP) was the first to be formed (1960); its leaders were Motsamai Mpho, Philip Matante, and Kgalemang Motsete. The party gained financial and moral support, including three Land Rover vehicles, from Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana.⁴ Two years later, with the participation of the protectorate authorities, the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) was formed, led by Seretse Khama. Members of the BDP included headteachers and small traders, a few white members, and a significant number of people who were related to chiefs.⁵ The BPP claimed to be the only anti-colonial force in Bechuanaland. Its leaders had close ties to the ANC; Mpho was one of the 156 people accused in the treason trial in South Africa (which ended with the acquittal of all accused in 1961).⁶ However, in 1962 there was a split in the BPP, which influenced the development of the situation in Bechuanaland.

3 On the nature of the relationship between the ANC-SACP and Moscow, see Filatova and Davidson, *The Hidden Thread*, p. 310; Shubin, *ANC: A View from Moscow*, p. 234. According to V. G. Shubin, until the early 1970s, the USSR did not provide systematic assistance to SWAPO, V. G. Shubin, *The Hot 'Cold War': The USSR in Southern Africa*, London: Pluto Press, 2008, pp. 201–203. The problem of ZAPU's influence on Moscow politics is discussed later in this chapter. The help and co-operation that Namibians going into exile received in Botswana is discussed in J. A. Müller, *"The Inevitable Pipeline into Exile": Botswana's Role in the Namibian Liberation Struggle*, Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2012.

4 Makgala, "The BNF and BDP's 'Fight' for the Attention of the ANC", p. 119; T. Tlou, N. Parsons and W. Henderson, *Seretse Khama, 1921–80*, Gaborone: Macmillan, 1995, p. 190.

5 Tlou et al., *Seretse Khama*, pp. 196–197.

6 Makgala, "The BNF and BDP's 'Fight' for the Attention of the ANC", p. 118; Botswana (Reference), 16 September 1969, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 715, p. 2.

In June 1962, a conflict broke out between Mpho and Matante, who was in alliance with Motsete, over the distribution of financial aid of USD 9,000. Mpho accused Matante of money embezzling and tried to remove him from the post of party president. Matante and Motsete responded by rallying their supporters and announcing Mpho's removal as general secretary and his expulsion from the party. All this was accompanied by mutual attacks, even to the point of physical clashes between supporters of the warring factions.⁷

The reasons for this intra-party conflict lay not only in the plane of personal rivalry, they also reflected larger processes taking place in the South African liberation movement.

A split occurred in the ranks of the ANC in 1958. A group of activists led by a popular leader, Robert Sobukwe, resigned their membership. A crisis in the South African movement emerged after the People's Congress of 1956, in which, in addition to the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, the Colored People's Congress, the Congress of Democrats (whose members were mainly representatives of the underground SACP), and the South African Congress of Trade Unions took part. Sobukwe supporters were dissatisfied with the ANC's collaboration with communists and representatives of the non-African population of South Africa.⁸

The Africanists, as Sobukwe and his associates were called, founded a new organization – the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), which quickly began to gain popularity among the African population. Sobukwe declared the PAC's goal to be “the creation of an African government by Africans and for Africans”. Africanists also viewed communism as an alien ideology, which whites were trying to impose on Africans.⁹

Events in South Africa had a direct impact on the balance of political forces in Bechuanaland. Matante and Motsete supported the PAC in this conflict and began to fight against the spread of “communist influence” in Bechuanaland, while Mpho retained close ties to the ANC.¹⁰

7 A. B. Davidson, S. V. Mazov, and A. S. Balizin (eds.), *Rossija i Afrika. Dokumenty i materialy 1961–nachalo 1970-ch* [Russia and Africa. Documents and materials 1961–early 1970s], Moscow: Politicheskaja Entsiklopedija, 2021, pp. 823–825; Record of a Conversation with the Vice-President of the Bechuanaland People's Party Philip Matante, 27 and 29 June 1963, GARF. f. R9540, op. 2, d. 64, p. 140.

8 T. R. H. Davenport and Ch. Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000, pp. 404–405; R. W. Johnson, *South Africa: The First Man, the Last Nation*, London: Phoenix, 2006, p. 151.

9 J. M. R. Sobukwe, “The Opening Address delivered by Mangaliso R. Sobukwe at The Africanist Inaugural Convention”, *The Africanist* 5 (1959) 1 (May–June), pp. 3–9.

10 L. M. Maksudov, Permanent Representative of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee (SKSSAA) in Cairo, to O. S. Kharkhardin, Deputy Executive Secretary of the SKSSAA, 2 Septem-

Describing the situation in Bechuanaland in a message to the Permanent Secretariat of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) dated 9 July 1963, Mpho cited the evidence of "collaboration with the fascist government" by the Motsete-Motante faction. They began a campaign in Bechuanaland to deport ANC members back to South Africa. Matante supporters attacked members of the Mpho faction, publicly calling them "communists". During the ANC conference in Lobatse (October 1962), "the Motsete-Motante group organized a gang of hooligans to demonstrate in front of building where the conference took place carrying placards bearing the name of Moses Kotane, Walter Sisulu, Duma Nokwe and others saying away with communists". The Motsete-Motante group sent a telegram to the High Commissioner, Sir John Maud, in Pretoria to stop the ANC conference in Lobatse.¹¹

In 1963, Mpho finally broke with the BPP, over which Matante had established control, and founded the Bechuanaland Independence Party (BIP). During a conversation at the Soviet Solidarity Committee on 4 March 1964, he emphasized: "A particularly close connection exists between the BIP and the ANC, since through Bechuanaland, with the help of the BIP, ANC emissaries are transferred to South Africa and patriots from South Africa are sent into exile who need to escape from police persecution."¹²

Fighting within the BPP and its breakup led to the Democratic Party's overwhelming victory in Botswana's first general election in 1965. It was better organized and "was the only party with truly national coverage".¹³ It won 28 out of 31 seats in parliament. On 30 September 1966, Botswana's independence was declared and Khama became the first president.¹⁴

The split in the South African liberation movement had a similar impact on the political parties in Basutoland. Its first fully fledged political party was the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP), founded in 1952 (originally called the Basutoland African Congress but changed its name to BCP in 1957). BCP was initially closely associated with the ANC. The founder of the BCP, Ntsu Mokhehle, was an active member of the ANC and its Youth League in the 1940s and 1950s. He was

ber 1962, GARF, f. R9540, op. 2, d. 57, p. 85; Botswana (Reference), 16 September 1969, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 715, pp. 1–2.

¹¹ M. K. Mpho, Situation in Bechuanaland: Supplementary Statement, 9 July 1963, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 713, pp. 41–43.

¹² Davidson et al., *Rossija i Afrika*, p. 838.

¹³ Tlou et al., *Seretse Khama*, p. 226.

¹⁴ *Izvestia*, 2 November 1966.

deputy to Robert Sobukwe when he was the leader of the ANC Youth League branch in Alice.¹⁵

The Secretary-General of the PAC, Potlako Leballo, who tried to create a PAC base in Basutoland in 1962–1964, was very active in BCP affairs. His first public engagement after returning to Basutoland from South Africa was at a BCP Youth League meeting, whose members hailed him as a hero. At the BCP annual conference in December 1963, a resolution was passed in a closed session that Leballo should be asked to organize a cell system on PAC lines to implement positive action “if independence of the Basutoland were delayed”.¹⁶

The radical Pan-Africanist BCP, which argued that the chieftaincy held back the country’s political development, provoked a backlash from more conservative politicians supported by the Catholic Church. In 1958, the Basutoland National Party (BNP) was formed to serve as a counterweight to the BCP. Its leader was a minor chief Leabua Jonathan, who had worked in South Africa as well as in the civil service in Lesotho.¹⁷ The BNP’s main support base consisted of junior chiefs and Catholic Basotho, who tended to live in rural areas. BNP propaganda statements portrayed Mokhehle as a communist. John Aerni-Flessner defines this strategy as the use of “communism as a rhetorical device in local political debates”.¹⁸

15 M. Grilli, “Between Socialism and Non-Alignment: The Basutoland Congress Party and the Soviet Bloc”, in: Ch. Saunders, H. A. Fonseca, and L. Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023, pp. 203–206; P. Y. Whang, “‘We pray that they should never win elections’: The Basutoland Congress Party as Opposition in the Late Colonial and Early Post-Independence Lesotho, 1960–1970”, *Africa. Rivista semestrale di studi e ricerche* 1 (2023), p. 10.

16 Excerpts from Basutoland Intelligence Reports, October 1963 and January 1964, The National Archives of the UK (hereafter TNA), CO 1048/522, South Africa. Potlako Leballo, Acting President, Pan-Africanist Congress of South Africa, pp. 84, 101, in: Adam Matthews Digital Archives, <http://www.apartheidsouthafrica.amdigital.co.uk/> (accessed 21 October 2020). Leballo was also a founding member and secretary of the Transvaal branch of the BCP and Mokhehle had helped the PAC establish a link with Nkrumah, who then sent funds to help launch the PAC. See A. Lissoni, “The PAC in Basutoland, c. 1962–1965”, *South African Historical Journal* 62 (2010) 1, p. 61.

17 J. Aerni-Flessner, *Dreams for Lesotho: Independence, Foreign Assistance, and Development*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018, pp. 42–43; Whang, “We pray that they should never win elections”, pp. 6, 12. According to Bernard Leeman, the party was formed during the constitutional talks in London at the end of 1958, and this was announced on the return to Basutoland. See B. Leeman, “Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania: The Origins and History of the African National Congress, Pan-Africanist Congress, South African Communist Party and Basutoland Congress Party, 1780–1994” [2015], https://www.academia.edu/10976948/Lesotho_and_the_Struggle_for_Azania_1780_1994, pp. 254–255 (accessed 26 April 2024)

18 J. Aerni-Flessner, “The Specter of Communism and Local Politics in Lesotho, 1952–1970”, in: F. Jacob (ed.), *Peripheries of the Cold War*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2015, p. 1.

The third most important party in Basutoland was the Marematlou Party, founded by S. Matete in 1957. It was royalist and advocated that the country should be led by a representative of the “house of Moshoeshoe I” (the founder of the state of Lesotho in the early nineteenth century). In the early 1960s, it merged with the Freedom Party (a breakaway faction from the BCP led by a former BCP deputy leader, B. M. Khaketla) and was named the Marematlou Freedom Party (MPF).¹⁹

At the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, the BCP tended to cooperate more closely with the PAC.²⁰ In the early 1960s, the Basutoland Congress also began cooperation with the USSR, requesting Moscow for financial assistance and scholarships for Basutoland students in Soviet tertiary institutions and technical schools. In July 1961, the BCP representative in Cairo, K. Chakela, travelled to Moscow, a visit that led to scholarships being provided to ten Basutoland students.²¹

However, Mokhehle severed relations to the ANC in 1960, and those BCP members who were also members of the ANC or SACP had to leave the party. Mokhehle accused former BCP-ANC members of plotting to assassinate him.²²

In turn, members of the Congress Party associated with the ANC and SACP tried to change the structure of the BCP leadership. In a report prepared for the Soviet Solidarity Committee, Tsiu Selatile²³ wrote in 1973 that, on the initiative of Joe Matthews,²⁴ a draft of the “ideal” composition of the BCP Central Committee without Mokhehle was developed for the 1961 BCP annual conference. Selatile referred to conversations with Matthews himself, Mokhehle, and G. Kolisang, BCP Secretary-General. This attempt ended up achieving nothing. At the 1961 confer-

¹⁹ Aerni-Flessner, *Dreams for Lesotho*, p. 43.

²⁰ J. Aerni-Flessner, “Homemakers, Communists and Refugees: Smuggling Anti-Apartheid Refugees in Rural Lesotho in the 1960s and 1970s”, *Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's and Gender Studies* 13 (2015), p. 189.

²¹ G. Abdurashidov, Permanent Representative of the Soviet Solidarity Committee in Cairo, to M. Sh. Bakhitov, Executive Secretary of the Soviet Solidarity Committee, 31 August 1961, GARF, f. R9540, op. 2, d. 44, pp. 149–150; K. Chakela, BCP Foreign Mission to the Soviet Solidarity Committee, Cairo, 8 January 1962, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 119, p. 48.

²² Aerni-Flessner, “The Specter of Communism and Local Politics in Lesotho”, p. 54.

²³ Tsiu Selatile was one of the first group of Basutoland students who went to study in the USSR in 1961. See Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania*, p. 304. In 1970, at the Institute for African Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences, he prepared a thesis for an economic sciences degree examining the agrarian economy of South African reserves. After this, he returned to Africa where he continued to participate in the activities of the BCP. At the time of preparation of the report, he was the BCP representative in Dar es Salaam.

²⁴ Joe Matthews was a Central Committee member of the SACP and on the National Executive Committee of the ANC.

ence, Mokhehle was re-elected for five years as president of the BCP.²⁵ This demonstrated the party's readiness to rally around him.

The expulsion of members associated with the ANC and SACP from the BCP led to the formation of the Communist Party of Basutoland (CPB, from 1966 the CPL) in late 1961 to early 1962 as a formally independent party, but under the patronage of the SACP.²⁶

The Communist Party of Basutoland relied primarily on the experience of the South African Communist Party, of which the founders of the CPB were members. Many of them also remained members of the SACP and the ANC, for example, Joe Matthews. Joe Matthews, Robert Matji, Meshack Poola, John Motloheloa, and others participated in the formation of the party.

Meshak Poola characterized the position of the communists in Basutoland during a conversation at the Soviet Solidarity Committee on 18 July 1966:

Many progressive figures left or were expelled from the BCP (including Poola himself and R. Matji), many of them joined the Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP). The MFP was weak at that time; traditional leaders and opportunistic elements played a significant role in it. However, the party leadership never opposed communism, and the Communist Party began to work with the goal of turning it into a stronghold of progressive forces. Many means were used, including financial assistance coming from the USSR. The influence of MFP in the country began to grow.²⁷

As John Aerni-Flessner writes, Matthews was a major fundraiser for the ANC and the SACP and was also able to raise funds for the MFP from the Soviet Union.²⁸ His connections and abilities propelled him to a leading role in the Communist Party at this time.

Soviet financial assistance to the CPB went through the International Trade Union Fund for Assistance to Left Workers' Organizations. In 1963, the CPB re-

25 Tsiu Selatile, Report on the Situation in Lesotho, 1973, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 737, p. 67.

26 John Aerni-Flessner mentions the founding date of the party as 5 May 1962 (see Aerni-Flessner, "The Specter of Communism and Local Politics in Lesotho", p. 39) and 1961 (see Aerni-Flessner, *Dreams for Lesotho*, p. 59). However, CPB members Meshack Poola and Emmanuel Letumanyane, during their stay in the Soviet Union at the end of April-May 1962, reported that the Communist Party of Basutoland was created in 1960. Moreover, according to them, some of the party members acted underground to avoid the risk of the party being outlawed (see Davidson et al., *Rossija i Afrika*, p. 823). It is likely that Poola and Letumanyane were referring here to an established group of SACP members in Basutoland who had found refuge from persecution in South Africa in the protectorate. The CPB officially took shape only in 1961. In May 1962, the party programme was adopted.

27 Record of a Conversation with Meshack Poola, a Member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Basutoland, 18 July 1966, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 735, p. 174.

28 Aerni-Flessner, *Dreams for Lesotho*, p. 117.

ceived USD 42,000 from the USSR, in 1965 the sum was 41,800, and in 1966 55,900.²⁹ Apparently, a portion of these funds were invested in the MFP election campaign. However, receiving Soviet money also had negative consequences. The MFP's connections with the communists became the subject of attacks from the BNP. The BCP, which received money from Beijing, also came under criticism from Leabua Jonathan and his supporters. At the same time, the BNP itself was the object of severe criticism due to its links with the British authorities and the National Party government in South Africa.³⁰ Thus, Basutoland became part of a more global ideological and political confrontation.

In 1973, Selatile emphasized that the CPB leadership wanted to transform the MFP into something like a Lesotho version of the ANC. The immediate goal of the MFP was to undermine the authority of the Congress Party and act as its competitor in the general elections of 1965.³¹ On 2 July 1964, Matthews openly spoke about the fact that the Communist Party pursued precisely these goals in a conversation with the representative of the High Commissioner Office in Basutoland, Hugo Herbert-Jones:

The ANC's³² main objection to the BCP, and the reason why through the MFP it was actively trying to get the BCP defeated in the coming elections, was that the BCP's close connection with the PAC struck at the good links the ANC had built up overseas, e.g. India, Nigeria and North Africa. The ANC did not go so far as to suspect the BCP of intending to do a deal with the South African Nationalists [. . .]. But they feared that a BCP government would deliberately make difficulties for the ANC both abroad and, in relation to refugees, at home.³³

The pre-independence general elections in Lesotho (April 1965) brought victory to the National Party. According to Richard F. Weisfelder, the BNP's victory was a result of the party having obtained “decisive” support from rural Basotho communities.³⁴ It won 31 seats in the parliament of 60 deputies, the BCP won 25 and

²⁹ Davidson et al., *Rossija i Afrika*, pp. 102, 110, 128.

³⁰ Aerni-Flessner, “The Specter of Communism and Local Politics in Lesotho”, pp. 58–59.

³¹ Selatile, Report on the Situation in Lesotho, p. 63.

³² It should be noted that Matthews is speaking about the interests of the ANC, not the communists. This shows, on the one hand, the similarity of the goals of the ANC and the SACP, but at the same time it represents an example of a convenient strategy whereby members of the ANC and the SACP, depending on the circumstances, resorted to different party self-identifications. In a conversation with the British representative, it was more advantageous for Matthews to position himself as a member of the ANC, although his affiliation with the Communist Party was no secret to anyone.

³³ The views of Joe Matthews, para. 21, TNA, FO 371/177055, South Africa. Record of Conversation Between Joe Matthews and Hugo Herbert-Jones, 1964 in: Adam Matthews Digital Archives, <http://www.apartheidsouthafrica.amdigital.co.uk/> (accessed 23 October 2020).

³⁴ See Whang, “We pray that they should never win elections”, p. 15.

the MFP 4 seats.³⁵ Thus, the first government of the independent Kingdom of Lesotho (from 4 October 1966) was formed by the National Party.

There is no doubt that the split in the BCP and the ongoing fight involving the Communist Party in alliance with the MFP against the BCP weakened their position. Collectively they received more votes than the National Party, but they were unable to gain control of parliament.³⁶

3 The Attitude of Moscow and South African Communists to the Independence of Botswana and Lesotho

The independence of Botswana and that of Lesotho were perceived differently in Moscow. This is evidenced by articles in the two most authoritative and largest-circulation newspapers of the Soviet Union – *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. The *Pravda* was a daily newspaper of the CPSU Central Committee and through it the official point of view of the Soviet government was broadcast and communicated to citizens. *Izvestia* was the organ of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the highest representative body of the Soviet state.

During the period from 1966 to 1970 (when diplomatic relations were established between Moscow and Gaborone), it was not possible to find a single newspaper article in *Pravda* and *Izvestia* in which Botswana and its government were mentioned in a negative light.³⁷ On the contrary, they emphasized its vulnerable position (surrounded by territories under the control of racist regimes), extreme poverty, and the “underdevelopment of the country”, which was explained by the legacy of colonial rule.³⁸

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ On the impact of the split in the BCP on the election results, see B. M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970: An African Coup under the Microscope*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970, p. 53. However, Khaketla places the main blame for the split in the party on Mokhehle. For the results of the 1965 elections, see S. Rosenberg, R. F. Weisfelder, and M. Frisbie-Fulton, *Historical Dictionary of Lesotho. New Edition*. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2004, p. 94.

³⁷ The only exception is an article by R. A. Ulyanovsky, the deputy head of the International Department of the CPSU Central Committee, about the AAPSO Conference in 1967. But it dealt with the BPP delegation (Matante became the party leader after the split), which took a pro-Chinese position. See *Pravda*, 22 May 1967.

³⁸ See *Pravda*, 30 September 1966; *Pravda*, 22 May 1967; *Izvestia*, 20 February 1968; *Izvestia*, 25 November 1968; *Izvestia*, 22 January 1969.

A completely different tone was used in newspaper articles regarding Lesotho. Even on the eve of the declaration of its independence, *Izvestia* published an article by B. Pilyatskin with the telling title “Insidious Trap”. This “trap”, as the article noted, was the BNP government led by Leabua Jonathan. Pilyatskin bluntly stated that the establishment of his power meant “the enslavement or even complete absorption of Lesotho by South African fascists, who have long been waiting for the moment to seize a territory equal in size to Belgium, surrounded on all sides by their gloomy reign of total apartheid and tyranny”.³⁹ *Pravda* correspondent A. Polishchuk wrote in an article on 4 October 1966, the day of the declaration of independence of Lesotho: “The formal declaration of independence, unfortunately, does not free the people of Lesotho from the loop of dependence on South African racists.”⁴⁰ Thus, Lesotho’s independence was not considered “genuine” in Moscow, and Leabua Jonathan’s government was viewed as a “puppet” regime controlled from Pretoria.⁴¹

These perceptions of the newly independent states in Southern Africa is explained as follows. Moscow’s main trusted sources of information on the situation in Botswana and Lesotho were representatives of the SACP, who were often referred to as “friends” in Soviet documents. On 8 and 11 July 1966, meetings with B. M. Khaketla, Poola, and Matthews took place at the Soviet embassy in Great Britain. Khaketla, on behalf of the MFP, appealed to the USSR with a request to provide financial assistance of 20,000 pounds to his party.⁴² The government of

³⁹ *Izvestia*, 11 July 1966.

⁴⁰ *Pravda*, 4 October 1966.

⁴¹ Such a view of Lesotho’s independence, of course, was not exceptional. Thus, the *Borba* newspaper, the official gazette of the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia, noted that “this country (Lesotho) will not be able to achieve true independence as long as the apartheid regime exists in South Africa”. However, *Borba* did not seek to place the blame for this state of affairs solely on Leabua Jonathan and his party, but rather emphasized the objective circumstances of the hostile encirclement. When describing the situation in the former British High Commission Territories, Botswana and Lesotho, Yugoslav journalists did not contrast them with each other (see *Borba*, 22 June 1966; 24 July 1970; 29 August 1970). Comparing the main newspapers of the two socialist countries, Yugoslavia and the USSR, the attitude of the Soviet press towards the independent Lesotho seems more biased.

⁴² Khaketla never received this money. Poola and Matthews spoke out against this during a conversation at the Soviet embassy on 11 July, at which Khaketla was not present. It was more useful for the CPL if financial assistance for the MFP did not all come directly from Moscow, but through the mediation of the Communist Party, see Record of a Conversation with Representatives of Friends from the Communist Party of Basutoland [Lesotho] M. Poola and J. Matthews, 11 July 1966, RGANI, f. 5, op. 58, d. 302, pp. 124–125.

Leabua Jonathan, according to Poola and Matthews, was reactionary and supported by “the English and the racist regime in South Africa”.⁴³

In August 1966, a memorandum on the issue of Lesotho’s independence was handed over to Moscow from “South African and Basutoland friends” through the USSR embassy in Great Britain. It was recommended that Moscow, on the occasion of Lesotho’s independence, should limit itself to sending “a purely formal telegram to the head of state Motlotlehi Moshoeshe II, but not to the Leabua [Jonathan] government”. The memorandum authors noted that the British deliberately handled the matter of granting independence in a way that would suit the interests of the ruling BNP, “whose relationship with Dr. Verwoerd is suspicious”.⁴⁴

In relation to Botswana, the position of the South African communists was more favourable. Firstly, in the information handed over to the USSR embassy in Great Britain at the end of July 1966, it was noted that at the celebration of Botswana’s Independence Day on 30 September 1966 “all the Socialist countries will be invited including China”.⁴⁵ Such a move on the part of Seretse Khama was seen as favourable to the interests of the USSR.

The future policy of the Botswana government towards the ANC was discussed by the Soviet ambassador to Tanzania, A. M. Timoshenko, on 22 July 1966 during a meeting with the SACP General Secretary and ANC Executive Committee member Moses Kotane. According to Kotane, an ANC representative had already met informally with Khoma, who promised to provide assistance to the ANC. Khama did not promise to provide assistance officially and openly, but Kotane hoped that perhaps the Botswana government could “turn a blind eye” “if the ANC smuggled people and materials through Buchuanaland illegally”.⁴⁶

Joe Matthews, in turn, discussed the situation in Botswana in conversations with British and Soviet diplomatic representatives. During a meeting with Hugo Herbert-Jones on 2 July 1964, Joe Matthews noted that Seretse Khama’s BDP was likely to win elections in March 1965 and stated: “The ANC would be well content with such a result, although they were ideologically much closer to Mpho’s BIP, because they respected Seretse and they recognized the role which chieftaincy

⁴³ Record of a Conversation with Representatives of Opposition Parties in Basutoland Khaketla, Poola, and Matthews, 8 July 1966, RGANI, f. 5, op. 58, d. 302, pp. 119–120; Record of a Conversation with Representatives of Friends from the Communist Party of Basutoland (Lesotho) M. Poola and J. Matthews, 11 July 1966, p. 123.

⁴⁴ Davidson et al., *Rossija i Afrika*, pp. 840–842.

⁴⁵ Information on the Situation in Basutoland, 25 July 1966, RGANI, f. 5, op. 58, d. 302, p. 159.

⁴⁶ Record of a Conversation with ANC Leader Comrade Moses Kotane, 22 July 1966, RGANI, f. 5, op. 58, d. 305, p. 129.

had still to play in the Territories.” For himself personally, dealings with a government headed by Seretse would be easy, because his family were Bamangwato from Serowe.⁴⁷

Joe Matthews also spoke about his close relationship with Seretse Khama in a conversation with an employee of the Soviet embassy in Great Britain. According to him, Seretse Khama lived in his father’s house for several years, and Matthews described the president of the Republic of Botswana as “an intelligent and very progressive figure”.⁴⁸

Such characteristics of the new government of independent Botswana should undoubtedly have inspired Moscow with hope for a rapid development of relations with this African country. Already at the end of 1966–beginning of 1967, Moscow and Gaborone exchanged notes on the start of negotiations about the establishment of diplomatic relations. However, Gaborone was in no hurry to speed up the process. The reasons for this included objective circumstances, a reluctance to irritate Pretoria, and a generally cautious attitude towards the Soviet Union and other countries of the socialist bloc.

Subsequent changes and priorities of Soviet policy towards Botswana are discussed in the next section, which focuses on the triangle of relations between Moscow, the Botswana National Front, and official Gaborone.

4 Kenneth Koma and the Botswana National Front in the Struggle for Moscow’s Sympathy

By the time Botswana gained independence, another party had appeared that claimed special relations with the USSR – the Botswana National Front (BNF). Its main organizer was Kenneth Koma, who, without exaggeration, can be called a veteran of Botswana politics. From 1965 almost until his death in 2007, he was the leader of the BNF, Botswana’s main opposition party.

Kenneth Koma first became involved in politics back in the 1950s, when he, along with other young intellectuals, supported the heir to the Bamangwato chieftaincy, Seretse Khama, in his confrontation with the regent Tshekedi Khama. The cause of the conflict was Seretse’s decision to marry an Englishwoman, Ruth Wil-

⁴⁷ The views of Joe Matthews, para. 13–14.

⁴⁸ Record of a Conversation with the London Representative of Friends from Lesotho, Comrade J. Matthews, 12 April 1966, RGANI, f. 5, op. 58, d. 393, pp. 50–51. Joe Matthew’s father was Z. K. Matthews, a leading African intellectual and ANC provincial president for the Cape (1949–1960).

liams.⁴⁹ The conflict was resolved by Seretse Khama's departure to the UK, which may also have encouraged Kenneth Koma to get into the University of Sheffield. In Great Britain, he became interested in Marxism and continued his education in Eastern Europe. From 1960 to 1963, Koma studied at Charles University in Prague. Then, for two years, he undertook an internship at the Institute of African Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences. In November 1964, Koma completed his thesis on the Congo Crisis (1960–1963) and was awarded a degree of Candidate of Historical Sciences (the first of two doctoral level degrees in the Soviet Union).⁵⁰

He seems to have made a positive impression in the USSR. The brief reference prepared by the staff of the Soviet Solidarity Committee in 1966 contains definitions that are important from the point of view of Soviet bureaucratic language: Koma's thesis is called "serious research"; during the years of his stay in Moscow, he became "thoroughly acquainted with the works of Marxism-Leninism". It can be supposed that the anonymous author of this reference regarded him favourably.

Koma, at 40, clearly had great political ambitions. While in Moscow, he closely followed the events taking place in his homeland. He received information about them in letters and from other students and also met with delegates from Bechuanaland who came to the Soviet Union. One such meeting is described in the memoirs of Botswana trade unionist Ntwaesele Thatayone "Fish" Keitseng, who participated as a guest in the XIII Congress of Trade Unions of the USSR (28 October–2 November 1963).⁵¹

In July 1964, Koma, during a conversation with a researcher at the Institute of African Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Yu. M. Ilyin, declared his intention to lead efforts to create a "national people's democratic front" upon his return to Botswana. Koma did not intend to occupy a leadership position in the future organization; he assigned himself the role of head of the international department.⁵²

After returning to Botswana in early 1965, Koma began working to unite all the disparate opposition forces within a united front. The Botswana National

⁴⁹ Tlou et al., *Seretse Khama*, pp. 118, 130.

⁵⁰ Brief handwritten reference on Kenneth Koma, 1966, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 714, p. 48. T. Tlou, N. Parsons and W. Henderson's book contains inaccurate information that he studied at Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow. See Tlou et al., *Seretse Khama*, p. 235.

⁵¹ B. Morton and J. Ramsay, "Comrade Fish: Memories of a Motswana in the ANC Underground", revised internet edition 2018, p. 99, https://www.academia.edu/35672165/Comrade_Fish_Memories_of_a_Motswana_in_the_ANC_Underground_Revised_internet_edition_2018 (accessed 10 May 2024).

⁵² Yu. M. Ilyin to V. G. Solodovnikov, Report on a Conversation with K. Koma, 17 July 1964, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 174, pp. 13–14.

Front was officially formed in October 1965 after eight unsuccessful attempts to negotiate unification with Mpho and Matante.

As Koma himself wrote in a report to the Soviet Solidarity Committee, the BNF included trade unions, the Teachers' Union, the Botswana Youth Federation, the Bakalanga Students Association, several committees of the Bechuanaland People's Party, all committees of the Bechuanaland Independence Party in the south of the country, and eight branches of the ruling Democratic Party in the south of the country.⁵³ Daniel Kwele, headmaster of the Francistown school, was elected president of the BNF, and Koma became head of the international department.⁵⁴

In June 1966, Koma submitted to the Soviet Solidarity Committee, through the Soviet embassy in Zambia, two lengthy memorandums on his activities after returning to Botswana. He also outlined the BNF's programme of action for the next three years and a list of necessary assistance that Koma hoped to receive from Moscow.

According to these documents, Koma intended to build a revolutionary party that, once in power, would implement a programme of radical reforms. He considered the socialist countries to be the BNF's natural allies. In his memorandum to the Soviet Solidarity Committee, he outlined the BNF's strategy for coming to power. First, he intended to develop youth, women's, and trade union organizations, which were to affiliate with "the pan-African organizations and cooperate with them and with the organizations of the socialist countries". Secondly, he proposed sending as many young people as possible to study in socialist countries (on average, he intended sending 30 people a year to the USSR). Thirdly, Koma did not expect that the BDP and the "imperialists" would voluntarily cede power, so he called for preparations for the violent overthrow of Seretse Khama, whom he considered a protege of the British colonialists.⁵⁵

In addition to party cadres, Moscow also had to accept people for military training and for specialized training. Details were proposed to discuss in person in the Soviet Union. As immediate assistance, Koma asked for about three duplicators to run a regular newspaper, three Land Rovers to reach remote areas, financial assistance of between 700 and 1,000 pounds, literature on Marxist-Leninist philosophy, and subscriptions to Soviet periodicals published in English (*The Moscow News*, *International Affairs*, and *The New Times*).⁵⁶

Demonstrating his readiness to take the most extreme measures in the struggle for liberation, Koma apparently counted on the favourable attitude of the So-

⁵³ K. Koma, *The Struggle for Unity in Bechuanaland*, 1966, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 714, p. 54.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 29–31, 58–59.

viet leadership. The characterization of the BDP and Seretse Khama as agents of “imperialism” and “neocolonial” influence, in his opinion, should also have been received with understanding in Moscow.

However, the Soviet leadership was by no means eager to support subversive activities against the government of Seretse Khama. During a conversation at the Soviet embassy in Zambia on 18 September 1966, Koma spoke out less radically and ambitiously. He proposed using the capabilities of the BNF to put pressure on Khama in order to force him to a rapprochement with the USSR. Koma also proposed to organize the distribution of Soviet films and the sale of Soviet books in Botswana.⁵⁷

The Soviet Solidarity Committee responded to Koma’s appeal only in December 1966. Although the text of the letter maintained a soft and courteous tone, its content was discouraging. Secretary General of the Soviet Solidarity Committee, D. Yu. Dolidze, indicated that the committee did not have the opportunity to satisfy all Koma’s requests. He promised to send Koma a typewriter and 100 kg of books through the Soviet embassy in Zambia and also to organize a subscription to Soviet periodicals. Furthermore, the Soviet Solidarity Committee was willing to provide the BNF with two scholarships for study at technical schools or Soviet universities.⁵⁸

On the next BNF appeal, officials of the International Department of the CPSU Central Committee made a brief handwritten note: “The Soviet Solidarity Committee does not have direct contacts with the National Front and does not provide assistance to it. Koma himself, as a person, does not have credibility. He was in the USSR to study for two years.”⁵⁹

In Soviet bureaucratic realities, such a resolution looked like a “black spot”. While this resolution did not correspond with the real nature of the relations between the Soviet Solidarity Committee and the BNF, its harsh wording was apparently necessary to prevent the possible development of relations between the BNF and other Soviet departments in the future.

57 Record of a Conversation with Members of the Botswana National Front Leadership, 18 September 1966, RGANI, f. 5, op. 58, d. 302, pp. 247–248.

58 D. Dolidze, Secretary General of the SKSSAA to Kenneth Koma, December 1966, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 714, pp. 76–77. In the same year, Matante and Mpho approached the Soviet Solidarity Committee with requests for financial and other forms of assistance, but no response to their requests could be found in the archives. See BPP to the Soviet Solidarity Committee, 24 February 1966, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 714, pp. 60–62; M. K. Mpho to the Soviet Solidarity Committee, 7 November 1966, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 714, p. 74.

59 Record of a Conversation with a Member of the Central Committee of the National Front of Botswana O. Menyatso, 2 September 1967, RGANI, f. 5, op. 59, d. 388, p. 195.

Even the patronage of ZAPU did not help change attitudes towards the BNF. On 18 October 1968, the Soviet embassy in Zambia, accompanied by vice president of the ZAPU, J. Chikerema, visited D. Kwele and D. Ontumetse. Chikerema tried to convince the Soviet ambassador, S. A. Slipchenko, that if the BNF managed to come to power in Botswana, it would be a great success for ZAPU and other “progressive forces in Southern Africa”. He expressed his readiness to act as a mediator in relations between the BNF and the Soviet embassy in Zambia.⁶⁰ However, this favourable report from Chikerema did not change the general political course of the USSR towards Botswana.

Koma and organizations associated with the BNF repeatedly contacted Moscow and the Soviet embassy in Lusaka with requests to provide assistance and accept Botswana students to study at Soviet educational institutions.⁶¹ However, it was only possible to find a few letters sent to organizations associated with the BNF after 1966 in Russian archives.⁶² The fact that the BNF was not considered by Moscow to be a potentially important ally in Botswana is also evidenced by the absence of its representatives in the delegation that visited the capital of the Soviet Union in 1969, on the eve of the establishment of diplomatic relations. At the insistence of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Soviet Solidarity Committee only invited members of the Botswana government, although initially the committee had plans to invite representatives of the opposition BNF and BIP.⁶³

Thus, the priority for Moscow in developing relations with Botswana was establishing contacts with the official authorities of Gaborone. The Soviet leadership sought to avoid any steps that could harm the development of bilateral relations. The Solidarity Committee’s line on a multi-vector policy for developing relations with opposition parties did not receive support. In the Soviet “table of ranks”, the position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was more significant than the opinion of the Solidarity Committee.

60 Record of a Conversation with ZAPU Vice-President J. Chikerema, Botswana National Front President D. K. Kwele and BNF Deputy Secretary for Foreign Affairs Ontumetse, 18 October 1968, RGANI, f. 5, op. 60, d. 457, p. 185.

61 K. Koma to the SKSSAA, 6 April 1967, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 714, p. 81; Pretty Molefhe, Botswana Youth Federation to the SKSSAA, 9 December 1966, GARF, f. P9540, op. 1, d. 235, p. 10; Davidson et al., *Rossija i Afrika*, pp. 842–843.

62 In March 1972, the SKSSAA notified the Botswana Youth Federation that it had sent the collected works of V. I. Lenin in 45 volumes and asked for information about events in the country (see GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 329, p. 21).

63 Report on the Visit in the USSR of the Delegation of the State of Botswana, headed by State Minister E. S. K. Masisi, 9–22 December, 1969, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 715, p. 44. After the 1969 general elections in Botswana, the BNF became the leading opposition party, although it was only able to get three of its representatives into parliament.

The fears of the Botswana authorities and especially the Special Branch, that Koma acted in the interests of “some Communist organization with its headquarters in Moscow” were completely unjustified. This attitude was more likely a manifestation of “government paranoia” than a reality.⁶⁴ The Soviet Union rather adhered to the principles of “soft power” in relation to Botswana, seeking to involve Botswana in the sphere of its interests, providing assistance in the implementation of technical development programmes, establishing scholarships for Botswana students, developing cultural ties, and so on.⁶⁵

However, the Botswana government was wary of the Soviet Union’s attempts to intensify cooperation and sent fewer students to study in the USSR than Moscow was ready to accept. The signing of the agreement on cultural cooperation was postponed, and the government also refrained from inviting Soviet specialists to conduct geological explorations to study the country’s water resources.⁶⁶ Attempts by the Soviet ambassador Belokolos to persuade Seretse Khama to support the MPLA in its confrontation with UNITA also met with no sympathy from the President of Botswana.⁶⁷

On 30 September 1976, during the visit of the Soviet ambassador V. G. Solodovnikov to Botswana, Koma was able to give him a letter in which he expressed regret that the BNF had failed to establish mutual cooperation with the Soviet Solidarity Committee, despite the fact that he had sent letters to it several times.⁶⁸ He attributed this to the difficulties of communication, although it is unlikely that Koma was so naive as to blame the lack of answers entirely on distance and the machinations of enemies.

As Koma pointed out, after 1966 the BNF received almost no financial assistance from any source, except for the past help in the form of scholarships: “But even this form of cooperation has stopped because Botswana has diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and most of the assistance that the Soviet Government gives to our people is channelled through the present Botswana Government.”⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Tlou et al., *Seretse Khama*, p. 267.

⁶⁵ Report on the Visit to Botswana of the Soviet Ambassador D. Z. Belokolos, 7 December 1970, RGANI, f. 5, op. 62, d. 536, p. 250–252; Record of a Conversation with the First Secretary of the Botswana High Commission in Zambia, 23 February 1972, AVP RF, f. 679, op. 7, p. 1, d. 1, pp. 5–6.

⁶⁶ Record of a Conversation with Assistant Attorney General of Botswana Joe Matthews, 18 June 1972, RGANI, f. 5, op. 64, d. 531, p. 9–10.

⁶⁷ M. C. Kwante and B. T. Manatsha, “Origins and Dynamics of the Botswana-Soviet Union Relations, 1960s to 1990”, *Botswana Notes and Records* 48 (2016), p. 93.

⁶⁸ K. Koma, National Chairman of the Botswana National Front to the SKSSAA, 30 September 1976, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 715, pp. 89–91.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 89–90.

Koma again proposed establishing unofficial channels of assistance from the USSR, at least through the sale of political literature and the distribution of Soviet films through the BNF structures and the provision of scholarships through the World Federation of Democratic Youth; then the Soviet Government would not be directly involved in the operation.⁷⁰ No answer to this letter has been found in Russian archives and it is probable that none was received.

Moscow remained suspicious of the BNF, which was obviously due to the fact that, in 1969, Kgosi Bathoen II, at the initiation of Koma, was elected leader of the party. The hope here was that this would enable the BNF to win some constituencies in Bathoen's tribal area. Koma himself "preferred to serve as organizer, secretary and publicist until 1977 when he became the party's president".⁷¹ But this led to accusations that the BNF promoted tribalism.

In a reference from the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 10 June 1974, the BNF was characterized as follows:

The Botswana National Front (BNF), created in 1965 and now headed by the popular leader of the second largest tribe in Botswana (Bangwaketse) G. Bathoen.⁷² At present, although he speaks out in defence of the rights of the African population of South Africa and Rhodesia, he expresses the views of the most reactionary and conservative circles in Botswana. Supports the development of the country in economic ties to South Africa, and advocates the revival of tribal institutions.⁷³

In subsequent years, Moscow continued to develop relations with the official authorities. This was also facilitated by the changes that took place in Southern Africa after the independence of Angola and Mozambique. Obviously, the Bot-

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 91. From the very beginning, the issue of providing scholarships to Botswana students to study in the USSR was one of the most controversial in relations between the Soviet Union and Botswana. Thus, in a letter from the USSR embassy in Lusaka dated 10 April 1967, it was noted that Botswana's High Commissioner to Zambia, R. Mannathoko, indicated that accepting candidates from opposition parties to study in the USSR, bypassing the Botswana government, could negatively impact the development of relations between the Soviet Union and Botswana (see RGANI, f. 5, op. 59, d. 436, pp. 55–56). The fact that the Soviet government paid attention to Gaborone's demand is indicated by the response of the second secretary of the USSR embassy in Zambia, A. Babushkin, to the representative of the BNF, O. Menyatsko, on 2 September 1967: "Due to the change in the situation in Botswana after independence, candidates for study in the USSR should be directed along government lines, as required by the Botswana government." See RGANI, f. 5, op. 59, d. 388, p. 194.

⁷¹ Ch. J. Makgala, "The Relationship between Kenneth Koma and the Botswana Democratic Party, 1965–2003", *African Affairs* 104 (2005) 415 (Apr.), p. 306. <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adi003>.

⁷² That is how the name is spelt in the document, correctly "Bathoen Gaseitsiwe".

⁷³ Republic of Botswana (Reference), 10 June 1974, AVP RF, f. 679, op. 8, p. 1, d. 1, pp. 13–14.

swana government began to feel more confident in pursuing an independent foreign policy.⁷⁴

The USSR's interest in developing relations with Gaborone was determined by the country's importance for the ANC, Moscow's main ally in the region, as well as the strategic position of Botswana itself, until 1975 the only independent state directly bordering South Africa. Joe Matthews noted in a conversation with the Second Secretary of the USSR embassy in Great Britain on 12 April 1967 that Botswana was the only window for the ANC into South Africa and South-West Africa. In his opinion, any diplomatic or other presence of the Soviet Union in "this strategically very important area of South Africa would be a huge help for the national liberation movement in Southern Africa".⁷⁵

After the banning of the ANC in South Africa, Bechuanaland became the main pipeline for sending political activists abroad to organize political structures in exile. This was facilitated by the fact that the families of many of the ANC and SACP leaders came from Bechuanaland: Joe Matthews and Joe Modise could trace their origins to the BaNgwato; an active member of the ANC was trade unionist and BNF member "Fish" Keitseng.⁷⁶ BIP leader Motsamai Mpho was also associated with the ANC, as mentioned above. Among the iconic figures who used this route to travel between South Africa and the outside world were Joe Slovo and Nelson Mandela.⁷⁷

In 1969, according to the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs E. S. K. Masisi, Botswana hosted up to 4,000 refugees from South Africa, Rhodesia, Angola, and

74 The changing nature of Soviet-Botswana relations is shown by negotiations on Soviet military supplies to Botswana (*specimushchestvo*) in 1981. The commander of the Botswana Defense Force, Mompoti Merafhe, said in a conversation with Soviet diplomat V. N. Kalinin in response to a question about the campaign launched in the South African press referring to the supply of Soviet weapons to Botswana: "This whole campaign does not concern the leadership of Botswana, since, as an independent state, it has the right to choose its own friends and build relationships with anyone, including a special area" (see Record of a Conversation with the Commander of the Botswana Defense Force, Major General M. S. Merafhe, 16 December 1981, AVP RF, f. 679, op. 15, p. 6, d. 2, pp. 19–20). Unfortunately, it was not possible to find more detailed information about these deliveries in the Russian archives as these documents remain classified. According to the CIA, Botswana signed a military agreement with China for a total amount of USD 1 million dollars back in the second half of 1976. In December 1980, Gaborone signed an agreement with the USSR on military supplies worth USD 7 million dollars (see Communist Military Transfers and Economic Aid to Non-Communist Less Developed Countries, 1984. A Reference Aide, p. 19 in: CIA Reading Room, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP07C00121R001000020001-6.pdf>) (accessed 11 July 2024).

75 Record of a Conversation with the London Representative of Friends from Lesotho, Comrade Joe Matthews, 12 April 1967, RGANI, f. 5, op. 59, d. 388, pp. 50–51.

76 Parsons, "The Pipeline: Botswana's reception of Refugees", p. 18.

77 Ibid., p. 21.

Mozambique.⁷⁸ From 1966 to 1969, about 30 Umkhonto we Sizwe (ANC military organization) fighters were arrested in Botswana trying to enter South African territory. Among them was Chris Hani, leader of the SACP and chief of staff of Umkhonto. However, Botswana did not extradite them to Pretoria and they only served short prison sentences.⁷⁹ And although Khama made every effort to avoid confrontation with South Africa, he nevertheless openly condemned the apartheid, the Ian Smith regime in Rhodesia, and the colonial policy of Portugal.⁸⁰ In addition to the USSR, Botswana also established diplomatic relations with Czechoslovakia in 1967, regardless of the negative reaction of South Africa.⁸¹

Immediately after the establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Botswana in 1970, the ANC began negotiations with the Khama government, seeking agreement to open its representative office in Gaborone.⁸² These negotiations only ended in 1974, when the Botswana government finally agreed to open an informal ANC office in Gaborone.⁸³ During a conversation at the USSR embassy in Tanzania on 11 September 1974, Oliver Tambo said that the ANC had the opportunity to create its base in Botswana and “use its territory to organize the fight against the racist regime of South Africa”.⁸⁴ However, this statement can be considered overly optimistic. According to Vladimir Shubin, the Botswana government mostly provided political and humanitarian support to the liberation movements until the late 1970s. It assessed Umkhonto’s military operations as poorly prepared, did not officially approve of such actions, opposed the use of its territory to conduct military operations against South Africa, and tried not to provoke Pretoria.⁸⁵

With Khama’s position, the BNF remained an important ally of Umkhonto in Botswana for conducting illegal operations. Its activists helped transport Umkhonto fighters to South Africa, organized caches of weapons, and created chan-

78 Report on the Stay in the USSR of the Delegation of the State of Botswana, headed by State Minister E. S. K. Masisi, 9–22 December 1969, GARF. f. R9540. op. 1. d. 715, p. 47.

79 Makgala, “The BNF and BDP’s ‘Fight’ for the Attention of the ANC”, p. 120.

80 *Izvestia*, 26 September 1969.

81 K. W. Grundy, *Confrontation and Accommodation in Southern Africa: The Limits of Independence*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, p. 137.

82 T. Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa: Solidarity and Assistance, 1970–1994*. vol. II: *Solidarity and Assistance 1970–1994*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002, p. 675.

83 Record of a Conversation with Alfred Nzo, 18 September 1974, RGANI, f. 5, op. 67, d. 897, p. 173.

84 Record of a Conversation with President of the African National Congress (ANC) Oliver Tambo, 11 September 1974, RGANI, f. 5, op. 67, d. 793, pp. 177–178.

85 Shubin, *ANC: A View from Moscow*, pp. 207–208.

nels for their transportation to South Africa. As noted by Ch. J. Makgala: “As a weak opposition party, the BNF could afford to proudly and openly demonstrate support for the liberation movement and political refugees, while the BDP as a governing party could not do the same for national security reasons.”⁸⁶ But despite this contribution to the ANC’s struggle, the BNF never received support from Moscow.

5 Soviet Union and Lesotho after 1966

The Soviet Union’s policy towards Lesotho after independence was determined by a number of factors.

First, as noted earlier, the government of Leabua Jonathan was perceived as a “puppet”, and its policies, according to Moscow, were determined by Pretoria and the former metropolis. Therefore, Lesotho’s independence was not considered genuine. Moscow completely refused to acknowledge the realities of Lesotho’s geographical location. The position of the Leabua Jonathan government was well expressed by one of Lesotho’s diplomats, whose words are quoted by Kennet W. Grundy: “Having survived for 150 years, we have no intention to commit national suicide through bravado.”⁸⁷

Secondly, the largest opposition party BCP took a pro-Chinese position in the Sino-Soviet confrontation. The BCP supported the Nicosia Declaration, which claimed that Soviet revisionists are “frantically engaged in manoeuvres to destroy the revolutionary unity of the peoples of Africa and Asia”. The declaration was issued following the council session of the Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity Organization, held in Nicosia, Cyprus in February 1967.⁸⁸ In an article in the *Pravda*, the deputy head of the International Department of the CPSU Central Committee, R. A. Ulyanovsky, called the authors of this declaration “renegades” who “are in no way connected with the struggle that is really being waged by the peoples whose name they use”.⁸⁹

This was an extremely harsh reaction from the main party department, which was responsible for relations with political organizations in the Third

⁸⁶ Makgala, “The BNF and BDP’s ‘Fight’ for the Attention of the ANC”, p. 121.

⁸⁷ Grundy, *Confrontation and Accommodation in Southern Africa*, p. 119. For a detailed analysis of relations between Lesotho and South Africa, see R. F. Weisfelder, “Lesotho and South Africa: Diverse Linkages”, *Africa Today* 18 (April, 1971) 2, pp. 48–55.

⁸⁸ Bertrand Russell Archives Catalogue Entry and Research System <https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/66027> (accessed 1 May 2024).

⁸⁹ *Pravda*, 22 May 1967.

World. It could have led to a complete cessation of ties between the USSR and the BCP, but in 1968, a BCP delegation led by Secretary General K. Chakela visited the Soviet Union and was given a very warm welcome. In this case, the decision to accept the BCP delegation may have been influenced by the close personal relationship that the Soviet officials had with Chakela, as well as the desire to prevent the BCP from completely falling under Chinese influence. However, it was not possible to find any information in the Russian archives about the provision of assistance to the BCP for the period of 1967–1969, with the exception of scholarships for students from Lesotho.⁹⁰

Thirdly, after the 1965 elections, the CPL found itself in a deep crisis caused by internal divisions within the party. The Communist Party was split into two rival factions: the Kena-Matji faction and the Motloheloa faction, or simply into supporters of Joe Matthews (the Kena and Matji faction) and his opponents.

In a note prepared by the Soviet Solidarity Committee at the beginning of 1973, the state of affairs in the CPL after the 1965 elections was characterized as follows:

The CPL's course to unite the revolutionary forces encountered resistance within the party itself. A group of ultra-left elements led by former General Secretary J. Motloheloa put forward the slogan of transforming the party into a mass national liberation organization, which would ultimately lead to the dissolution of the party into the general democratic movement. Having met resistance, they created a schismatic group claiming international recognition as the only and "true" Communist Party of Lesotho. In 1967, dissenters were expelled from the party, which contributed to its organizational and political unity.⁹¹

In Moscow, Joe Matthews was still considered the official representative of the CPL. He represented the Communist Party at the International Meeting of Communist and Workers Parties in 1969.⁹² However, obviously, Moscow had serious concerns about whether there was any real chance of the CPL (Matthews' faction)

⁹⁰ Report on the Stay of Representatives of the Kingdom of Lesotho in Armenia, 30 October – 3 November 1968, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 736, pp. 11–12; BCP – SKSSAA, 12 April 1971, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 304, p. 3; Record of a Conversation with BCP Representative in Dar es Salaam, 25 March 1968, RGANI, f. 5, op. 60, d. 450, pp. 122–123. But for the period 1967–1969, there is no correspondence with the leader of the Basutoland Congress Ntsu Mokhehle, of whom the Soviet officials were more suspicious. Also see About Conversations with BCP President N. Mokhehle and BCP Secretary General K. Chakela during their Stay in Moscow at the XII Session of AAPSO, 1 October 1975, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 737, pp. 173–176.

⁹¹ Information about Lesotho parties, n.d., GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 737, pp. 5–6.

⁹² Statement of the Communist Party of Lesotho to the International Conference of the Communist and Workers Parties, Moscow, June 1969, RGANI, f. 10, op. 1, d. 363, pp. 31–36.

exerting influence in the country. Since 1966 it had disappeared from the list of organizations that received financial assistance from the International Trade Union Fund.⁹³

The change in priorities was also shown by the topics of Matthews' conversations with Soviet diplomats in the second half of the 1960s: the Civil War in Nigeria, the situation in Botswana, the state of affairs in South Africa, etc. Lesotho was rarely a separate topic of conversation, although Matthews continued to be listed in reports from the Soviet embassy in London as a representative of the CPL.⁹⁴

The degree of Moscow's trust in Matthews is evidenced by one episode reported by Bernard Leeman. In 1968, Tsiu Selatile, while studying in Moscow, tried to convey to Soviet officials the deficiencies of Matthews' policies in Lesotho. According to Selatile, "his irresponsibility had ushered in a neo-colonialist government at Independence". However, "Selatile's criticism was interpreted as a pro-China stance and he only escaped expulsion from the USSR through the intervention of the principal of the Soviet Academy of Science".⁹⁵

In a report prepared for the Soviet Solidarity Committee in 1973, Selatile provided a detailed analysis of the situation in the CPL after 1966. As Selatile wrote, the Motloheloa faction was more closely linked to the party's grassroots structures. He and his supporters appealed to the masses, considering the primary task to be the creation of real grassroots structures and the party machine as necessary conditions for the growth of the party.⁹⁶

Thanks to the efforts of Matthews, who lived in Europe for almost five years (1965–70), the international position of the Matji-Kena faction was better than that of his opponents, but domestically the position of the Motloheloa faction was stronger. Its supporters carried out propaganda work, even reaching remote mountainous regions of the country. Motloheloa also became close to the BCP, working with its representatives among the rural population of Lesotho. At the general elections of 1970, the Motloheloa faction united with the BCP, in contrast to the Matji-Kena supporters, who went to the elections independently.⁹⁷

The BCP eventually won 36 of the 60 seats in the National Assembly. Mokhehle would have become the next head of government of Lesotho if Leabua

⁹³ Davidson et al., *Rossija i Afrika*, pp. 127–133.

⁹⁴ RGANI, f. 5, op. 58, d. 393, pp. 44–45, 49–51, 111–115, 121–122.

⁹⁵ Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania*, p. 339.

⁹⁶ Selatile, *Report on the situation in Lesotho*, p. 72.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Jonathan had not declared a state of emergency on 30 January 1970 and cancelled the election results.⁹⁸

The coup d'état led to a temporary increase in South African influence in Lesotho. Following the cessation of Western bailout programmes, Pretoria remained the only source of external aid for the BNP government for the first months after the coup.⁹⁹

These events affected the attitude of the CPL and Moscow towards the BCP, the main opposition party in Lesotho. On 3 February 1970, Matthews, in a conversation at the USSR embassy in London, noted that the CPL united in the elections with the BCP and MFP, which he assumed to be progressive forces supported by the majority of voters. He asked the Soviet Union to provide support to these parties in the international arena, primarily through its propaganda and actions at the UN.¹⁰⁰

The very next day, the Secretary General of the BCP, Kolisang, approached the Soviet embassy in London with a request for financial assistance to the amount of 1,000–1,500 pounds. Moscow immediately sought the opinion of South African comrades at the SACP London headquarters on this issue. On 9 February, Matthews reported that he had discussed the BCP request with Yusuf Dadoo, Chairman of the Central Committee of the SACP. According to Matthews and Dadoo, the BCP's request should have been granted if possible. According to them, "despite connections in the past with the Chinese, the party in recent years has noticeably moved away from the Chinese in its policies and activities, establishing, in particular, good contacts and connections with the CPL".¹⁰¹

In the spring of 1970, Kolisang showed remarkable diplomatic activity. On 14 April, he repeated his requests during a conversation at the Soviet embassy in Dar es Salaam.¹⁰² Several more meetings between Kolisang and Soviet officials took place on 13 and 19 August in Cairo. In a conversation with a representative of the Soviet Solidarity Committee, S. I. Kalandarov, Kolisang confirmed the BCP's

98 W. J. A. Macartney, "The Lesotho General Election of 1970", *Government and Opposition* 8 (1973) 4, p. 486; L. N. Rytov, "Bor'ba narodov Lesoto i Botsvany za nezavisimost', 1945–1966 gg." [The struggle of the peoples of Lesotho and Botswana for independence, 1945–1966], thesis candidate of historical sciences: 07.00.03. Moscow, 1999, p. 135.

99 See Aerni-Flessner, *Dreams for Lesotho*, pp. 155–169.

100 Record of a Conversation with London Representative of Lesotho Friends J. Matthews, 3 February 1970, RGANI, f. 5, op. 62, d. 536, pp. 18–20.

101 Record of a Conversation with London Representative of Lesotho Friends J. Matthews, 9 February 1970, RGANI, f. 5, op. 62, d. 536, p. 14.

102 Record of a Conversation with the Secretary General of the Basutoland Congress Party G. M. Kolisang, 14 April 1970, RGANI, f. 5, op. 62, d. 536, pp. 64–65.

intention to switch to armed struggle and asked for financial assistance for the purchase of weapons.¹⁰³

How did Moscow react to the BCP's request for military assistance? The International Department of the CPSU Central Committee was ready to consider the possibility of providing assistance but only after it received "concrete requests in this regard".¹⁰⁴ However, in declassified archival documents there is only one mention of assistance to the BCP of 650 foreign currency roubles (approximately USD 585).¹⁰⁵

Further negotiations between the BCP and Soviet officials ceased in September 1970. The renunciation of armed struggle occurred on the orders of Mokhehle, who, while in prison, entered into negotiations with Leabua Jonathan about the formation of a government of national unity. Hopes that the BCP could join the government turned out to be groundless, however, the respite gave the BNP the opportunity to suppress the resistance of BCP supporters and consolidate power.¹⁰⁶

Representatives of the BCP returned to the issue of armed struggle again in negotiations with Soviet officials in 1973. In a conversation with a Soviet Solidarity Committee official at the end of October, Chakela talked about the development of a plan for an armed uprising against the regime of Leabua Jonathan.¹⁰⁷ On 19 February 1974, Mokhehle, Chakela, and Khasu had a conversation with the USSR ambassador to Zambia, D. Z. Belokolos. The BCP leaders again expressed their commitment to the armed struggle and asked for help in establishing contacts with the vice-president of the Soviet Solidarity Committee, A. S. Dzasokhov, to discuss the Soviet Union's assistance to the BCP.¹⁰⁸

On 26 November, Mokhehle reported that the BCP had begun training for the underground and armed struggle, sending the first group (without specifying

103 Record of a Conversation with the Secretary General of the Basutoland Congress Party G. M. Kolisang, 13 August 1970, RGANI, f. 5, op. 62, d. 536, pp. 112–114.

104 Record of a Conversation with the Secretary General of the Basutoland Congress Party G. M. Kolisang, 19 August 1970, RGANI, f. 5, op. 62, d. 536, pp. 109–111.

105 SKSSAA to the International Department of the CPSU Central Committee, 8 June 1970, RGANI, f. 5, op. 62, d. 630, p. 58.

106 Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania*, pp. 439–463.

107 Record of a Conversation with Representatives of the Basutoland Congress Party at the World Congress of Peace Forces, late October 1973, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 737, p. 20.

108 Record of a Conversation with Members of BCP leadership, 19 February 1974, RGANI, f. 5, op. 67, d. 776, p. 8. This conversation resulted in the BCP providing financial assistance to the amount of 1,900 dollars. See K. Chakela to the SKSSAA, 16 May 1974, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 737, pp. 141–142.

where exactly) of 50 people for military training.¹⁰⁹ He also asked that two BCP members be accepted for military training in the USSR as well as requesting help to organize a meeting with ANC leader Oliver Tambo.¹¹⁰

Mokhehle took the next step on 17 July 1975 by sending a request to Moscow with a detailed list of military assistance that the BCP wanted to receive from the USSR. He asked for 50 BCP cadres to be accepted for military training, specifically in the art of guerilla warfare. He also asked for various weapons and ammunition: 400 Kalashnikov assault rifles, 10 medium and 100 light machine guns, rocket launchers, and other military equipment.¹¹¹

During a visit to Moscow in September 1975, Mokhehle and Chakela tried to convince the Soviet Solidarity Committee staff that the BCP was committed to improving relations with the ANC. At the same time, they were critical of the ANC's ties with Leabua Jonathan, which, according to them, did not help strengthen the position of the national liberation movement in Southern Africa.¹¹²

None of these requests were supported by Moscow. As early as 13 August 1975, the International Department of the CPSU Central Committee decided not to respond to Mokhehle's letter dated 17 July. The department concluded that the "BCP is deprived of the capabilities to organize armed struggle. At the same time, anti-imperialist tendencies have recently intensified in the policies of the Lesotho government."¹¹³

There were several reasons for this reaction to the BCP leader's requests. Firstly, Moscow did not trust Mokhehle, which became evident during his visit to the USSR in September 1975. The referent of the Soviet Solidarity Committee, L. N. Rytov, gave the following characterization of the leader of the BCP: "N. Mokhehle comes across as a very cautious person, an experienced politician, intolerant of the opinions of others who disagree with him." Rytov, during conversations with Mokhehle, attempted to get him to explain what caused the persecution of communists and members of the ANC in the early 1960s. Mokhehle tried to convince his interlocutor that he was never anti-communist and was only trying to

109 According to B. Leeman, Mokhehle, with the assistance of PAC, was able to send several dozen people to Uganda and Libya for military training. See Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania*, pp. 497–498.

110 Record of a Conversation with BCP leader N. Mokhehle, 28 November 1974, RGANI, f. 5, op. 67, d. 776, p. 8.

111 Ntsu Mokhehle to Government of the Soviet Socialist Republic, 17 July 1975, RGANI, f. 5, op. 68, d. 1963, pp. 8–10.

112 Record of a Conversation with a Delegation of the Basutoland Congress Party (Lesotho), 24 September 1975, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 737, pp. 158–159.

113 Reference to a letter from BCP (Lesotho) President N. Mokhehle, 13 August 1975, RGANI, f. 5, op. 68, d. 1963, p. 11.

protect the BCP from accusations of pandering to the communists. To this, Rytov replied that he had at his disposal a photocopy of Mokhehle's letter from the Hoover Institution in the United States, in which Mokhehle advocates a decisive struggle against the South Africans (ANC and SACP members) who have infiltrated the BCP.¹¹⁴

This style of conversation, with a representative of the Soviet Solidarity Committee driving his interlocutor into a corner with his arguments, speaks for itself. Moreover, as this conversation showed, Moscow was well aware of Mokhehle's past activities and did not intend to forget his "sins".

And then, there was one more circumstance: Moscow was well aware that discontent with Mokhehle was brewing within the BCP. The leader of the hidden opposition within the party was Chakela. Back in October 1973, in a confidential conversation with an official of the Soviet Solidarity Committee, Chakela spoke out in favour of removing Mokhehle from the post of party leader.¹¹⁵

After Chakela and G. Khasa's outbreak against Mokhehle in late 1976, the BCP split into several factions. The Soviet Solidarity Committee continued to maintain relations with Chakela, who was willing to cooperate with the SACP and ANC.¹¹⁶

Another factor that influenced Moscow's position was related to changes in the foreign policy of the Lesotho government. In the first half of the 1970s, Leabua Jonathan began to criticize Pretoria's policies and support liberation movements. This helped strengthen Lesotho ties with other African countries and the OAU. In 1973, the Lesotho government established diplomatic relations with socialist Yugoslavia.¹¹⁷ On 16 August 1976, Leabua Jonathan spoke with a Soviet TASS correspondent in favour of developing relations with the Soviet Union.¹¹⁸

This foreign policy development opened up prospects for the ANC, the USSR's closest ally in the region, to intensify its actions in Lesotho.

During a meeting in Moscow at the office of the Soviet Solidarity Committee on 18 September 1974, Alfred Nzo emphasized that the ANC's relations with the Leabua Jonathan government had improved. At the same time, the ANC did not

114 L. N. Rytov, About Conversations with BCP President N. Mokhehle and BCP Secretary General K. Chakela during their Stay in Moscow at the XII Session of AAPSO, 1 October 1975, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 737, pp. 173–175.

115 Record of a Conversation with Representatives of the Basutoland Congress Party at the World Congress of Peace Forces, late October 1973, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 737, p. 15.

116 Basutoland Congress Party (information), October 1977, GARF, f. P9540, op. 1, d. 738, p. 3; Record of a Conversation with the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Lesotho, Comrade J. Kena, 2 September 1977, GARF, f. P9540, op. 1, d. 738, p. 25.

117 Aerni-Flessner, *Dreams for Lesotho*, pp. 184–187.

118 *Pravda*. 17 August 1976.

maintain relations with the leadership of the BCP, since the BCP collaborated with the PAC. The ANC only had contacts with individual members of the BCP.¹¹⁹

In 1975, Chris Hani settled in Lesotho, where he remained until 1982. From there he periodically visited Transkei, the Eastern Cape, and the Free State “to set up fresh three-person cells, connected vertically to Maseru”.¹²⁰ Although he was initially detained by the Lesotho authorities and faced deportation to South Africa, the ANC was able to persuade Leabua Jonathan’s government not to follow through on this. As V. G. Shubin writes: “Later, with relations between the government and the ANC further improved, Hani even became its official representative in Maseru.”¹²¹

Thus, from the second half of the 1970s, Lesotho became one of the important bases for infiltrating South African territory, a situation which could not have been accomplished without the tacit assistance of the authorities.

The reaction of CPL Secretary General Jacob Kena to the changes that had occurred in the policy of Leabua Jonathan is revealing. In a conversation with the Soviet Solidarity Committee official E. Samoilov, he outlined the immediate tasks of the CPL as follows:

- develop relations with the K. Chakela group and its worldwide strengthening;
- make a possible impact on other democratic forces in the country, primarily on the left wing of the National Party, for which there are certain conditions;
- create and strengthen the left front;
- facilitate possible negotiations between Leabua Jonathan and K. Chakela;
- promote the strengthening of leftist forces in a possible alliance with Leabua Jonathan.

To address these problems, Kena assigned an important place to the possible establishment of diplomatic relations between Lesotho and socialist countries, including the Soviet Union.¹²² According to Kena, the most promising option for resolving the internal crisis in Lesotho was the initiation of negotiations between

119 Record of a Conversation with Alfred Nzo, 18 September 1974, p. 173. It is highly likely that by these “individual members” with whom the ANC was in contact, Nzo was referring to the Chakela and Khasa group.

120 T. Lodge, *Red Road to Freedom: A History of South African Communist Party, 1921–2021*, Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2021, p. 370.

121 Shubin, *ANC: A View from Moscow*, p. 162. Oliver Tambo, back in 1974, told a Soviet diplomat about the Lesotho government’s agreeing in principle to have an ANC representative office operate unofficially on its territory. See Record of a Conversation with President of the African National Congress (ANC) Oliver Tambo, 11 September 1974, p. 178.

122 Record of a Conversation with the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Lesotho, Comrade J. Kena, 2 September 1977, GARF, f. R9540, op. 1, d. 738, p. 26.

Leabua Jonathan and Chakela. Kena put forward the task of creating a united left front of the CPL, the Chakela faction, and the left wing of the BNP. Such a front could contribute to changing the country's foreign policy.¹²³

Although these ambitious plans by Kena never came to realization and the Chakela group never became a significant political force, nevertheless, in 1980, diplomatic relations were established between Lesotho and the USSR and the first official Soviet delegation visited Maseru.¹²⁴

Thus, with the change in the foreign policy of the BNP government, the Soviet Union and its allies in South Africa chose a similar course to that which they had followed towards Botswana after 1966.

6 Conclusions

In the 1960s, Botswana and Lesotho found themselves at the crossroads of not only regional but also global politics, caught up in a confrontation between political systems and ideologies. In this regard, they had much in common – the leaders of both states had to choose a foreign policy course in conditions of strong dependence on their closest neighbour, the Republic of South Africa. Therefore, neither Leabua Jonathan nor Seretse Khama could afford to take an openly hostile position towards the apartheid regime. However, this does not mean that they could not pursue independent policies, including in relation to liberation movements.

From the very beginning of independence, Seretse Khama sought to prevent the South African authorities from openly interfering in the internal affairs of Botswana. He saw it as his task to prevent his country from being drawn into the Cold War confrontation and the armed struggle against the apartheid regime. The leadership of the South African liberation movement and Moscow were well aware of the dilemma that Khama faced. They viewed him as a potential ally and tried to get at least benevolent neutrality from him, if not open assistance, so that the Botswana authorities would turn a blind eye to the clandestine activities of the ANC on their territory.

Moscow made deliberate efforts to maximize cooperation with Botswana, which, given the hostile environment of this African country and Khama's wary attitude towards communism, developed extremely slowly. It took a full ten years after independence for a Soviet embassy to appear in Gaborone.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 25.

¹²⁴ *Pravda*, 28 April 1980.

Moscow's relations with Lesotho seemingly developed according to a different scenario. The USSR was sceptical about the government of Leabua Jonathan from the very beginning. This attitude was due not only to the fact that Jonathan took a pro-Western position in the Cold War and had close ties with South Africa, but also to the information that Moscow received from its South African friends – the Communist Party of Lesotho and the SACP (often these were the same people).

The South African communists really hoped to bring to power in Lesotho a party controlled or at least loyal to them. To a certain extent, they were inspired by the experience of South Africa, where a unique alliance was formed between the ANC and the SACP. However, a different alignment of political forces developed in Lesotho where the PAC enjoyed greater influence. Furthermore, the institution of chiefs as well as the Catholic Church, around which political organizations were built, also played a major role in political life.

The reasons for the failure of the communists lay not only in objective differences in the conditions of South Africa and Lesotho. The communist tactics themselves were more aggressive and cruder in nature. Their attempts to establish control over the BCP really represented a kind of “raider” takeover of the party, which spoiled their relations with the main opposition force in the country for almost a decade.

However, Leabua Jonathan's changes in foreign policy in the 1970s – a break with South Africa and a transition to a position of solidarity with other frontline states – changed the attitude of the ANC/SACP and, consequently, the Soviet Union towards him. The opportunity to secure the loyalty of the Lesotho government to the ANC outweighed all other arguments in favour of supporting the opposition led by Ntsu Mokhehle. Moreover, Mokhehle was not trusted in Moscow due to his long-standing ties to the PAC, his opposition to the communists of Lesotho, and his pro-China stance in the 1960s.

In Moscow, the motives and goals of African leaders were not very well understood. For Mokhehle, Leabua Jonathan, Khama, and Koma, the goals of national development and independence or the preserving of power always remained the priority; the Cold War confrontations, ideologically important for Moscow, were of secondary significance.

It is necessary to note the role played by representatives of the communist parties of South Africa and Lesotho in the formation of Soviet policy towards Botswana and Lesotho. The assessments in the Soviet press of Seretse Khama and Leabua Jonathan in the 1960s coincided almost word for word with the recommendations that Moscow received from its South African friends.

Moscow also directly addressed the communists to seek their opinion regarding the situation in Botswana and Lesotho, and the line that the Soviet Union

should follow in relation to these countries. Such relations of the Soviet political leadership with the communist parties of Southern Africa, and through them with the ANC, confirm the conclusions expressed by V. G. Shubin as well as I. I. Filatova and A. B. Davidson. As the latter write, “all the memoirs or books published by the ANC and SACP leaders and activists in the last two decades stress that these were relations between equal partners”.¹²⁵

However, it cannot be argued that these relations were completely devoid of an ideological component. For Moscow, the closeness of the positions of its allies on key foreign policy issues was important. And during the split in the CPL, Moscow supported the Kena-Matji faction, while Motloheloa's views were considered pro-Chinese by Soviet officials. Likewise, during the split in the BCP, Moscow relied on Chakela, although Mokhehle was more popular and was supported by the majority of party members. Therefore, it can be argued that Soviet policy in these cases was largely characterized by a combination of both pragmatics and ideology. This combination determined Soviet foreign policy regarding Botswana and Lesotho.

¹²⁵ Filatova and Davidson, *The Hidden Thread*, p. 310. See also Shubin, *ANC: A View from Moscow*, p. 234.

Jodie Yuzhou Sun

5 Testing for “Genuine Revolutionary Leadership”: China’s Support of Liberation Struggles in Congo and Angola (1960–1966)

1 Introduction

“If a single spark can start a prairie fire, then the fire in Africa has already spread. The Chinese torch has enlightened Africa”, said Leonard Mitoudidi of the Congolese movement Parti Solidaire Africain (PSA) in his conversations with Chinese paramount leader Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai in April 1964 in Changsha, People’s Republic of China (RPC).¹

This chapter examines China’s role in the Congo “crises” (1960–1965) and its extended impact in the region, with a particular focus on Angola, leading up to the Civil War in 1975. The work primarily draws on the rarely consulted China’s Foreign Ministry Archives (CFMA) and Shanghai Municipal Archives (SMA). Building on the existing literature on Africa’s global Cold War and especially the roles of communist actors, the rich, detailed, and lively discussions between Chinese hosts and African delegates help reveal some of the hidden episodes of China’s relations with Congo and Angola at the time of fierce ideological and geopolitical struggles in the Cold War.

Emphasizing “African agency” and its necessary constraints, this chapter analyses how African political parties, social groups, and elites approached, deepened, and negotiated their relations with communist China as they searched for global ideological and material support. While Chinese leaders tried to avoid becoming embroiled in the factional politics of African leaders, this tactic was often compromised by the professional and personal goals of their African counterparts.

The issue of human agency exercised by Africans, especially against the odds, has been heavily debated. To counter the rise of a “radical pessimism” in the late 1960s, Terence Ranger described such creative potential in “three magnetic fields

¹ “毛泽东主席接见刚果(布)特使安托万和刚果(利)非洲团结党政治局委员米都迪迪的谈话记录” [Mao Zedong receives Congo-Brazzaville Special Envoy and Congo-Leopoldville Parti Solidaire Africain], April 16 1964, 108–01341-01, 1, 4–8, 10–11, China’s Foreign Ministry Archives (hereafter CFMA).

of socially bargained experience”: religious belief, cultural or moral community, violent conflict and its reconciliation.² Though the narrative and initiative of “African agency” was initially contextualized in relation to European conquest or colonization, it has more recently gained prevalence in international politics, as part of an overarching mission to explain “how far, and in what ways, African political actors are impacting on, and operating within, the international system”.³ Scholars of “China-Africa” have also used case studies in particular countries or sectors to demonstrate the capacity of African elites to wield “agency” in their own favour.⁴ These works, by focusing on economic relations such as aid and bilateral investments, assume that these financial institutions have always existed and operated in the same way as they do today.

A detailed comparative study of Kenya and Zambia has demonstrated the diversity through time and space of the much-cited but little-explained concept of “African agency”. When faced with similar challenges of state building and economic development, Kenya and Zambia approached, deepened, and negotiated their relations with China as they searched for ideological and material support towards their goals. China’s changing global image, from a leader of the “Third World” to an economic superpower, was subject to interpretation and engagement by African states and elites that were simultaneously experiencing their own processes of historical change.⁵ But this does not mean that such agency was wielded without constraint. Critics call into question the “effectiveness” of creating agency for African elites as well as highlighting their inability to structurally change their states’ relationships with China.⁶ This was a result of an international system that tended to oppress weaker actors in the interests of the powerful. The weaker actors were vulnerable to intense ideological struggles that often ended up with violent internal conflict and foreign intervention, intentionally or not. The Cold War became “hot” as liberation movements in Africa competed for

2 Quoted in J. Lonsdale, “Agency in Tight Corners: Narrative and Initiative in African History”, *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 13 (2000)1, pp. 12–13.

3 W. Brown and S. Harman (eds.), *African Agency in International Politics*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2013, p. 1.

4 See a recent summary of this scholarship by N. Duggan, “The Agency Problem in Readings of Sino-African Relations”, *African Affairs* 122 (2023) 488, footnote 41, p. 471.

5 J. Y. Sun, *Kenya’s and Zambia’s Relations with China 1949–2019*, Oxford: James Currey, 2023, p. 13.

6 See, for example, C. M.-T. Schmitz, “Significant Others: Security and Suspicion in Chinese-Angolan Encounters”, *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 43 (2014), pp. 41–69; P. Carmody and P. Kragelund, “Who is in Charge? State Power and Agency in Sino-Africa Relations”, *Cornell International Law Journal* 49 (2016), pp. 1–24; J. Phillips, “Who’s in Charge of Sino-African Resource Politics? Situating African State Agency in Ghana”, *African Affairs* 118 (2019) 470, pp. 101–124.

backing from various Cold War actors.⁷ The global Cold War involved unequal relations of power among political communities that pursued or were driven to pursue a specific path of progress within the binary global order.⁸ Scholarship on how less powerful Cold War actors such as Cuba and Eastern European countries engaged with post-colonial Africa is particularly salient. According to Piero Gleijeses, Havana did not intervene in Congo and later in Angola as a “proxy” of Moscow, as is usually stated, but instead as an independent global actor in pursuit of its own distinctive revolutionary vision.⁹

Through a study of the motivations of individual Cubans who participated in military and civil engagement in Angola, Christine Hatzky judged Cuba to be an autonomous driving force.¹⁰ Quinn Slobodian’s edited volume brings in a representative range of examples that document the diverse breadth of interactions between East Germany and its partners in Africa.¹¹ Communist China made unique contributions to these debates thanks to its challenge of the conventional understanding of the divisions of East and West, North and South in African decolonization. Some African delegates claimed that the Chinese were closer to them than the Soviets because of their skin colour.¹² More than the issue of colour, what Julia Lovell called “high Maoism”, universal in theory and parochial in practice, helped distinguish Chinese engagement with the world from that of the Soviets.¹³ Therefore, it is essential to delve into the means by which Mao’s China attempted to define and approach specific African actors.

The Zanzibar Revolution of 1964 convinced the US that the islands could serve as a subversive base for the region as well as an “‘African model’ of their

7 V. G. Shubin, *The Hot ‘Cold War’: The USSR in Southern Africa*, London: Pluto Press, 2008.

8 H. Kwon, *The Other Cold War*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

9 P. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa 1959–1976*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002; P. Gleijeses, “Moscow’s Proxy? Cuba and Africa 1975–1988”, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8 (2006) 2, pp. 3–51.

10 Ch. Hatzky, *Cubans in Angola: South-South Cooperation and Transfer of Knowledge, 1976–1991*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2015.

11 Q. Slobodian (ed.), *Comrades of Color: East Germany in the Cold War World*, New York: Bergahn Books, 2015. Also L. Dallywater, Ch. Saunders, and H. A. Fonseca (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War ‘East’: Transnational Activism 1960–1990*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019; Ch. Saunders, H. A. Fonseca, and L. Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023.

12 This was during a session of the executive council in preparation for the upcoming conference of the Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) in June 1971, see J. Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015, p. 197.

13 J. Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History*, London: Vintage-Penguin Random House, 2020.

own revolutionary tactics".¹⁴ However, contrary to Western assumptions that China was encouraging African radicals to deliver revolutionary gains, Premier Zhou Enlai in fact refused to rush to recognize the newly formed Supreme Council of Revolution of the Congo-Kinshasa (SCR). Instead, he made clear that his country would follow the lead of other "friendly" African countries in offering official recognition.¹⁵ On several occasions, Chinese leaders purposely avoided making exclusive commitments to a particular liberation movement or political leader so as not to be embroiled in factional politics that could potentially damage Mao's vision of world revolution or China's international reputation.

In the first years of the PRC, its revolutionary leaders adopted a foreign policy of "Leaning to One Side", based on the belief that China naturally belonged in the Soviet camp. Eager to break the economic embargo and diplomatic isolation of China by the United States and its allies in Asia in the 1950s, Mao developed the concept of the "intermediate zone", which denoted the vast majority of Asia, Africa, and Latin America that belonged to neither the communist nor the capitalist bloc.¹⁶ "Apart from the question of geographical distance" from Africa, Beijing was not yet "strong enough to adopt any meaningful policy towards Africa".¹⁷ In September 1954, however, China's annual Government Work Report declared that developing de facto relations with Africa was essential to enhance mutual understanding and create the conditions for the establishment of de jure relations.¹⁸ The first Afro-Asian Conference held in Indonesia in 1955, which later became known as the Bandung Conference, marked China's "modern debut onto the

14 T. Burgess, "A Socialist Diaspora: Ali Sultan Issa, the Soviet Union, and the Zanzibari Revolution", in: M. Matusевич (ed.), *Africa in Russia, Russia in Africa: Three Centuries of Encounters*, Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007, p. 264.

15 "周恩来总理访问坦桑尼亚时接见刚果(金)革命最高委员会主席苏米亚谈话记录" [Minutes of meeting between Zhou Enlai and Soumialot during his visit to Tanzania], 5 June 1965, 108-01423-01, CFMA.

16 M. Zedong, "Talks with Anna Louise Strong", in: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, vol. 4, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1967, pp. 1191-1192. For more detailed studies of Mao's "intermediate zone" theory, see N. Jun, 中华人民共和国对外关系史概论 [Introduction to the history of foreign relations of the People's Republic of China (1949-2000)], Beijing: Peking University Press, 2010, pp. 176-177; C. Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 18-21.

17 A. Ogunsanwo, *China's Policy in Africa, 1958-71*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1974, p. 4.

18 A. Zhouchang and M. Tao, 中非关系史 [History of Sino-African relations], Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 1996, p. 218.

world stage” and paved the way for its diplomatic relations with newly independent African countries.¹⁹

Ideology was crucial to China’s foreign policy and its relations with Africa, just as it was for other communist regimes at the time. The Sino-Soviet split of 1956–1966 was driven by opposing interpretations of orthodox Marxism. China and the Soviet Union had diverged on the way to achieve socialism domestically as well as on the direction adopted by the global socialist camp against the capitalist world.²⁰ China’s support for independence struggles in Africa throughout the Cold War can be partly explained by its own historical trajectory. While the Russian Revolution aimed primarily to remove class inequalities and build socialism within Russia, debates on the Chinese revolutionary path were at the outset centred around a nationalist impetus to defeat the foreign invaders at whose hands the country had endured “a century of humiliation”. During the time that China was under Japanese occupation during the Second World War, Mao criticized the 1935 Italian invasion of Ethiopia.²¹ China’s revolutionary outlook was thus inherently anti-imperialist. The CCP’s successes in overcoming both foreign and domestic enemies owed much to a united front across region, class, and ethnicity. Hence, its leaders believed it was imperative that the people of the “Third World” unite against imperialist enemies.

In Africa, specific distinctions were made between social class and nationalism. Populated by a largely illiterate and rural population, Africa was not an ideal location for a Soviet-style working-class revolution. In 1946, Stalin personally denounced indigenous political elites in the colonies, claiming that “[t]hese leaders [. . .] in their majority are corrupt and care not so much about the independence of their territories, as about the preservation of their privileges regarding the population of these territories”.²² It was only during the Khrushchev era that Moscow formed a meaningful Africa policy, underpinned by the “socialist model of development”. This was based on the belief that “a faster and better modernity

19 J. K. Cooley, *East Wind over Africa: Red China’s African Offensive*, New York: Walker and Company, 1965, p. 11.

20 L. M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

21 W. Qinmei, “毛泽东与中非关系” [Mao Zedong and China-Africa relations], *Foreign Affairs Review* 4 (1996), pp. 4–8.

22 Stalin to Molotov, 20 November 1946, quoted in O. A. Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Makings of Our Times*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 60.

would allow for the final victory of Soviet socialism over Western capitalism”.²³ In contrast, Maoist thought was attractive to many African leaders, eager as they were to mobilize their large rural population in the nation-building process. In Tanzania, Julius Nyerere adapted this “ruralization of Marxism” to local practices by launching Ujamaa schemes.²⁴

2 Starting from Scratch: Tragedy in Congo

“A clear victim of both nineteenth-century-style imperialism and the realities of the post-1945 Cold War”, in the words of Lise Namikas, Patrice Lumumba “witnessed the promise of the decolonization throughout Africa become engulfed in conflicts and challenges because of the Cold War.”²⁵ The tragedy taking place in a newly independent country in central Africa was one of the worst nightmares of African nationalists and certainly alarmed communist China, which at the time was eager to set its own feet on the continent. In a recent article, Sun offered a systematic analysis of the nature and development of Chinese policy in the Congo Crisis, in particular, Beijing’s support of two Lumumbist movements in Kwilu and eastern Congo in 1963–1965.²⁶ Quite contrary to the beliefs of external observers, especially the US State Department, China’s commitment to the revolutionary cause of Congo suffered from serious drawbacks, such as limited intelligence and human resources, long physical distance, dependence on other African countries and, above all, misinterpretation of the rebel leaders. The meetings and conversations between Chinese leaders like Mao and Lumumbist leaders help reveal their mismatched expectations and even China’s seriously mistaken understandings of the local conditions. This begs the question of the extent to which China’s advocacy of the “world revolution” in the early 1960s was marred by its domestic agenda.

In the initial stage of the political crisis in Congo, China relied heavily on “friendly” African countries for direct sources of information and evaluation of

23 A. Iandolo, “The Rise and Fall of the ‘Soviet Model of Development’ in West Africa, 1957–64”, *Cold War History* 12 (2012) 4, pp. 683–704; See also A. Iandolo, *Arrested Development: The Soviet Union in Ghana, Guinea and Mali, 1955–1968*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022.

24 P. Lal, “Maoism in Tanzania: Material Connections and Shared Imaginaries”, in: A. Cook (ed.), *Mao’s Little Red Book: A Global History*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 96–97.

25 L. Namikas, *Battleground Africa: Cold War in the Congo, 1960–1965*, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2015, p. 3.

26 J. Y. Sun, “Supplied cash and arms but losing anyway: Chinese support of the Lumumbist insurgencies in the Congo Crisis (1959–65)”, *Cold War History* 22 (2022) 4, pp. 459–478.

the local situation. In August 1960, just one month after the Katanga’s surprising secession, Xinhua News Agency sent journalist Wang Shu to cover the “fast-changing situation” in Congo.²⁷ Travelling with him was Ghana’s newly appointed Chinese ambassador Huang Hua, a seasoned diplomat and rare expert on Africa. Despite Beijing’s welcoming posture, China did not yet have formal diplomatic relations, as specifically stated by Vice Premier Chen Yi when he met delegates from Portuguese Guinea (today’s Guinea-Bissau) and Angola. They agreed on the necessity of “achieving genuine independence through armed struggle”. When Viriato da Cruz raised the question of China providing direct support to the MPLA’s armed struggle, Chen Yi ruled out the possibility of Congo and instead suggested that he could directly contact Chinese embassies in Guinea, Ghana, and Sudan.²⁸ Accra remained a reliable ally for Beijing’s policy towards Congo in the aftermath of Lumumba’s murder. In February 1961, Vice Premier Chen Yi received the Chargé d’affaires of the Ghanaian embassy in Beijing. After initial greetings, their conversation turned to the ongoing political turmoil in Congo: “We support the policies of the Governments of Ghana and Guinea towards the Congo. We share your support for the legitimate Government of the Congo, represented by Lumumba and Kizenga”, stated Chen Yi.²⁹ Later, through Guinea and Ghana, China provided £1 million cash to Antoine Gizenga’s government in Stanleyville and expressed an interest in direct military assistance and civilian goods.³⁰

China’s support of Gizenga was in line with its consistent anti-colonial and anti-imperialist position. The Congo Crisis caused by the secession of Katanga, encouraged and funded by Belgian-controlled interests, looked like a typical example of lingering European colonial control and thus required active international solidarity with the oppressed. Gizenga, as the inheritor of Lumumba’s political legacy, received Chinese backing in the form of a diplomatic mission and some financial assistance. This backing came with the expectation that he would be dedicated to a guerrilla war that mobilized the popular masses. Constrained by its insufficient presence on the ground and its limited ability to gather intelli-

27 W. Shu, 五洲风云纪——见证历史:共和国大使讲述 [The turbulent chronicles across five continents: witness to history: a PRC diplomat’s own account], Shanghai: Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 2007, pp. 240–2.

28 “陈毅接见葡属几内亚非洲独立党和安哥拉人民解放运动代表团的谈话记录” [Minutes of meeting between Chen Yi and delegations from the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) and the MPLA], 9 September 1960, 108G00098G06 (1), pp. 62–73, CFMA.

29 “陈毅副总理接见加纳驻中国使馆临时代办万得普耶谈话记录” [Minutes of meeting between Vice Premier Chen Yi and Chargé d’affaires of Ghanaian Embassy in China], 108-00234-01, 4 February 1961, CFMA.

30 “苏联在刚果问题上的态度” [Soviet attitudes on the issue of Congo], 20 September 1961, 109-03033-01, pp. 2–7, CFMA.

gence, China had to rely on other “friendly” nations to set foot in Stanleyville. Beijing’s delay in dispatching an envoy was not deliberate, nor was it “an attempt to match Soviet moves”;³¹ it was because, in 1960/61, China had neither the will nor capacity to compete with the Soviet Union in Congo. Although China tried to influence Gizenga to pursue military struggles, at this point its efforts were not intended to destroy the communist alliance. It was only when Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated rapidly in late 1961 that China’s policy towards the Congo began to diverge from that of the Soviet Union, towards an ostensibly radical orientation.³² Whether this reorientation led to an open confrontation with “its enemies” needs to be further explored.

3 Mao’s Radical Discourse of “World Revolution”

In many ways, the year of 1963 was a turning point. Events like the Cuban Missile Crisis and the second Sino-Indian border conflict worsened the existing cleavages within the socialist bloc. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) saw itself in an intense theoretical debate with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Both claimed to be “Marxist-Leninist” parties, but they battled for “what they believed to be the mantle of leadership of a single global revolution”.³³ Mao Zedong’s distinct theory of foreign policy focused on two crucial concepts. Firstly, he believed that the world was in a stage of “Cold War coexistence”, where both sides had tense relations and fought limited wars, comparable to the “intermittent period between the two world wars”.³⁴ His concept of “the two intermediate zones” provided the theoretical foundation for China’s grand discourse of “world revolution”: in addition to Asia, Africa, and Latin America (or *yafeila* ‘亚非拉’ in Chinese), the “second intermediate zone” included “powerful capitalist countries” like Japan and Canada that were “not satisfied with either the US or the USSR”. Translating this theory into foreign policy practice, China actively supported

31 B. D. Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949–1970: The Foreign Policy of the People’s Republic of China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971, p. 55.

32 The Sino-Soviet split had started in the late 1950s, but there was a brief period of relaxation in early 1961, see L. M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008, pp. 197–198.

33 Friedman, *Shadow Cold War*, p. 7. For a more detailed analysis of the Sino-Soviet polemics between 1962–1963, see S. Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy*, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009, especially chapter 1.

34 N. Jun, 冷战时代的中国战略决策 [China’s strategy making in the Cold War era], Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 2018, pp. 346–347.

world revolution, but tried to avoid outright war. A clear example of this practice was Zhou Enlai’s tour of ten African countries.

From 13 December 1963 to 5 February 1964, Premier Zhou Enlai and Vice Premier Chen Yi visited Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Ghana, Mali, Guinea, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia. A key motivation was to generate support for the upcoming Second Afro-Asian Conference, scheduled to take place in Algiers in 1965. As China had severed its relations with the Soviet Union, the issue of Soviet attendance was a contentious debate. By the time Zhou completed his official mission, six out of ten of these African countries had expressed open support for China’s position regarding the Second Afro-Asian Conference. This led to China’s “tactical success” in excluding the Soviet delegation from the Preparatory Meeting for the Conference, to take place in Algiers in April 1964.³⁵ On 19 June, however, a coup took place in Algeria, overthrowing Ben Bella’s government.³⁶ Most African representatives thus decided to postpone the meeting. This shows that African countries were politically sensitive to domestic turmoil and retained significant agency on issues concerning global ideological confrontations. China made the difficult decision to delay the conference indefinitely to avoid becoming isolated in the leftist bloc,³⁷ revealing the fact that China, “as the weakest of the Cold War powers”, had the most complex relationship to non-alignment.³⁸ Its allegedly “grand” policy in Africa was, in practice, far from coherent and had to be continually negotiated with African counterparts in a fast-changing international environment.

4 A Search for “Genuine Revolutionary Leadership”

In 1963, two centres of opposition emerged against the Congo central government, one in Kwilu and one in east Congo. The former was led by Pierre Mulele, the former PSA vice president and Lumumba’s minister of education. In early 1960, he had attended a Chinese military school to learn about Chinese communist rev-

35 Ogunsanwo, *China’s Policy in Africa, 1958–71*, p. 126.

36 Ahmed Ben Bella (25 December 1916–11 April 2012) was an Algerian politician, socialist soldier, and revolutionary who served as the first president of Algeria from 1963 to 1965.

37 L. Qianyu, “试论中国对第二次亚非会议政策的演变” [China’s policy towards the second Afro-Asian conference], *International Politics Quarterly* 4 (2010), pp. 115–33.

38 M. A. Lawrence, “The Rise and Fall of Nonalignment”, in: R. J. McMahon (ed.), *The Cold War in the Third World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 145.

olutionary tactics during the Civil War.³⁹ The length of time he stayed in China remains disputed.⁴⁰ An account published shortly after the revolt doubted that China provided any material aid such as funds, munitions, military equipment, or personnel to Mulele, while Cook claims that a battle cry included in a Chinese play provides evidence of China's involvement.⁴¹ The available CFMA documents give no indication that Mulele communicated directly with the Chinese during his organization of the revolt, probably due to the secret nature of his earlier training. Yet there are multiple signs of linkages between China and his party. For example, in March 1964, three PSA members reached the Chinese embassy in Guinea. They were disappointed by their experience in Moscow and wanted to pursue military training in China.⁴² Within a month, Leonard Mitoudidi paid a joint visit to Beijing with the Special Envoy of Congo-Brazzaville. A leader of the PSA's political bureau and someone who worked closely with Mulele, Mitoudidi was one of Beijing's most trusted allies. Compared to other more powerful Lumumbist forces like the Conseil National de Liberation (CNL) in Congo-Leopoldville, Mitoudidi's PSA was rather weak. But he was deeply trusted by Beijing for his commitment in the armed struggle in liaison with Pierre Mulele in Kwilu. The other opposition movement coalesced into the CNL. Mainly operating in Orientale, Kivu, and northern Katanga, it received external support from Soviet and African allies.⁴³ The movement's leaders, Christophe Gbenye, Gaston Soumialot, and Egede Bocheley-Davidson (hereafter Bocheley), each had their respective political philosophies and foreign backers, at times confusing for unfamiliar observers.⁴⁴ In contrast to the central role of the PSA in leading the Kwilu rebellion, the loose organization of the CNL would limit its capacity to create a unified movement.

How did the Chinese leaders understand the nature of a revolution or distinguish its "genuine" leadership? The answers rest in their myriad perceptions and

39 Ogunsanwo, *China's Policy in Africa*, p. 174; G. Nzongla-Ntalaja, *Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History*, New York: Zed Books, 2002, pp. 128–9.

40 Brazinsky wrote that he stayed as long as 15 months, but some said only two months; for example, see C. Young, *Politics in Congo: Decolonisation and Independence*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015, p. 583.

41 R. C. Fox, W. de Craemer, and J.-M. Ribeaucourt, "The Second Independence': A case study of the Kwilu rebellion in the Congo", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 8 (1965) 1, pp. 78–109; A. C. Cook, "Chinese Uhuru: Maoism and the Congo Crisis", *Positions: Asia Critique* 27 (2019) 4, p. 587.

42 "刚果非洲团结党等3人来华学习事" [The issue of three PSA members to study in China], 26 March 1964 – 19 April 1964, 108–00503-01, 5–6, CFMA.

43 Namikas, *Battleground Congo*, p. 182.

44 Gaston Soumialot was misspelled by some as "Soumaliot"; see Cook, "Chinese Uhuru", p. 590.

interactions. While it is tempting to apply the Marxist-Leninist theory of “class analysis”, labelling certain leaders “proletarian” and others not, this is oversimplistic. For example, the above-mentioned meeting between Chinese leaders and Mitoudidi in April 1964 made no mention of the class of Lumumbist leaders but rather devoted most space to talking about the necessity of the armed struggle for eventual victory. Unlike Zhou, Mao had no first-hand knowledge of Congo and never set foot on the African continent. His conversation with Mitoudidi remained abstract. Mao first equated Mobutu Sese Seko with Chiang Kai-shek as examples of “paper tigers” and stated, “Why was Lumumba killed? Because he did not have armed force, which was controlled by Mobutu.”⁴⁵ Mitoudidi replied that “since independence, Mulele is the most correct. He advised against Gizenga’s attendance at the Leopoldville meeting, and asked Lumumba and Gizenga to operate in the countryside.”⁴⁶ After listening to Mitoudidi’s explanation of revolutionary progress in Kwilu, Mao praised the strategy of organizing small numbers of troops in widely dispersed resistance bases, then made a lengthy comment about the CCP’s past mistakes in organizing armed struggles. He enjoined his Congolese guests to maintain an austere lifestyle, from nutrition to uniform. Zhou immediately followed: “They don’t need shoes. Even if without shoes, they can walk normally.” Mao responded: “Good, they can practice walking.” Zhou concluded: “The black people have strong legs. Both men and women dance with powerful movements.”⁴⁷ It is rare for casual conversations like this to be recorded in official meeting minutes with foreign delegates, and they certainly deserve attention. The apparent cultural estrangement, if not racial stereotyping, in Sino-African relations was given a different nuance by Mao’s later remarks that China would support revolutionaries regardless of their origins. Otherwise, Chinese people were “no longer genuine Marxist-Leninist but rather selfish nationalists”.⁴⁸ In this context, “nationalists” simply became the equivalent of those who opposed revolution.

The other revolutionary wing, the CNL, developed with the support of two neighbouring countries, Congo-Brazzaville and Burundi.⁴⁹ In April 1964, Soumialot recruited thousands of supporters along the Congo-Burundi border, which al-

45 “Mao Zedong Receives Congo-Brazzaville Special Envoy and Congo-Leopoldville Parti Solidaire Africain”, 16 April 1964, CFMA, p. 1.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

49 According to Portuguese military intelligence, the Congo-Brazzaville rebellion is the third centre that belonged to the Mulele wing. ANTT/SCCIA: RS [Situation report], L. 123, no. 120, 29 July 1964, fls 1–2 and Annex A.

lowed him to seize the city of Uvira and other towns in Kivu. These revolutionaries, who came to be known as the “Simba” (lion in Swahili), quickly gained control of half the country and even set up a rival government in Stanleyville.⁵⁰ China had established diplomatic relations with independent Burundi in December 1963 and Congo-Brazzaville in February 1964. In June 1964, the Chinese embassy in Brazzaville sent an urgent telegram to Beijing reporting Ambassador Zhou Qiuye’s meeting with the Congolese Prime Minister Pascal Lissouba.⁵¹ Their conversations focused on the definition of “genuine nationalists”: among the self-proclaimed “nationalists” were some in exile who desired nothing but money from the Chinese embassy, while the “genuine” ones raised their issues through the Chinese embassies in Algeria or Ghana rather than Brazzaville, for the sake of personal security.⁵² Mitoudidi was named by China as a “genuine nationalist” who rarely left his place and went outside (in disguise) only when necessary. Bocheley and Gbenye were considered less favourably because of their closer relations with the Soviet Union. Lissouba raised concerns that Chinese support of opposition struggles across the border made his country vulnerable to potential US attack. The Chinese embassy therefore suggested that its direct contacts with African nationalists would remain covert and that the Xinhua News Agency should refrain from reporting on the CNL’s activities. This advice was fully embraced by the Chinese Foreign Ministry so that China refrained from entanglement in “many practical issues” such as facilitating contact and information between Mitoudidi and Soumialot.⁵³

By late August 1964, Tshombe had formally replaced Adoula as Congo’s new head of state and received direct military support from the United States. Meanwhile, the rebel movements took control of almost all north-eastern Congo except Bukavu. In early September, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Council of Ministers organized many extraordinary sessions to negotiate for a possible ceasefire. Sensing that the ceasefire was “in the interests of American imperialism and Tshombe”, the Chinese People’s Institute of Foreign Affairs invited Bocheley and Gabriel Yumbu to Beijing in October 1964.⁵⁴ This visit came at a time when

⁵⁰ Brazinsky, *Winning the Third World*, p. 261.

⁵¹ P. Lissouba (15 November 1931–24 August 2020) was a Congolese politician. He was Prime Minister of the Republic of Congo (24 December 1963–15 April 1966) under President Alphonse Massamba-Débat.

⁵² “关于与非洲民族主义者接触中应注意到的问题” [Issues to note in contact with African nationalists], 30 June–9 July 1964, 108–00493-02, CFMA.

⁵³ “The Issue to Note When Getting in Touch with African Nationalists”, 30 June–9 July 1964, CFMA.

⁵⁴ “关于刚果(金)全国解放委员会访华接待计划” [Reception plan for the CNL delegation], 1 October 1964, 108–00509-02, 2, CFMA.

the leaders of the two separate revolutionary forces were struggling to maintain communication and collaboration. At the OAU, Bocheley once claimed that “the CNL was the only organization worthy of speaking validly on behalf of the Congolese people” and that “the progress of the national revolution under the banner of the CNL is indisputable”.⁵⁵ He also called Gbenye a “possible” member of his organization.⁵⁶ According to Chinese intelligence, the Eastern Front had been seized by the “[Soviet] revisionist-backed” Gbenye, whose affiliation to the CNL had been rejected by Bocheley: though Bocheley and Yumbu were in charge of the organization’s external relations, it was, Chinese analysts believed, the PSA that possessed the “real power”.⁵⁷ The main principle for China’s strategy in dealing with Bocheley and Yumbu was to encourage them to continue with the armed struggle, especially its “long and consistent” nature, as well as an emphasis on the domestic side. One document even stated bluntly that “the Congolese patriotic force had not yet developed a united and robust leadership core, and was thus incapable of practically leading the revolutionary struggle”.⁵⁸ Though both men condemned Gbenye and Soumialot as US and Soviet “agents”, Bocheley was apparently less enthusiastic in conversation with his Chinese host and even prevented Yumbu from criticizing the Soviet involvement in Congo. Yumbu was more interested in China’s revolutionary history and made private requests to China for provision of a telegraph machine, explosive devices, and additional military training. Beijing’s reaction to those requests was cautious. The fact that Bocheley and Yumbu had lavished China’s previous sponsorship of USD 100,000 only on overseas activities and living expenses made their local host more reluctant to dedicate any additional funding.

The personal rift between Bocheley and Yumbu was a clear reflection of the deeply rooted power struggle of the CNL’s leadership, which further disappointed Chinese leaders. In early December 1964, on his way to meet Gbenye in Khar-toum, Bocheley visited the Chinese embassy in Ghana. He attacked his colleague Yumbu for “misbehaving” during the visit to Beijing mentioned earlier and called him a “liar” and “ambitious” for power.⁵⁹ This was in reaction to a document pre-

55 “Prise de Position du Groupe Bocheley-Yumbu”, September 9, Xinhua News Agency, quoted in J. Gérard-Libois and B. Verhaegen, *Congo 1964*, Brussels: CRISP, 1965, pp. 473–4.

56 *Courrier d’Afrique*, 17 September 1964, quoted in Young, *Politics in Congo*, p. 597.

57 “Reception Plan for the CNL Delegation”, 1 October 1964, CFMA, p. 2.

58 “刚果(金)全国解放委员会第一总书记博歇利和对外关系总书记尤姆访华接待简报” [Reception briefing on Bocheley and Yumbu], 6–31 October 1964, 108–00509-01, CFMA.

59 “博歇利同我馆谈话情况” [Bocheley discusses with our embassy], 1 December 1964 p. 12, “刚果(金)全国解放委员会内部分歧及我援助其物资分配问题” [CNL internal division and the distribution of our assistance], 5 September–2 December 1964, 105–00508-02, CFMA.

viously sent by Yumbu to the Chinese embassy in Congo-Brazzaville, according to which Bocheley had been dismissed from his position as CNL's first Secretary General. Bocheley claimed that his MNC party was the most influential across Congo, while Yumbu's PSA had only local support. The Chinese embassy staff, however, recalled that the Congolese guerrilla struggle was mainly led by the PSA, in which Mulele, Yumbu, and Mitoudidi had played leadership roles.

Almost at the same time, another CNL leader, Soumialot, seeking to broaden his international influence, met Chinese ambassador Chen Jiakang in Cairo. This was during Operation Dragon Rouge, in which the US air force airlifted Belgian paratroopers into Stanleyville, ostensibly to rescue Western hostages held by Simba rebels, but also to facilitate Congolese government action against the rebels.⁶⁰ Soumialot reassured Chen that Stanleyville was still "under control", and declared that his "patriotic force" would take over all of Congo "in less than a month and a half if equipped with enough weaponry".⁶¹ The reality was, however, very different, as hundreds of insurgents were killed in this operation. Aware of growing divisions in his organization, Soumialot sought to demonstrate his ability to unite and lead the liberation council. In January 1965, the Chinese embassy in Brazzaville received a CNL official who brought news that Gizenga's PSA would help create a new liberation council led by "genuine revolutionaries on the eastern and western front".⁶² The embassy provided him with Mitoudidi's address and contact details. Its report back to the foreign ministry noted a "new developing trend" for Congolese revolutionary leaders to seek both "a right revolutionary path" and "a nation-wide, right leadership core".⁶³ This shows that, despite military defeats, Chinese leaders, largely driven by their own revolutionary experience, still held an optimistic assessment of the Congolese revolution.

⁶⁰ Brazinsky, *Winning the Third World*, p. 266.

⁶¹ "关于邀请刚果斯坦利维尔政府国防长苏米亚洛访华事" [The issue of inviting Soumialot to visit China], 4–10 December 1964, 108–01345-01, 9, CFMA.

⁶² "刚果(利)全国解放委员会驻外代表阿仆杜拉伊.耶罗迪亚向我驻外使馆谈国内斗争形势" [CNL foreign representative discusses about domestic struggles], 11 January 1965, 108–00615-01, CFMA.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

5 Competing for Influence: Schisms of Angolan Liberation Movements

While Congo was in political chaos, its neighbour under Portuguese colonial rule was about to experience significant changes. In February 1961, the outbreak of the “Angolan uprising” posed a significant challenge to the dictatorship of António de Oliveira Salazar and triggered a widespread international response. For the first time, US President John F. Kennedy stood with Soviet delegates at the United Nations (UN) Security Council meeting in criticizing the brutality of colonial rule in Lusophone Africa. The economic assistance provided by the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia to the anti-colonial struggles in Angola (People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola, MPLA), Mozambique (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique, FRELIMO), and Guinea-Bissau (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, PAIGC) is well documented by Natalia Telepneva.⁶⁴ China did not yet have a substantial policy towards Lusophone Africa at that time. It was mainly through existing revolutionary hubs in Africa, like Accra, Conakry, and Algiers, that Chinese diplomats gradually connected with activists and nationalist movements in still-colonized territories.

Individual interactions and communications between China and Lusophone Africa were largely established through literary networks, youth festivals, and solidarity conferences. Viriato da Cruz, Mário de Andrade, and Marcelino dos Santos already had contacts in China or had visited the country as early as 1954. From the late 1950s, the poems of the Mozambican writer Santos, using the pen-name of Lilinho Mikaia, appeared in journals, newspapers, and various publications.⁶⁵ This helped introduce the anti-colonial struggles in Lusophone Africa to Chinese readers. In 1958, Andrade and Cruz went to China directly after the first Afro-Asian Writers’ Conference in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The extended trip greatly impressed Cruz who wrote several poems dedicated to the “wonders” that he saw, from the Wuhan Yangtze River Bridge to the sparks of the steel-making process. The Chinese leading literary journal *World Literature* published four poems by Cruz between 1959 and 1965.⁶⁶ These writerly and textual travels facilitated shared experiences of sweat and political turmoil. Beyond Tashkent, Andrade also attended the 1957 Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Conference and the

64 N. Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation: The Soviet Union and the Collapse of the Portuguese Empire in Africa, 1961–1975*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021, pp. 57–58.

65 Ge Baoquan as a translator was certainly critical in facilitating these cultural exchanges. See G. Baoquan, 米凯亚诗选 [Poems of Mikaia], Beijing: Writers’ Publishing House, 1962, p. 4.

66 X. San, “从塔什干归来” [Coming back from Tashkent], *World Literature* 1 (1959), p. 14.

1961 All African People's Conference in Cairo. Cruz went to all three All African People's conferences: Accra in 1958, Tunis in 1960, and Cairo in 1961, which were also attended by Chinese delegations and writers such as Yang Shuo, Han Beiping, and Du Xuan. In August–September 1960, Andrade and Cruz visited Beijing again with Amílcar Cabral, Secretary General of the PAIGC. Later in his autobiography, Andrade noted that this was “the first contact [visit] with a socialist country directly, in its capital” as well as “the first real contact of political engagement”.⁶⁷ They also received basic political-military training as well as substantial financial aid, although this waned in the following years.⁶⁸ Cruz's close relationship with China increased his international political reputation, but this dependence also incubated risks.⁶⁹ In short, Lusophone African writers and activists had been in contact with China through various networks long before the liberation movements and the country established an official relationship.

Anti-colonial struggles in Southern Africa involved armed conflict and, in the case of Angola, internecine fighting between the liberation movements themselves, reflecting a decolonization process significantly influenced by foreign intervention. Helder Adegar Fonseca described the Angolan schisms as accentuated by “a Brazzavillian ‘phase of enthusiasm’ (1963–1966), regionalizing Cold War rivalry, and the Moscow/Peking competition or influence”.⁷⁰ While the Chinese embassy in Congo-Brazzaville had a crucial role to play in facilitating Chinese support to Angolan liberation movements, after Lissouba's persuasion it decided to restrict such activities in July 1964. According to Lissouba, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) led by Holden Roberto received support from Congo-Léopoldville, whose prime minister, Cyrille Adoula, was a US ally.⁷¹ He regretted to admit that the “progressive” MPLA was in a difficult situation as it had failed to be recognized by African countries, and its leadership was “divided between Neto, Andrade, and Cruz”.⁷² He also mentioned Cruz's alliance with Rob-

67 M. P. Andrade and M. Laban, *Mário Pinto de Andrade. Uma entrevista* [Mário Pinto de Andrade. An interview], Lisbon: João Sá da Costa, 1997, pp. 160–165.

68 Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation*, p. 52.

69 M. S. Fernandes, “O percurso Chinês de Viriato da Cruz, 1958–1973” [The Chinese journey of Viriato da Cruz, 1958–1973], in: E. Rocha, F. Soares, and M. Fernandes (eds.), *Angola – Viriato da Cruz, O Homem e o Mito*, Lisbon: Prefácio, 2008, pp. 269–270.

70 H. A. Fonseca, “Choosing Eastern Partners: The First Phase of the ‘Angolan Revolution’ (1960–1964)”, in: Saunders, Fonseca, and Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa*, pp. 21–22.

71 “Issues to Note in Contact with African Nationalists”, 30 June 1964, CFMA. Cyrille Adoula (13 September 1921–24 May 1978) was a Congolese trade unionist and politician. He was Prime Minister of Congo-Léopoldville, from 2 August 1961 until 30 June 1964.

72 “Issues to Note in Contact with African Nationalists”, 30 June 1964, CFMA.

erto and Neto’s allegedly political sell-out. The report of this meeting therefore concluded:

We [Chinese] need to be certain about the friends that we support, and we only choose the righteous nationalists. Our actions need to be very cautious and careful, as some so-called nationalists are essentially the most dangerous enemies.⁷³

The fact that this report from Brazzaville was sent to Beijing at the same time as the MPLA delegation was received in Shanghai provides an opportunity to examine the (un)reliability and (in)consistency of China’s policy towards Angola in the 1960s. Especially for fluid matters like the political ideology of African revolutionaries, China’s seemingly centralized policy-making mechanism often displayed uneven reverberations and repercussions.

The newly declassified documents from the Shanghai Municipal Archives indicate that China’s competition with the Soviet Union in Angola was implemented along two parallel roads: in public, China exerted influence on “leftists” like Viriato da Cruz in its efforts to seize control of the Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity Organization (AAPSO);⁷⁴ off the public radar, China engaged with all Angolan liberation movements and their leaders in the hope of shifting their attitudes more favourably towards Beijing. When receiving the National Confederation of Workers of Angola (CNTA) delegation in April 1964, the Shanghai branch of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) reiterated its position of no interference in their internal conflicts as well as avoiding any possible contacts with “Roberto’s people” in Shanghai so as to prevent dispute.⁷⁵ Founded in 1962, the CNTA claimed to be independent of political parties and advocated in favour of “trade union pluralism”.⁷⁶ Yet its leader once wrote to Vice Premier Chen Yi complaining of China’s closeness with the FNLA and insisted on China maintaining its exclusive support for the MPLA. In June 1964, Neto made his first official visit to China. Along with him were MPLA’s Foreign Secretary Luís de Azevedo and MPLA’s representative in Cairo, Antonio Miguel Baya. The MPLA visit was meant to be secret. As the OAU had exclusively recognized the FNLA in June 1963, China

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ J. Y. Sun, “Viriato da Cruz and his Chinese exile: A biographical approach”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 46 (2020) 5, pp. 853–856.

⁷⁵ “上海市总工会联络部接待安哥拉全国工人联合会代表团的计划、日程、情况汇报、照片、消息及市总工会负责同志在联欢会上讲话稿等” [Reception of the General Confederation of the Workers of Angola delegation by the Shanghai branch of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions], April 1964, C1-2-4777, SMA.

⁷⁶ J. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, vol. II: *Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare (1962–1976)*, Cambridge: MIT, 1978, p. 377.

was cautious of the controversies among African countries and did not allow any challenges from the “imperialists and revisionists”.⁷⁷ But it was probably not surprising to the Chinese that their Angolan guests immediately shared the details of their China visit with Soviet officials from the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU in Moscow, as recently revealed in Alexander Voevodskiy’s essay.⁷⁸ It is therefore fascinating to compare the accounts recorded in the Chinese and Soviet records to measure the extent of sincerity and depth of MPLA’s dealings with both communist giants. This will hopefully address some of the limitations of the previous volume in terms of assessing what Telepneva called “the depth of these convictions” of UNITA and Angolan movements more generally.⁷⁹

According to the receiving plan, the Chinese government was not ready to promise any assistance to the MPLA leaders and would only consider cadre training after the movement was practically involved in the domestic armed struggle. During the visit, the MPLA leaders had five separate meetings on issues related to the Chinese democratic revolution (with the Central Party School), united front (with the United Front Work Department), armed struggle (with the defence ministry), Afro-Asian solidarity and Peace Movement (with the World Peace Council), and the Sino-Soviet split (with Wu Xueqian).⁸⁰ As head of the West Asia-Africa Group of the International Department of the Central Committee of the CCP, Wu Xueqian was no doubt an experienced expert on Africa as well as the most senior politician who received Neto.⁸¹ While Azevedo and Baya later claimed that most of their stay in China was “reduced to a discussion of Soviet-Chinese disagreements”,⁸² it was in fact Neto and Azevedo themselves who urged for Wu’s lecture on this topic and related documentations.⁸³ Neto and especially Azevedo paid rel-

77 “Shanghai branch of the Chinese People’s Committee for World Peace receives the MPLA Chairman”, 23 June 1964, C36-2-192, 21, SMA, p. 5.

78 A. Voevodskiy, “The Sino-Soviet Split and Soviet Policy towards Southern African Liberation Movements in the early 1960s”, in: Saunders, Fonseca, and Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa*, pp. 192–195.

79 N. Telepneva, “Book review: *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s* by Helder Adegas Fonseca, Lena Dallywater, Chris Saunders, eds.”, *H-Luso-Africa*, December 2023.

80 “Shanghai branch of the Chinese People’s Committee for World Peace receives the MPLA Chairman”, 23 June 1964, SMA, p. 6.

81 “Biography of Comrade Wu Xueqian”, The State Council of the PRC, 9 June 2009, https://www.gov.cn/test/2009-06/09/content_1335417.htm (accessed December 2023).

82 Voevodskiy, “The Sino-Soviet split and Soviet policy”, p. 193.

83 “Shanghai branch of the Chinese People’s Committee for World Peace receives the MPLA Chairman”, 23 June 1964, SMA, p. 37.

actively careful attention, but Baya was not so focused. The lecture simply concluded with no further debate or statements. Just as every single line on China’s position was underlined in pencil in the Soviet records, the Chinese archives also made relentless records on how MPLA leaders reacted to ideological statements about Soviet revisionism and Khrushchev. On 22 June 1964, the Chinese officials found Neto to be cautious and thoughtful. Azevedo was the most talkative and engaged person during the visit. Baya, on the contrary, was quiet. They initially refrained from either responding to Chinese critique of Soviet policy in Congo-Leopoldville or clarifying their position on the Sino-Soviet disputes.⁸⁴ A week later, Azevedo claimed that African countries had “no right to judge whether their father or mother was right”.⁸⁵ There was a clear mismatch of expectations regarding the “elephant in the room”: the Chinese perceived the MPLA as pro-Soviet prior to their visit, and they sought to push forward “neutrality”. As time went on, conversations between the Chinese hosts and Angolan delegates became deeper. On 29 June, Baya admitted that the Soviets had in effect pursued an anti-Chinese policy at the Baku conference of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee in late April. For Neto, however, a reaffirmation of “neutrality in the Sino-Soviet conflict” was his achievement of this visit.⁸⁶ And clearly the Soviet officials were relatively satisfied about this.

In addition to ideological disputes, another major issue concerned the power struggle of Angolan liberation movements. In April 1962, one week after the FNLA was founded, the Government of the Angolan Republic in Exile (later Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile, Governo Revolucionário de Angola no Exílio [GRAE]) was established. Roberto was eager to identify his FNLA–GRAE as an emulation of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA).⁸⁷ After 1963, the Chinese press gradually adopted a favourable position towards Roberto, whose FNLA’s emphasis on the armed peasants leading anti-colonial revolution echoed China’s own historical achievements.⁸⁸ By the first quarter of 1964, the

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁸⁶ “Record of a Conversation with the Representative of Angola in the Permanent Secretariat of the Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organization, a member of the Political Bureau of the MPLA, A. M. Baya, 9 August 1964”, RGANI, f. 5, op. 50, d. 642, p. 154 quoted in Voevodskiy, “The Sino-Soviet Split”, p. 194.

⁸⁷ J. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, vol. I: *The Anatomy of an Explosion (1950–1962)*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969.

⁸⁸ Sun, “Viriato da Cruz and His Chinese Exile”, pp. 852–853.

FNLA received much-needed financial and material aid from China.⁸⁹ Cruz, having drifted away from the MPLA leadership since July 1963, decided to join Roberto's cause in April 1964. As GRAE's foreign minister, Jonas Savimbi also accompanied Neto to Moscow in April 1964.⁹⁰ Though he was in favour of a common front with the MPLA, there were already hints that he had his own agenda within or outside the GRAE.⁹¹ Savimbi's personal role in this FNLA-Beijing connection is quite disputed, as newly declassified Portuguese sources indicate that he opposed instead of promoting the FNLA's new Chinese connections.⁹² During the 1964 visit, Azevedo acted as a formal spokesperson of the MPLA and complained to his Chinese hosts that Cruz had already been expelled and no longer represented the organization. Neto followed up by explaining that he had "no political or organizational differences of principle" with Cruz.⁹³ The criticisms fired against Cruz and Andrade were harsh: they were always abroad and never visited the Angolan border. Azevedo even referred to Cruz as making the same mistake as Chen Duxiu in 1927, ordering a guerrilla force from Cabinda to withdraw after three victories.⁹⁴ Roberto's organization was condemned for being infiltrated with US intelligence agency personnel and not committed to domestic struggles. It was therefore sincere for the MPLA delegates to admit that their 1964 visit to China was both to prevent a closer Beijing-FNLA alliance and to discredit the reputation of Cruz.⁹⁵

When Agostinho Neto, chairman of the MPLA, made his first visit to China, he insisted on his commitment to bringing the MPLA cadres back to Angola for the armed struggle and tried to convince his Chinese host that he did not have any "political or organizational differences of principle" with Viriato da Cruz, the MPLA's former Secretary General who was about to start his lifelong exile in Beijing.⁹⁶ According to China's leading Cold War scholar Shen Zhihua, mid-1964

89 J. F. Ribeiro, "UNITA, China, and the Soviet Bloc: Rivalries, Constraints, and Cooperation (1964–1974)", in: Saunders, Fonseca, and Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa*, p. 61.

90 Fonseca, "Choosing Eastern Partners", p. 53.

91 Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation*, pp. 81–85.

92 Ribeiro, "UNITA, China, and the Soviet Bloc", p. 61.

93 "Shanghai branch of the Chinese People's Committee for World Peace receives the MPLA Chairman", 23 June 1964, SMA, p. 21.

94 *Ibid.*, p. 56. Chen Duxiu was a Chinese revolutionary socialist, educator, philosopher and author, who co-founded the CCP with Li Dazhao in 1921. After his expulsion from the CCP in 1929, Chen was for a time the leader of China's Trotskyist movement.

95 Voevodskiy, "The Sino-Soviet Split", p. 193.

96 "Shanghai branch of the Chinese People's Committee for World Peace receives the MPLA chairman", 23 June 1964, C36-2–192, 21, SMA.

marked a critical shift in Mao’s strategic thinking from “anti-imperialist” to both “anti-imperialist” and “anti-revisionist”. As the Sino-Soviet split escalated from theoretical debates to border disputes, the Soviet Union became China’s major security concern. Nikita Khrushchev’s successor, Leonid Brezhnev, was more active in relation to decolonization conflict areas such as Vietnam. Therefore, the search for “a genuine revolutionary leadership” was crucial to China’s support of liberation struggles in Congo and Angola. It was through this process that China eventually diverged from its Soviet counterpart in determining the nature of a revolution not by the class element of the leadership itself but by its instruments at the rural mass level in engaging armed struggle.

His visit helped soften Neto’s relations with China. In September 1964, China, along with the USSR and Czechoslovakia, helped ship three thousand boxes of arms to Ponta Negra.⁹⁷ The MPLA’s first “study group” arrived in August 1965.⁹⁸ But only the Chinese knew that they were not the only Angolans in China. Savimbi, having resigned from the GRAE at the OAU summit in Cairo in July 1964, founded a splinter group named the Friends of the Angola Manifesto (AMANGOLA). João Fusco Ribeiro has done an excellent job of detailing the initiative and process of military training for Savimbi’s men in China, which lasted for six months from March 1965 in the famous Nanking Military Academy.⁹⁹ When the MPLA study group was received, the Chinese made sure that they did not know of the existence of Savimbi’s men in China. But such a secret was difficult to keep. In January 1966, during the visit of a MPLA youth group to China, the issue of military training was repeatedly raised. The youth leader made every effort to inquire about the misspelled “Kulumbungo” trio sent by Savimbi, who had left China and remained close to the Tanzanian border.¹⁰⁰ This trio was made up of Jacob Hossi Inácio, Samuel Chiwale, and José Kalundungo who travelled to China from Congo-Brazzaville, joined by another five from Lusaka.¹⁰¹ The misspelling of Kalundungo’s name suggests that the Shanghai Municipal Committee of the Communist Youth League operated separately from the military academy in receiving Angolan delegates and was instructed not to share any information related to their training.

97 Centro de Documentação e Investigação do Comité Central do MPLA (ed.), *História do MPLA*, vol. I, 1940–1966, Luanda: CDIH, 2014, p. 310.

98 “Shanghai branch of the Chinese People’s Committee for World Peace receives the MPLA study group”, August 1965, C36-2–241, SMA.

99 Ribeiro, “UNITA, China, and the Soviet Bloc”, pp. 64–65.

100 “Shanghai Municipal Committee of the Communist Youth League receives the MPLA Youth Organization”, January 1966, C21-2-2838, SMA.

101 Ribeiro, “UNITA, China, and the Soviet Bloc”, p. 65.

6 Conclusion

This chapter set out to examine the rationale and development of China's support of liberation struggles in the early defining moment of decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa. As a weaker Cold War power and relatively new actor to the African continent, communist China led by Mao Zedong gradually recognized Africa's potential as both an ally against the colonial and imperial order and as a focus for its vision of "world revolution". Official records from China's Foreign Ministry Archives and the Shanghai Municipal Archives help reveal the often-mentioned but seldom explained concept of "African agency". From the late 1950s and early 1960s, African political parties, social groups, and elites approached, deepened, and negotiated their relations with communist China as they searched for global ideological and material support. The political tragedy of Lumumba in Congo sent an early alarm that, if not handled well, newly independent African countries could be easily manipulated by external powers with conflicting interests. It was also with Gizenga's government in Stanleyville that China realized the significance of locally rooted contacts and reliable sources of intelligence for achieving its foreign policy goals on fast-changing political terrains.

When the two communist giants started to drift apart in 1963, China pursued a more independent, radical policy in support of two Lumumbist rebellions in Kwilu and east Congo (Simba rebellion). Underlying Mao's grand discourse of "world revolution" was a consistent search for those whom the Chinese called "genuine revolutionaries" in the non-aligned world. Terms like "leftists", "nationalists", and "proletarians" were used interchangeably, which, without necessary clarification, caused a sense of confusion and even frustration among liberation movements and leaders in Africa. In the earlier years of their interactions, China's insufficient knowledge of local conditions gave more political leverage to people like Mitoudidi in shaping the course of Congolese struggles. In addition to its firm backing of Mulele's military force in organizing the armed struggles, China also channelled its support to the more internationally recognized CNL through its regional allies Burundi and Congo-Brazzaville, a strategy found later in Angola.

The Congo case exemplified the failure of direct communist intervention in an independent African country. Angola's path to national independence was a successful one, though at a high cost and only for some: with strong Soviet and Cuban support, the MPLA fought against the Portuguese army in the Angolan War of Independence from 1961 to 1974 and defeated UNITA and the FNLA in the Angolan Civil War. Afro-Asian solidarity conferences and revolutionary hubs in Africa played a vital role in facilitating China's earlier connections with activists and nationalist movements in still-colonized territories. It was through these

transnational networks that Angolan nationalists and writers Andrade and Cruz consolidated their prestige in Chinese leadership circles, which later transformed into an official relationship with the liberation movement. Although the negative impact of the Sino-Soviet split in the Angolan liberation movements is well known, China did not stop engaging with the Angolan liberation movements and their leaders from the “other” wing. Neto’s visit to China in the summer of 1964 coincided with the military training of Roberto’s people in Nanking. While Neto, Azevedo, and Baya managed to adhere to their “neutrality”, they were not successful in distancing China from their political opponents. By this stage, the Chinese leaders had arrived at the conclusion that “genuine” revolutionary leaders were those who were willing and able to mobilize the popular masses in the use of violence against both imperialist and revisionist powers.

Thomas C. Burnham

6 Soviet and Chinese Perspectives on Coups in Africa in the 1960s

1 Introduction

According to orthodox Marxism-Leninism, there is nothing essentially progressive or reactionary about coup d'états. Coups may be handmaidens of counter-revolutionary restoration, like the Bonapartist 1851 French coup d'état had been, or moments of profound contingency whereby revolutionary aims may be achieved by a sufficiently disciplined and prepared vanguard party. For Vladimir Lenin and later Josef Stalin, the historical significance of the attempted coup that was the Kornilov Affair was that it “confirmed that the stark choice facing Russia was between Soviet power and military dictatorship” and thereby served as an immediate preface to the October Revolution.¹ Front of mind for Mao Zedong was modern China's own history of reforms and revolts being suppressed by reactionary coups, particularly the “April 12 Counter-Revolutionary Coup” and the Shanghai Massacre, a disaster for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) which Mao blamed on the right opportunism and defeatism of Chen Duxiu in the party's first historical resolution, the “Resolution on Several Historical Questions” passed in April 1945.² While Mao often emphasized that repressive coup regimes served the positive role of clarifying for the people who the enemy was, just as the Kornilov Affair had done for the Bolshevik revolution, the first historical resolution established that the disaster of the April 12 Counter-Revolutionary Coup was a symptom of a larger problem within the revolutionary organisation itself.

Following the engagement of both countries with the first phase of African decolonization in the late 1950s, Mobutu Sese Seko's first coup in 1961 and the assassination of Patrice Lumumba forced the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the CCP to view this topic as external actors. As discussed by Alessandro Iandolo and Lise Namikas, between the impracticability of Moscow's initial attempts to underwrite non-capitalist development and the debacle of the Congo

1 S. A. Smith, *Russia in Revolution: An Empire in Crisis, 1890–1928*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 146. “The influence of the Bolsheviks in the Soviets grew stronger than ever.” *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1945, pp. 201–202.

2 “关于若干历史问题的决议” [Resolution on several historical questions], 《建党以来重要文献选编 (1921–1949)》 [Selected important documents since the founding of the party (1921–1949)], vol. 22, Beijing: Central Literature Publishing House, 2011, p. 21.

Crisis (1960–65), Nikita Khrushchev and the CPSU elected to gradually disentangle the Soviet Union from large-scale economic assistance projects in newly independent African states.³ In contrast, PRC involvement deepened into the 1960s, with much of its efforts in Africa during the first half of the decade focused on supporting radical anti-imperialist movements across the continent, including the Lumumbaist rebels which emerged to oppose the Congolese reconciliation government and the *Armée Nationale Congolaise* commanded by Mobutu.⁴

At the close of the first phase of African decolonization, a wave of coups swept the Afro-Asian world, testing the approaches of both the Soviet Union and the PRC. Just as Mobutu's first and second coups had consolidated his authority for decades to come, a number of these coups were ultimately revealed part of the wider Cold War dynamic of the "first generation of postcolonial leaders" being replaced by "military juntas or revolutionary regimes" across the Global South.⁵ During the 1960s, however, this was by no means clear. As will be seen in the first section, there were occasions when the Soviet Union or the PRC stood to gain from the success of specific military coups, at least in terms of their rivalry with one another, even if they opposed such coups on the grounds of their bilateral partnerships with the overthrown governments in question. Military coups were not and are not uniform and occurred for a wide variety of reasons. Most straightforwardly, according to Samuel Decalo, the seizure of power by African militaries can be understood as "a function of systemic disequilibrium", particularly the bevy of challenges faced by of post-independence governments.⁶ With their debuts as aid providers in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Soviet Union and the PRC were invested in addressing this systemic disequilibrium through

3 A. Iandolo, *Arrested Development: The Soviet Union in Ghana, Guinea and Mali, 1955–1968*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022, p. 196; A. Iandolo, "Imbalance of Power: The Soviet Union and the Congo Crisis, 1960–1961", *Journal of Cold War Studies* 16 (2014) 2, p. 54; L. Namikas, *Battle-ground Africa: Cold War in the Congo, 1960–1965*, Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2013, pp. 253–258.

4 Most crucially, negotiations for what would become Tan-Zam Railway – the PRC's largest single project in Africa during the Mao era – began against the background of the PRC and Tanzania's efforts to provide cross-border assistance to the Simbas. 《周恩来年谱:1898 – 1976》 [Chronicle of Zhou Enlai: 1898–1976], Beijing: Central Literature Publishing House, 2007, p. 1088. For the PRC's support of Lumumbaist insurgents, see J. Y. Sun, "Supplied Cash and Arms but Losing Anyway", *Cold War History* 22 (2022) 4, pp. 459–478.

5 M. E. Latham, "The Cold War in the Third World, 1963–1975", in: M. P. Leffler and O. A. Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. II: *Crisis and Detente*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 275.

6 S. Decalo, "Military Coups and Military Régimes in Africa", *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 11 (March, 1973) 1, pp. 108–109.

economic assistance and cooperation. As will be seen in the second section of this chapter, coups therefore stood to permanently frustrate their efforts. Moreover, as examined by Kristen A. Harkness and as will be seen in the third section, a further complicating factor is the role which ethnic allegiances played in African military coups, particularly in terms of how coups created or destroyed “entire systems of ethnic privilege”, thus exacerbating the persistent fragility and instability of newly independent countries.⁷ As will be shown, whether the Soviet Union or the PRC understood this “militarization of ethnic conflict” as progressive or reactionary was key in determining who they would support in the event of a coup. Finally, as pointed out by Jonathan Powell and Mwita Chacha as well as extrapolated into the twenty-first century by Issaka K. Souaré, in the context of the first full decade of decolonization, there were no robust international norms governing engagement with coup regimes, even coup regimes which were obviously backed by foreign actors or which had executed the civilian leaders they had overthrown.⁸ How the Soviet Union and the PRC would respond was thus based on the the particular circumstances of the coups in question.

The CCP and the CPSU interpreted the phenomenon of military coups very differently from one another. During a CCP-CC Politburo meeting two days after the 16 May Notification which launched the Cultural Revolution, Mao’s designated successor, Marshal Lin Biao lamented:

Coups have become a kind of trend. Globally, coups have become the norm [. . .]. In our country’s history, after the founding of each dynasty, ten years, twenty years, thirty years, fifty years, after a very short time there is always a coup, there are many examples of the usurpation of power [. . .]. Lately there are many ghosts, ghostly occurrences, that deserve attention. Perhaps when a coup occurs, there will be killing, power will be usurped, capitalism will be revived, and socialism will be overthrown.⁹

Chen Jian writes that after 1965, it became clear that Beijing’s “aggressive foreign policies backfired”, and that “(r)ight-wing coups in several African countries that were close to Beijing reversed the trend of the PRC’s diplomatic advance in

7 K. A. Harkness, *When Soldiers Rebel: Ethnic Armies and Political Stability*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 9.

8 J. Powell and M. Chacha, “Closing the Book on Africa’s First Generation Coups”, *African Studies Quarterly* 18 (Feb. 2019) 2, p. 93; I. K. Souaré, “The African Union as a norm entrepreneur on military coups d’état in Africa (1952–2012): an empirical assessment”, *Journal of African Studies* 52 (2014) 1, p. 92.

9 《毛泽东年谱:1949–1976》 [Chronicle of Mao Zedong: 1949–1976], vol. 5, Beijing: Central Literature Publishing House, 2013, p. 587.

Africa”.¹⁰ As Lin Biao’s remarks indicate, the CCP was concerned with the likelihood that this wave of coups might reach China itself.

A month prior, the son of veteran revolutionary and the Soviet Union’s former head of state Anastas Mikoyan, Sergo, wrote a piece taking stock of the impact of the coups which had swept the Afro-Asian world in the mid-1960s. Writing for *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, Sergo Mikoyan argued that military coups often played a “patriotic role” in developing countries, and that the coups in Egypt, Burma, Indonesia, Syria, and “possibly [. . .] the overthrow in Ghana” showed that coups could lead these countries “onto the non-capitalist path of development”. For Sergo Mikoyan, whether or not a coup played a “patriotic role” depended on the “political orientation of the officers’ corps and the degree of its true patriotism, since true patriotism will in the end lead it to democratic, progressive positions”.¹¹ Natalia Telepneva argues that, rather than simply disengaging from Africa, the Soviet Union revised its foreign policy in response to the “coup contagion”. In so doing, Moscow emphasized building connections with the national armies and intelligence services of African states.¹²

At the close of the first phase of decolonization, a reappraisal of the phenomenon of military coups against postcolonial regimes clearly took place in both Moscow and Beijing. Subsequently, there was a further divergence in the assessment of both countries to the risks posed by coups as well as their posture towards coup regimes themselves. This chapter uses Russian- and Chinese-language archival and published materials to explore this divergence in their evaluation of coups in Africa during the 1960s through a synchronic analysis of the responses of their leadership and policy actors to the 1965 coup in Algeria that overthrew Ahmed Ben Bella, the 1966 coup in Ghana that ousted Kwame Nkrumah, and the January and July 1966 coups that preceded the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970).

2 Algeria, 1965

On the eve of the first full decade of decolonization, the Soviet Union and the PRC both associated themselves with the “Nasserist line”. The Soviet Union’s relation-

10 J. Chen, “China, the Third World, and the Cold War”, in: R. J. McMahon (ed.), *The Cold War in the Third World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 93.

11 “Soviet Policy Towards Africa: April 1–30”, College Park, 1966, Program Files on Soviet Foreign Policy, 1946–1984, Africa, General Pre-1970 Chronology, Record Group 59 (RG59), National Archives and Records Administration (NARA II).

12 N. Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation: The Soviet Union and the Collapse of the Portuguese Empire in Africa, 1961–1975*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021, p. 101.

ship with North Africa was built upon its diplomatic manoeuvring and largesse during the Suez Canal Crisis, both of which made it a compelling alternative to the West for both political support and development assistance.¹³ The PRC's relationship with the Algerian *Front de libération nationale* (FLN) was premised on its ability to establish relations with regional actors and its willingness to then lend assistance to Algeria's struggle for independence. After Beijing successfully established commercial relations with Morocco, the PRC embassy in Tangiers became the base for this assistance. By the end of the year, Chinese experts were providing training and medical care on the border, especially in the area around Oujda, where a leading faction of the post-revolution FLN was formed.¹⁴

Algerian independence in 1962 roughly coincided with Beijing's intense lobbying of Africa and Asia to permanently exclude the Soviet Union from the Afro-Asian Movement. As explored by Hanna Jansen, among others, the Soviet Union was at this time engaged in a concerted effort to deepen its friendships with post-colonial countries and involve itself in Afro-Asian organisations.¹⁵ By 1965, Mao Zedong was primarily concerned with the Third Front project and the US bombing campaign on North Vietnam.¹⁶ On 15 June 1965, prior to a meeting with Ho Chi Minh, he spoke with Zhou Enlai, Chen Yi, and other key CCP leaders about the then upcoming Second Afro-Asian Conference, scheduled to be held on 20 June in Algiers. In relation to his central concern with maintaining and expanding an international united front against the expansion of the war in Vietnam against the backdrop of the turmoil wrought on the anti-imperialist world by the Sino-Soviet Split, Mao worried that Soviet participation in the conference would provoke a

13 O. A. Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Makings of Our Times*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 107–108.

14 D. Chau, *Exploiting Africa: The Influence of Maoist China in Algeria, Ghana, and Tanzania*, Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2014, pp. 40–41. Kyle Haddad-Fonda has argued that the impact of Chinese military assistance to Algeria has been exaggerated and that the affinity between the Chinese revolution and the Algerian revolution is an illusion. K. Haddad-Fonda, "An Illusory Alliance: Revolutionary Legitimacy and Sino-Algerian Relations, 1958–1962", *The Journal of North African Studies* 19 (2014) 3, p. 339. Indeed, while comparisons often were drawn between the Chinese and Algerian revolutions, the FLN itself saw no comparison. "The Algerian Problem: Comparison with the Chinese Struggle", Algiers, 1962, Dossier 37/01/11, Fond GPRA, 1958–62, Archives Nationales d'Algérie, Wilson Center Digital Archive (WCDA), trans. P. Asselin.

15 H. Jansen, "Soviet 'Afro-Asians' in UNESCO: Reorienting World History and Humanism", in: C. Stolte and S. L. Lewis, *The Lives of Cold War Afro-Asianism*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2022, p. 193.

16 The Third Front Project (三线建设) was a top-secret effort to develop the industrial and defence capacity of China's interior in preparation for possible war with either the United States or the Soviet Union or both. See C. F. Meyskens, *Mao's Third Front: The Militarization of Cold War China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

number of non-aligned Afro-Asian countries to abandon the Vietnamese cause.¹⁷ In a conversation between Zhou, Chen, and Ho, the conference was discussed at length. Ho had sources which indicated that thirty-eight countries in the Afro-Asian movement already supported Soviet participation. These were countries that avoided taking public stances on the issue for fear of offending Moscow or Beijing. Chen recalled how the Soviet Union had attempted to gain entry to the preparatory conference in Jakarta in April 1964 by granting ten ships to the Indonesian government. At that time, Indonesian Deputy Prime Minister Subandrio acknowledged the conflict of interest and enlisted the Afghan delegation to serve as a substitute host, but the fact that the Soviet Union could utilize its largesse in this way posed an obvious risk.¹⁸

This risk was already salient in Algeria. During his 1963–64 tour of Africa, Zhou was greatly annoyed by the fact that Algerian press coverage of his visit to Algiers shared front page space with a report on an Algerian delegation in Moscow negotiating an economic cooperation agreement with the Soviet Union. Algeria was, in the words of a British Foreign Office Report, “non-aligned twice over”, meaning both non-aligned in the Cold War and attempting non-alignment in relation to Moscow and Beijing. However, in the analysis of that same report,

She [Algeria] probably feels the Soviet bloc has more to give her than China, but against this she has a greater political affection for the Chinese, a sense of gratitude and of being in the same boat, though she is also a little frightened of them.¹⁹

By late 1963, Soviet aid to Algeria was increasing rapidly, tipping the scale in favour of Moscow. During those negotiations, Moscow offered a single credit grant of almost USD 250 million, which was more than the sum of China’s aid to Africa as a whole in that same year.²⁰ Just a day prior to the coup, on 18 June 1965, Ben Bella’s government signed yet another agreement with the Soviet Union. In this

17 《毛泽东年谱:1949–1976》 [Chronicle of Mao Zedong: 1949–1976], vol. 5, p. 500; 《周恩来年谱: 1898–1976》 [Chronicle of Zhou Enlai: 1898–1976], p. 1089.

18 Record of Conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai and Chairman Ho Chi Minh, Beijing, 15 June 1965, 106-00861-02, 中华人民共和国外交部档案馆 [Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China] (PRC-FMA), WCDA, trans. S. Mercado.

19 “Report on Chou En-lai’s Visit to Algeria from December 21–27 1963”, London, 27 December 1963, Foreign Office (FO) 371-175919, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA).

20 Ibid.; “Algeria in the Soviet Orbit: A Maghribi Mirage?”, March 1969, CIA-RDP78-03061A000400 020007-0, Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room (CIA-ERR); “An Evaluation of Chinese Communist and Soviet Aims and Activities in Africa – and implications for US Policy”, College Park, no date (early 1965), Program Files on Soviet Foreign Policy, Africa, General Pre-1970 Chron, RG59, NARA II. According to classified figures, between 1954 and 1965, excluding military aid, China pledged a total of USD 52 million to Algeria. Only USD

agreement, which was largely devised to assist Algeria spend more effectively the 1963 credit, the Soviet Union committed itself to providing technical training for 4000 Algerian workers as well as to deploying 200 doctors and 130 university instructors.²¹

The ground for Soviet participation in a Second Afro-Asian Conference had already been laid during Khrushchev's 1964 trip to the United Arab Republic, when Nasser agreed to characterize the Soviet Union as both a European and an Asian power in a joint communique.²² In May 1965, it was affirmed again at the Fourth Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference in Winneba, where the Indian delegation announced its support for Soviet attendance, calling the Soviet Union an Asian country.²³ With this, the UAR and India, the two most prominent members of the Afro-Asian movement aside from China (as well as the two largest non-bloc recipients of Soviet economic assistance), had both established grounds for Soviet attendance at a Second Afro-Asian Conference. Zhou concluded that due to the growing likelihood of Soviet attendance, the conference either had to be held on time or not at all.²⁴

What became known in China as the "19 June Incident in Algiers" prevented the conference from being held on time. Together with other members of the Oujda Group, Algerian Defence Minister Houari Boumédiène and Foreign Minister Abdelaziz Bouteflika placed Ahmed Ben Bella under house arrest just three days before Ben Bella had arranged to fire Bouteflika. Under the leadership of Boumédiène, the military centralized control under the aegis of a junta called the Revolutionary Committee. They began disestablishing the popular militias which had been a hallmark of Ben Bella's leadership and which threatened the monop-

2 million was ever drawn upon. "Article in *New York Times*", College Park, 21 February 1966, Records of the Bureau of African Affairs, Subject Files, 1960–65, Communism, RG59, NARA II.

21 *SSSR i Strany Afriki. Dokumenty i materialy. 1963–1970 gg.* [The USSR and African countries: documentary material (1963–1970)], part 1 (1963–1966), Moscow: Politizdat, 1982, pp. 75–77, 217–218. In contrast, while Beijing had contributed as much as USD 20 million to the Algerian independence struggle and had offered a total of USD 50 million by 1965, Algeria had only drawn on USD 2 million. NARA II, RG59, Records of the Bureau of African Affairs, Subject Files, Communism, 21 February 1966 Memorandum from William F. Scott.

22 "Sovmestnoe zaivlenie o peregovorakh mezhdu predsedatelem soveta ministrov SSSR N.S. Khrushchevym i prezidentom OAR Gamal' Abdel' Naserom" [Joint communique on negotiations between Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR N.S. Khrushchev and President of the UAR Gamal Abdel Nasser], *Izvestia*, no. 124, 25 May 1964.

23 李潜虞 [Q. Li], "中国对亚非人民团结大会的政策 (1957–1965)" [Chinese policy towards Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation (1957–1965)], 《外交评论》 [Foreign Affairs Review] 4 (2012), p. 126.

24 Record of Conversation between Zhou Enlai and Ho Chi Minh, PRC-FMA, WCDA.

oly of force enjoyed by the army.²⁵ The coup was swift, next to bloodless, and served to cement the Oujda Group as a fixture in Algerian politics right until today.²⁶

None of this was reported in commonly available Chinese newspapers. Instead, the Chinese newspapers continued to run pre-prepared coverage for the conference. For instance, a central part of *People's Daily's* prepared coverage included a renewed salvo of articles against Soviet participation in the conference. For most of 1965, Chinese officials and publications had been muted on the Sino-Soviet dispute. As discussed by Jeremy Friedman, the way that Afro-Asian forums had become arenas for the Sino-Soviet dispute had become grating and disruptive in the eyes of most African governments.²⁷ Even members of African trade unions were fed up. When a British High Commission official in Accra spoke with a representative of the All African Trade Union Federation in October 1965, he was told that during a visit to China, the trade unionists' hosts had "sought the whole time to score ideological points against the USSR" and that they had formed the opinion that "the Chinese regarded Africa as a battleground rather than a place where Africans wanted to live and work in peace". The author of this report quipped,

It sounds as if [John Kofi Barku] Tettegah has come to exactly the same conclusion as President [Félix] Houphouët-Boigny, that the Chinese are "a constant source of hate and war between men"! An odd couple to concur so completely about an issue common to both! I was really surprised by the evident bitterness which the Chinese had engendered. [J. P.] Addei said that you simply could not argue with them: they took an ideological standpoint on every single issue and could not be budged. Their main theme was armed insurrection to oust imperialist colonialists and neo-colonialist regimes, which were being supported by Soviet revisionists who should be ejected too, and so on.²⁸

²⁵ Earlier in 1965, Algeria and China had begun exchanging information and training on people's militias, something which had been the fulcrum of Ben Bella's control and had been a major impetus for the military's coup. Had this gone forward, it would have been an almost unprecedented opportunity for Beijing to deploy its aid on behalf of the security of a national government in Africa. "Office of the British Chargé d'affaires letter from TJB George", London, 29 December 1964, TNA, FO 371-1965.

²⁶ Bouteflika only resigned from power, after four full presidential terms, during the 2019 Hirak Movement. See W. B. Quandt, *Revolution and Political Leadership: Algeria, 1954–1968*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969; D. Ottaway and M. Ottaway, *Algeria: The Politics of a Socialist Revolution*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970.

²⁷ Friedman, *Shadow Cold War*, p. 115.

²⁸ John Kofi Barku Tettegah (1930–2009) was secretary-general of the All-African Trade Union Federation and an influential Ghanaian trade unionist, diplomat, and politician. J. P. Addei was part of the delegation which visited China with him. "Letter from J. D. M. Blyth", London, 13 October 1965, Dominions Office (DO) 195–232, TNA.

Recognising this “evident bitterness”, the Chinese delegates to the Afro-Asian Economic Seminar in Algiers on 28 February 1965 had refrained from the polemics which characterized past forums.²⁹

In the two months prior to the Second Afro-Asian Conference, this truce ended. The Chinese delegation at the Fourth Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference in Winneba on 9 May – the same conference in which the Indian delegation spoke in favour of Soviet attendance at Bandung II – unleashed a torrent of criticism of the Soviet Union for its approach to the war in Vietnam, characterising Soviet aid as being self-interested and even profit-seeking in the capitalist sense despite the dire situation of the Vietnamese anti-imperialist struggle.³⁰ The anti-Soviet polemic grew in intensity over the course of May and June 1965. On 18 June, in anticipation of the arrival of the Chinese delegation in Cairo the next day, *People's Daily* published an article titled “The Soviet Union is not eligible to attend the Afro-Asian Conference”. The article was reprinted in all major publications in China and put forward the official line that only countries which by their geography were situated in Asia or Africa or were still actively engaged in liberation struggles were eligible to attend the conference.³¹

The Chinese press only reported on the coup on 21 June when Bouteflika offered the assurance that the conference would go ahead as scheduled despite the coup.³² Bouteflika repeated his assurance the next day, telling the international press, “Struggle and love of freedom are traditions in Algeria [. . .]. It will not allow the Third World to be disappointed.”³³ For many governments, however, Ben Bella's arrest was simply intolerable. Some, like Turkey, announced that they would not attend no matter what. For others, like Kwame Nkrumah, who had

29 “The Afro-Asian Economic Seminar”, March 1965, CIA-RDP79T01003A002200190001-6, CIA-ERR.

30 Li, 《从万隆到阿尔及尔:中国与六次亚非会议(1955–1965)》 [From Bandung to Algiers: China and Six Afro-Asian Meetings (1955–1965)], Beijing: World Knowledge Publishing House, 2016, p. 160.

31 “苏联没有资格参加亚非会议” [The Soviet Union is not eligible to attend the Afro-Asian Conference], *People's Daily*, 18 June 1965.

32 “阿国家人民军政治部发表文告” [The Algerian national military issues: a communique] and “阿尔及利亚外交部长发表声明” [The Algerian Foreign Minister makes an announcement], *PLA Daily*, 21 June 1965.

33 “阿尔及利亚外交部长布特费利卡打法记者问” [Algerian Foreign Minister Bouteflika responds to questions from French journalists], *Cankao Shaoxi*, 22 June 1965.

hoped that Accra and not Algiers would be the capital of the Afro-Asian Movement, a delay was a chance to effect a change of venue.³⁴

When the Chinese delegation arrived in Cairo en route to Algiers on 19 June, UAR Prime Minister, Ali Sabri, told them that his government would wait and observe before coming to a decision about how to respond.³⁵ Zhou did not share his counterpart's patience. At a banquet in Cairo on 22 June, Zhou announced that he was committed to holding the conference as scheduled.³⁶ He sent a telegram to the Afro-Asian Conference summit announcing that China did not intervene in the domestic politics of other countries, which meant that China was officially neutral on the matter but effectively supportive of the military junta.³⁷ This was in marked contrast to the Soviet Union, which was vocal in its support and concern for Ben Bella. Moscow had authorized students at Lumumba University to hold a demonstration against the coup. While the Soviet press did not report on their demonstration, it did report on demonstrations by international students in London and elsewhere as well as the pro-Ben Bella demonstrations in Algeria itself.³⁸ In response to this, *PLA Daily* accused the Soviet Union of interfering in Algerian affairs.³⁹

For the many countries which viewed Ben Bella as an anti-imperialist icon, Zhou's insistence on salvaging the conference was nakedly self-interested. Fidel Castro said the coup was disgraceful, called Boumédiène a fascist, and criticized the CCP for abandoning Ben Bella so quickly. Qiao Guanhua was frustrated that Castro had "cursed both of us (meaning both China and the Soviet Union)" for recognising the new regime too early. Qiao reflected, "Of course, we cannot ap-

34 "外电报道:阿尔及利亚两名使节抵伦敦将向英联邦亚非国家说明阿尔及利亚局势" [Foreign reports: two Algerian envoys arrive in London to explain the situation in Algeria to the Asian and African Countries of the Commonwealth], *Cankao Shaoxi*, 21 June 1965.

35 《周恩来外交大事记:1949–1975》 [Chronicle of events of Zhou Enlai's diplomacy: 1949–1975], Beijing: World Knowledge Publishing House, p. 270.

36 "Chou En Lai's visit to Cairo 19 & 30 June 1965", London, 30 June 1965, FO 371-180991, TNA.

37 《陈毅年谱》 [Chen Yi Chronology], Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995, p. 1117; 《周恩来年谱:1898–1976》 [Chronicle of Zhou Enlai: 1898–1976], p. 1091.

38 "莫斯科卢蒙巴大学一些学生公开举行集会" [Some students of Lumumba University in Moscow held a public rally], *Cankao Shaoxi*, 29 June 1965; "K položheniiu v Alzhire" [The situation in Algeria], *Pravda*, no. 177, 26 June 1965; "Vzryv v alzhirskom 'Dvortse natsii'" [Explosion at the Algerian "Palace of Nations"], *Pravda*, no. 178, 27 June 1965.

39 "坚决反对苏联代表分裂国际青运恶劣行径" [We firmly oppose the bad behavior of the Soviet Union's representatives in splitting the International Youth Movement], *PLA Daily*, 3 July 1965.

prove of the way in which Boumédiène came to power, but it is not necessarily right to say that he is counterrevolutionary and a fascist.”⁴⁰

It soon became clear that Bouteflika had been stringing Zhou along using assurances about the conference. On 23 June, Nasser revealed to Zhou that Bouteflika had told him days before that the conference would “likely” be postponed.⁴¹ On 25 June, the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that the conference would be delayed one further day, but behind closed doors it had already been all but agreed to postpone.⁴² On 28 June, citing the fact that not enough delegations had arrived and the fact that there were disputes over the venue of the conference, the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that the conference was postponed to 5 November 1965. On 29 June, Nasser finally admitted to Zhou that on 23 June Bouteflika had not just said the conference would “likely” be delayed but that postponement was unavoidable.⁴³

Meanwhile, Afro-Asian support for Soviet participation in the Afro-Asian movement continued to grow. By 22 June, TASS was reporting that it was a “fait accompli” that Moscow would receive an invitation to attend the Second Afro-Asian Conference.⁴⁴ Shortly after the postponement of the conference, on 1 September, in a quid pro quo for debt relief, Nasser officially endorsed Soviet participation in the second Afro-Asian Conference in a joint communique issued in Moscow.⁴⁵ This enraged the Chinese leadership. Zhou told Guinea’s Minister of Communications on 3 September, “Nasser abandoned his promise to us.”⁴⁶ As the date of the conference drew nearer, Zhou insisted on yet another postponement.⁴⁷

40 Record of Conversation between Vice-Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua and North Korean Ambassador in China Pak Se-chang, Beijing, 23 July 1965, 106-00836-13, PRC-FMA, WCDA, trans. J. Tompkins.

41 《周恩来外交大事记:1949–1975》 [Chronicle of events of Zhou Enlai’s diplomacy: 1949–1975], p. 271.

42 “合众国际社报道:印、日、蒙等国策划推迟亚非会议的提案” [United Press international report: India, Japan, Mongolia and other countries plan to postpone the Asian African Conference], *Cankao Shaoxi*, 25 June 1965.

43 To console a disappointed Zhou, the “Four Man Summit” of Nasser, Zhou, Sukarno, and Ayoub Khan met briefly and issued a boilerplate joint communique committing themselves to ensuring the success of the postponed conference. 《周恩来外交大事记:1949–1975》 [Chronicle of events of Zhou Enlai’s diplomacy: 1949–1975], p. 278.

44 “Golos Irakskoi Pechati” [Voice of the Iraqi press], *Izvestia*, no. 146, 22 June 1965.

45 *The USSR and African Countries*, part 1, p. 254.

46 “Record of Premier Zhou Enlai’s Fourth Conversation with Guinea’s Minister of Posts and Communications Minister Diop”, Beijing, 3 September 1965, 108-01436-07, PRC-FMA, WCDA, trans. S. Mercado.

47 《周恩来外交大事记:1949–1975》 [Chronicle of events of Zhou Enlai’s diplomacy: 1949–1975], p. 282.

This doomed the conference forever, as aside from India and the UAR, China was considered a cornerstone of the organisation. On 2 November, the conference was postponed indefinitely.⁴⁸

Regarding the hastily made decision to support the Algerian coup regime, the Chinese leadership believed it had badly miscalculated. In a conversation with his North Korean counterpart, Pak Seong-cheol, and Vice Premier, Ri Ju-yeon, Zhou lamented,

We believed the words of the UAR and assessed it as good. Our assessment was wrong. Leaders of Asian and African countries in London at the time as well as the leaders of some black African countries had their doubts about Boumédiène and, in particular, Bouteflika. They were right. We should be frank. If we know something is wrong, then we admit it.⁴⁹

Reflecting on the events leading to the indefinite postponement of the Second Afro-Asian Conference and the Soviet Union's ability to use large offers of assistance to insinuate itself into the Afro-Asian movement, Chen Yi complained bitterly. While there was still some enthusiasm for Chinese assistance in the realm of light industry, in general there was the overwhelming preference for British, French, Soviet, or American aid. African countries, however, did not wish to give up what Chen called "the China card".

Chen took Boumédiène's Algeria as an example of holding onto "the China card". It seemed to him that Algeria was both rife with corruption and seeking to apply "Tito's experience – worker's self-management". It looked to France and the US for currency and food in exchange for oil, and to the Soviet Union for everything else. However, despite all this, "Algeria is also not willing to give up the China card":

Recently Algeria raised with us their desire for a large amount of aid. We are now considering whether or not to give it to them. Their objective is not to take China's aid. They want to use it to haggle with the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union.⁵⁰

He had similar complaints about the UAR and Mali which resonated with his North Korean counterpart. Pak shared this anecdote:

I once talked with persons of the UAR. They said that the United States, the Soviet Union, France, and China all wanted to provide aid. I asked them: Having borrowed so much, what

48 《周恩来年谱:1898–1976》 [Chronicle of Zhou Enlai: 1898–1976], p. 1102.

49 "Record of Second Conversation of Premier Zhou Enlai and Vice Premier Chen Yi with Foreign Minister Pak Seong-cheol", Beijing, 11 November 1965, 106-01476-06, PRC-FMA, WCDA, trans. S. Mercado.

50 Ibid.

will you do in the future? They said, in the future there will always be a way to resolve it. In any case, once the dam and factories have been built, all of them are on Egypt's land, and no one can move them. I asked if there were some way of handling it. They said that in the future when the regime is changed, the persons involved will no longer be there. We will then not acknowledge the debt. On hearing this talk, I paid no more attention to them.⁵¹

Chen listened and responded with his own anecdotes about excessive administrative expenditure and corruption by Western interests in both Guinea and Mali, stressing that this was precisely why the PRC placed a premium on the principle of self-reliance when considering whether to lend a country assistance. He predicted coups in both countries.⁵²

On the eleventh anniversary of the Algerian Revolution, Beijing was exceedingly restrained in comparison with its activities for the tenth. Whereas the tenth anniversary saw an enthusiastic capital-wide celebration with special editorials praising the revolution and a congratulatory message from Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Zhou, and Mao himself, the eleventh saw nothing of the sort. Press acknowledgement was minimal. While Zhou still rendered the “decent minimum reserved for Afro-Asian friends” during the eleventh anniversary celebrations in Beijing, he privately bemoaned the course Algeria had taken since the coup.⁵³ Zhou attended a banquet held by the Algerian ambassador along with Vice Premier and Minister of Finance Li Xiannian, who was brought along in hopes of carrying on economic links with Algeria despite the fraying relationship between the two countries.⁵⁴ By 1971, China was convinced that Algeria was firmly under Soviet influence due to its preference for, and continuous receipt of, Soviet military hardware.⁵⁵

3 Ghana, 1966

In February 1966, just three months after the publication of Yao Wenyan's critique of *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*, Kwame Nkrumah travelled to China.⁵⁶ He

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² He was correct about one of them. In 1968, Malian military lieutenant Moussa Traoré led a successful coup against Modibo Keita. He ruled first a military junta and then a one-party state until 1991. See J. Dedieu, “Dissidence, Dictatorship, and Democracy: The Struggles of Malian Exiles in Africa and Beyond, 1968–91”, *The Journal of African History* 61 (2020) 2, pp. 241–261.

⁵³ “Office of the British Chargé d'affaires”, London, 5 November 1965, FO 371–1965, TNA.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ “Letter from Gordon S. Barrass”, London, 28 April 1971, FO 21–806, TNA.

⁵⁶ “Dr. Nkrumah's Visit to Peking”, London, 2 March 1966, DO 195–232, TNA; “对有关《海瑞罢官》问题七个材料的批语” [Comments on seven materials related to “Hai Rui Dismissed from Of-

was en route to Hanoi, where he intended to call for peace talks as a representative of the British Commonwealth. This issue had become a major point of friction between Accra and Beijing and had been worsening since Nkrumah attended the Fourteenth Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in late June 1965, just before the original scheduled date of the Second Afro-Asian Conference. In hopes of dissuading him before his arrival in Hanoi, Nkrumah was invited to visit Beijing to discuss the matter further.

While Nkrumah was in the air from Rangoon, Myanmar, to Kunming on 24 February 1966, a coup occurred in Accra. Another military junta, calling itself the National Liberation Council (NLC), took power and began purging pro-Nkrumah elements from Ghanaian politics and society. They immediately shut down Nkrumah's ideological school and arrested hundreds. The arrestees included the editors of *Spark*, *The Ghanaian Times* as well as pro-Nkrumah ministers and other government officials.⁵⁷ As was the case with the Algerian coup over half a year earlier, publicly available Chinese news media did not report the coup until days later.⁵⁸ When Nkrumah arrived on 24 February, everything went forward as per protocol as if he was still a major head of state. He was welcomed by Zhou, Liu Shaoqi, and a twenty-one-gun salute at the airport.⁵⁹ Nkrumah, whose army was now ransacking his own country, inspected the Chinese military. Banners were hung throughout the thoroughfares of Beijing celebrating Sino-Ghanaian friendship. About half an hour before the banquet organized in his honour, the banners welcoming Nkrumah by name were quietly taken down.⁶⁰ The Ghanaian embassy's position on the coup was confirmed on 26 February 1966 when Nkrumah's portrait disappeared from its walls.

Despite the embassy's choice to stand with the new government, Nkrumah was defiant: "I am the constitutional head of the Republic of Ghana and the supreme commander of the armed forces. I will be back in Ghana soon."⁶¹ The governments of Guinea and Mali declared solidarity with him the same day.⁶² The

fice"], 《建国以来毛泽东文稿》 [Mao Zedong's writings since the founding of the People's Republic of China], vol. 12, Beijing: Central Literature Publishing House, 1996, p. 7.

57 "Polozhenie v Gane" [The situation in Ghana], *Pravda*, no. 59, 28 February 1966.

58 "Dr. Nkrumah's Visit to Peking", London, 2 March 1966, DO 195–232, TNA. "加纳部分部队发动政变" [Elements of the Ghanaian military launch a coup], *PLA Daily*, 5 March 1966.

59 "加纳总统恩克鲁玛到京 刘少奇主席设宴欢迎贵宾" [Ghanaian President Nkrumah arrives in Beijing: Chairman Liu Shaoqi cordially welcomes him], *PLA Daily*, 25 February 1966.

60 "Dr. Nkrumah's Visit to Peking", London, 2 March 1966, DO 195–232, TNA.

61 "The Situation in Ghana", *Pravda*, no. 57, 26 February 1966.

62 "K sobytiyam v Gane" [Events in Ghana], *Pravda*, no. 58, 27 February 1966.

bulk of the members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) joined in protesting against the coup, calling it an imperialist conspiracy.⁶³

Days later, Nkrumah was seen off by Zhou, Liu, and the Soviet Ambassador to the PRC and departed for Moscow on an Aeroflot plane. In Moscow, he was greeted by Andrei Gromyko as well as a number of Soviet officials.⁶⁴ After seeking support first from Beijing and then from Moscow, both without success, Nkrumah arrived for his life-long exile in Conakry on 2 March 1966.

Ghanaian-Soviet relations collapsed almost immediately after the coup. This was partly due to the fact that the Soviet Union had hosted Nkrumah during his return journey. This was also because the Soviet press and government immediately came out against the coup. From the beginning, the Soviet press reported on Nkrumah's movements and statements with minute detail. It reprinted the condemnations and recriminations of regional governments as well as the OAU's formal condemnation of the NLC.⁶⁵ It also reprinted Nkrumah's statement made on his arrival in Conakry, in which he said he was "on the road to Accra".⁶⁶ Perhaps most gallingly, *Pravda* translated and reprinted a Lusaka-based Zimbabwean newspaper comparing the coup against Nkrumah to the assassination of Lumumba, implying that the NLC was an imperialist puppet regime like Katanga.⁶⁷

Moreover, in a real sense, the Soviet Union was on the opposite side of the battle lines from the NLC.⁶⁸ During the coup itself, Soviet security personnel in Ghana found themselves in the crossfire. This was because, after a number of attempts on Nkrumah's life and a retaliatory purge of the police in the early 1960s, Nkrumah enlisted Soviet personnel to serve as part of his personal security force. Scores were killed in the fighting, and his Soviet security personnel were among the first to find themselves in harm's way. Curiously, Soviet press denied that any

63 “杜尔指责英国策划加纳政变” [Touré blames British plot for Ghanaian coup], *Cankao Shaoxi*, 2 March 1966; “The Situation in Ghana”, *Izvestia*, no. 51, 1 March 1966.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 “Vokrug sobytii v Gane” [Surrounding the events in Ghana], *Izvestia*, no. 54, 4 March 1966.

67 “Soobshcheniia iz Gany” [Correspondence from Ghana], *Pravda*, no. 69, 10 March 1966.

68 As shown by S. V. Mazov, the Soviet Union very nearly became militarily involved after the coup as well, sending a military vessel towards Ghana before Leonid Brezhnev was convinced to recall it following the efforts of the Soviet ambassador in Ghana and Alexei Kosygin. S. V. Mazov, “SSSR i gosudarstvennyi perevorot 1966 g. v Gane: po materialam rossiiskikh arkhivov” [The USSR and the 1966 coup in Ghana: based on Russian archival materials], *Istoriia mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii* [special issue Vneshniaia politika Rossii v XXI veke v otsenakh rossiiskikh i zarubezhnykh ekspertov (Russia's foreign policy in the 21st century as assessed by Russian and foreign experts)] 20 (2020) 3, p. 629.

Soviet security personnel were actually killed, but it was widely reported elsewhere that a dozen died in the first hours of the coup.⁶⁹

An explanation for why TASS denied that Soviet personnel had been killed might be that, in addition to saving face, the CPSU sought to give the NLC a way to normalize relations. After centralising power, the new authorities in Ghana announced that they would not alter the country's foreign policy and that they would continue to respect its agreements with socialist countries. The Soviet press welcomed this.⁷⁰ A report drafted on 21 March 1966 emphasized that there was not yet any evidence that the NLC was explicitly anti-socialist and that it was primarily pro-British, in search of better relations with its neighbours, dissatisfied with Nkrumah's mismanagement of the economy, and – crucially from the post-Twentieth Party Congress perspective of the CPSU – resentful of his cult of personality.⁷¹

The NLC subsequently showed little interest in normalising relations with the Soviet Union or with any other part of the socialist world, and its political orientation was ultimately revealed to be actively anti-socialist. On 3 June, the NLC groundlessly accused the Soviet Union of supporting a build-up of pro-Nkrumah forces in Guinea. It also excluded it from participating in a discussion held in London on the handling of existing economic aid and commercial credits under the new regime.⁷² With that, the NLC and the subsequent regime cut itself off from all aid and investment from the socialist world.⁷³ Doing so left Ghana burdened with scores of “bearded”, or unfinished, projects. According to the Soviet press, the

69 “Oproverzhenie TASS” [TASS Rebuttal], *Pravda*, no. 67, 8 March 1966.

70 “Gana: Polozhenie v strane” [Ghana: The situation in the country], *Izvestia*, no. 53, 3 March 1966.

71 “Spravka II Afrikanskogo otdela MID SSSR o gosudarstvennom perevorote v Gane” [Memo on the coup in Ghana by the Second African Department of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs], Moscow, 21 March 1966, f. 0573, o. 10, p. 20, d. 11, ll. 73–77, Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (hereafter AVP RF), in: S. V. Mazov, A. B. Davidson, A. S. Balezin, A. V. Voevodskiy, *Rossiia i Afrika. Dokumenty i materialy. 1961–nachalo 1970-kh* [Russia and Africa: Documents and Materials (1961 to the early 1970s)], Moscow: Rosspen, 2021, pp. 350–352.

72 “Zapiska II Afrikanskogo otdela MID SSSR o sovetsko-ganskikh otnosheniiakh psole gosudarstvennogo perevorota i nedostatkah v rabote sovetskogo posol'stva v Gane” [Memo on Soviet-Ghanaian relations after the coup and shortcomings in the work of the Soviet embassy in Ghana by the Second African Department of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs], Moscow, 11 June 1966, f. 573, o. 10, p. 20, d. 10, ll. 31–37, AVP RF, in: *Rossiia i Afrika*, pp. 352–356.

73 There was also evidence, not acknowledged in the West until a decade later, that the coup had been orchestrated with assistance from the CIA to install a pro-Western government in Accra. S. Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*, New York: Public Affairs, 2021, p. 497.

government had halted eighty construction projects since the coup. Most state-owned enterprises were threatened with closure.⁷⁴

Despite the wait and see approach taken by the Chinese press, this overall hostility towards the socialist world on the part of the NLC regime quickly spoiled relations between Beijing and the new Ghanaian government as well. On 27 February 1966, three Chinese aid personnel and one embassy staffer found themselves arrested by the new regime's police. The police demanded their identification, at which point the leader, Zhou Jinwen, protested that, according to the Sino-Ghanaian agreement, Chinese personnel were not required to carry identification and that they had none to carry in any case. The police then roughed them up and brought them to the police station, where they assaulted them with whips, gun stocks, fist blows, and kicks for as long as an hour. Zhou Jinwen was beaten so brutally his femur was broken.⁷⁵ On 28 February, the NLC demanded that all Chinese personnel leave immediately and cut the Chinese embassy's staff to eighteen.⁷⁶ That same day, Beijing lost its patience and gave up on maintaining cordial relations. The Chinese embassy sent the first of many apoplectic notes to the Ghanaian Ministry of Foreign Affairs documenting the assault on the Chinese personnel and alleging that the police had not merely engaged in brutality but had been acting on the explicit orders of the NLC.⁷⁷

On 4 March, the NLC accused China too of covertly supplying arms to pro-Nkrumah forces mustering in Guinea.⁷⁸ The Ghanaian government then accused the PRC of interfering in its internal affairs in contravention of the Non-Aligned Charter by training saboteurs in Ghana. On 19 March, the Chinese embassy called this accusation "absurd slander" and said that this was "obviously an attempt by the Ghanaian side to create pretexts for its recent unjustifiable expulsion of three diplomatic officials of the Chinese embassy and to shirk its responsibility for deliberately worsening relations between China and Ghana". The Chinese embassy insisted:

As is well known, the military experts as well as the economic and technical experts sent by the Chinese Government to work in Ghana were dispatched at the request of the Government of the Republic of Ghana [. . .]. They always worked in accordance with the arrangements made by the Ghanaian Government. They are beyond reproach.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ "Ekonomicheskii spad" [Economic downturn], *Pravda*, no. 168, 17 June 1966.

⁷⁵ "Text of Note to the Ghanaian Ministry of Foreign Affairs", London, 28 February 1966, DO 195–232, TNA.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, "Text of Aide Memoire to the embassy of the PRC", 28 February 1966.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, "Text of Note to the Ghanaian Ministry of Foreign Affairs", 28 February 1966.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, "Text of Note to the embassy of the PRC", London, 4 March 1966.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, "Text of Note to the Ghanaian Ministry of Foreign Affairs", London, 19 March 1966.

On the 24 March, the Ghanaian Ministry of Foreign Affairs retorted:

The so-called military experts employed by the old regime had undeniably trained the so-called freedom fighters in secret camps in Ghana for the purpose of carrying out subversive activities in independent African states with which Ghana enjoys friendly relations. Assuming that they were invited to Ghana by the deposed regime of Kwame Nkrumah does not in the view of the Ministry justify their illegal activities calculated to damage relations between Ghana and her neighbours.⁸⁰

The note asserted that the NLC had “concrete proof” of Chinese assurances to Nkrumah about providing military assistance to “overthrow the new regime”. The Ghanaian Ministry of Foreign Affairs then threatened to publish its evidence. This documentation was later published by the Ghanaian Ministry of Information in two short volumes titled *Nkrumah’s Subversion in Africa: Documentary Evidence of Nkrumah’s Interference in the Affairs of Other African States* and *Nkrumah’s Deception of Africa*. This evidence seemed to prove the worst narratives about Chinese assistance across Africa.

Finally, on 20 October 1966, the NLC delivered an aide-memoire announcing the suspension of relations.⁸¹ The *People’s Daily* said the suspension of relations was the same as “picking up a stone to drop on one’s own feet” and called the NLC “hysterically anti-China” (疯狂反华).⁸² When Chinese charge, Huang Shixie and the remainder of the staff of the Chinese embassy in Accra took their leave from Ghana on 3 November, their flight was grounded for two days, after which they returned to Beijing via Paris.⁸³ They arrived in Beijing on 11 November 1966. They were met by Chen Yi and welcomed with their very own copies of the little red book, a sign of the times.⁸⁴

As noted above, the CPSU gave the NLC the benefit of the doubt even as relations took a turn for the worse and the blood of Soviet military experts ran in the streets of Accra. N. G. Scherbakov explains this measured response to coups by

⁸⁰ Ibid., “Text of Note to the embassy of the People’s Republic of China”, London, 24 March 1966, DO-232, TNA.

⁸¹ “Text of an exchange of notes between Ghana Government and Chinese Embassy in Accra between 28 February and 31 March”, London, FO 371-187000, TNA.

⁸² “加纳当局片面宣布中断中加两国关系 我大使馆奉命向加纳当局提出最强烈抗议” [The Ghanaian authorities unilaterally announced the suspension of Sino-Ghanaian relations, our embassy was ordered to lodge the strongest protest to the Ghanaian authorities], *People’s Daily*, 30 October 1966.

⁸³ “加纳人民对毛主席和中国的热爱谁也限制不了” [No one can restrict the love of the Ghanaian people for Chairman Mao and China], *PLA Daily*, 7 November 1966.

⁸⁴ “我驻加纳使馆人员回京受到热烈欢迎” [The staff of the Chinese embassy in Ghana were warmly welcomed back to Beijing], *PLA Daily*, 11 November 1966.

noting that, following Khrushchev's removal in 1964, rumours abounded within the Soviet government that Stalin was going to be rehabilitated. To dispel these rumours in preparation for the Twenty-Third Party Congress in 1966, a series of documents were published reaffirming the Twentieth Party Congress' position on personality cults. In this spirit, the coup against Nkrumah was blamed on his personality cult, while the other coups were explained as being manifestations of a global "crisis of bourgeois parliamentarism".⁸⁵ Furthermore, as noted above, Telepneva points to how the "coup contagion" was seen as a temporary setback to be remedied by fostering deeper connections with African military leaders and that the coups illustrated the staying power of military governments as opposed to so-called "African socialist" governments.⁸⁶ As will be shown, this new approach was tested soon after the Ghanaian coup.

In contrast, the leadership in Beijing saw nothing to redeem the spate of coups which had swept the Afro-Asian world, frustrating Zhou's plans for a Bandung II and resulting in the loss of a close ally in Africa. As indicated by the Lin Biao quote in the introduction of this chapter, the anxiety produced by the Ghanaian coup was palpable in China and fed the paranoia of the architects of the then developing Cultural Revolution. The Propaganda Department of the Shanghai Central Committee put together a report exploring public opinion on the coup. While noting that many people believed the coup in Ghana was "nothing extraordinary" (没啥了不起) or that it might serve as a cautionary tale for African nationalist leaders against the treachery of their own militaries, there were citizens and cadres who were deeply concerned. Their concerns centred either around the idea that China had been taken advantage of (吃亏) or, more disconcertingly for the leadership, that China had found itself on the losing side of the Cold War.

For those concerned about China having been taken advantage of, the issues were that scarce resources were being wasted and that China was being humiliated. One short quote summed up these concerns, "It's always China which has the bad luck (倒霉). We give them things, and then there's a coup, and then even our experts end up getting attacked." Another was quoted as saying,

We send experts to support them, make painstaking efforts, pay enormous sums, send all this equipment to build a cotton textile mill in Ghana, and then if the experts run away,

⁸⁵ N. G. Shzherbakov, "'Afrika grez i deistvitel'nosti' – ppytki sovetskoi afrikanistiski soedinit' teroriiu i praktiku v 1960-e gg." ["Africa in Dreams and Reality" – attempts by Soviet Africanists to combine theory and practice in the 1960s], *Istoriia* 9 (2018) 5.

⁸⁶ Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation*, p. 101.

they [the Ghanaians] will make off with everything and the sunk costs will be huge. It's loathsome!⁸⁷

Those with these concerns concluded that China should not be too generous with its aid or too friendly with nationalist governments. Their instability posed too much of a risk of subjecting China to further waste and humiliation. More worryingly for the authorities, for those concerned about China being on the losing side, faith in the inevitable victory of socialism was diminishing. A respondent publicly aired their worries in a Jingan District bank: "Now the imperialist camp is making coups here, making coups there, going against China here, going against China there. Can we compete?" Another respondent said: "Now the situation everywhere is in chaos, only the capitalist countries are not in tumult [. . .]." These respondents all viewed the world as shifting right and not left and that if things continued this way, this would not be to China's advantage (对我们不利), particularly if it continued squandering blood and treasure in faraway "nationalist" countries even while circumstances remained difficult in socialist China.⁸⁸

4 Nigeria, 1966–1970

On 5 March, *Izvestia* ran a ponderous editorial reflecting on the fact that while military coups might seem to be reactionary, the January 1966 coup in Nigeria led by Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi showed that this was not always the case and that they could become progressive with time.⁸⁹ Where the Algerian Revolutionary Committee and the Ghanaian NLC had both received withering critiques in the Soviet press, the January 1966 coup in Nigeria was lauded as a model of how military coups could play a progressive role in African politics. In May-July 1966, another coup was staged against the predominantly Igbo leadership of the January regime. This time, the countercoup leaders were criticized as reactionaries, at least initially. The Soviet Union looked on in horror with the rest of the world as pogroms were waged against Igbos in the north. In preparation for a then upcoming Soviet mission to the majority Igbo Eastern Region, Igbo military general Odu-megwu Ojukwu openly espoused socialist politics in a bid for Soviet support. Just

⁸⁷ “中共上海市委宣传部办公室关于部分干部、群众对加纳政变的反映材料” [Materials of the Propaganda Department Office of the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee on the reaction of some cadres and masses to the coup in Ghana], Shanghai, 6 March 1966, A22-1-905-26, 上海市档案馆 (SHMA).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ “Nakal bor’by v Afrike” [The intensity of the struggle in Africa], *Izvestia*, no. 55, 5 March 1966.

before the arrival of the mission, he gave a speech to the Nigerian Council of Trade Unions saying that socialism was the only philosophy fit for a developing country.⁹⁰ Seeing this, Soviet press reported on the developing Biafran War in a relatively neutral fashion.

Less than a year later, the Soviet leadership changed its mind. In late July 1967, the Soviet government decided to make arms transfers to the Nigerian federal government in Lagos so it could prosecute a brutal war against Biafran secession. In August 1967, Moscow sold fifty MiG-15 and -17 fighters to the federal government. To help train pilots for these jets, they deployed a large number of military technicians under cover of a cultural agreement. Twenty-five of these jet fighters had already arrived by November 1968. The Soviet Union also gave seven Ilyushin-28 jet bombers and a large quantity of 500-lb bombs to Lagos free of charge. Soviet officers provided technical support and even took part in the military command of the federal government.⁹¹ This combination of military aid and arms transfers was key later in the conflict. MiG-17s were used to run interdictions and interceptions of Biafra's last remaining supply line, which were night-time airlifts from Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon. Moreover, while Moscow provided a steady stream of arms and military vehicles just weeks after fighting broke out, Nigerian civil servants and military leaders complained about the slow speed on Western deliveries until the end of the war.⁹²

Outgunned and outmanned, the Biafran regime was quickly encircled and subjected to a blockade by the federal government. Biafra then came to Western public attention due to the mass starvation of Biafran civilians which inevitably followed. Nonetheless, Moscow decided to support the federal government for the entire duration of the horrific war for three reasons. First and most straightforwardly, the pre-existing Soviet-Nigerian relationship was seen as promising. The Soviet Union saw Nigeria as on the way to industrialisation and therefore of socialist orientation, and the labour movement represented by the Nigerian Trade Union Congress was largely pro-Soviet. Despite the socialist rhetoric of the Biafran leadership, Nigeria as a whole was seen as having a potentially proletarian class-character and was therefore worth defending, especially in the context of its then ongoing project to reinvigorate relations with existing African governments.

Second, considering the position taken on the Sand War and the Ogaden War in 1963 and 1964, respectively, the attitude of the OAU towards Biafran secession

⁹⁰ "Memo from D. F. Hawley", London, 1 April 1967, Colonial Office 1027-124, TNA.

⁹¹ "Memo from G. G. H. Walden", London, 8 October 1968, FCO 21-58, TNA; "Central Intelligence Bulletin", 22 November 1968, CIA-RDP79T00975A012600050001-6, CIA-ERR.

⁹² "Central Intelligence Bulletin", 22 November 1968, CIA-RDP79T00975A013900070001-0, CIA-ERR.

was easy to anticipate. Since the secession of Katanga in the Congo Crisis, the line on separatism in Africa had been clearly drawn: post-colonial Africa was to follow the principle of *uti possidetis*. Having had the unnatural and illogical borders of the colonial era foisted upon them, there were concerns that separatism could be a contagion capable of infecting any country in Africa if it was allowed to infect one. Supporting Biafran independence, as Tanzania did, would set a government at odds with the majority of African governments. The Soviet Union's choice to support Lagos therefore placed it among the majority in Africa.

Third, Soviet support for the federal government fit into the overall bipolar dynamic of the Cold War. Despite initially welcoming the January 1966 coup, Ironsi was later understood to be a flag carrier for the British Crown, while Yakubu Gowon was evaluated in a more positive light because he had been trained in Nkrumah's Ghana.⁹³ The Soviet government also perceived that there was interest among large American and British oil conglomerates in supporting Biafran independence. Western oil conglomerates, scandalously for London and Washington, continued to pay out royalties to the separatist government in the early days of the fighting. This drove the call of the Soviet-leaning Nigerian Trade Union Congress to nationalize all Nigerian oil.⁹⁴ Support for Lagos therefore lined up with the longstanding foreign policy of opposing Western monopolistic interests in Africa. Moreover, the Soviet government recognized that the slow pace at which American and British aid and arms transfers arrived in the hands of the federal government was exacerbating concerns in Lagos that the West was acting behind the scenes in favour of their oil conglomerates in Biafra. There were even rumours that, in addition to the West "dragging its feet", British advisors to the Nigerian army and US intelligence agents were engaged in covert sabotage.⁹⁵ As the war wore on, American relief aid to Biafra was increasingly seen by Lagos as "aid and comfort for the enemy" and as cover for military support. The fact that Biafra's sole bomber was an American-made B-26 further irked Lagos.⁹⁶

For these reasons, the Soviet Union and its press treated Biafra as yet another Katanga. Following the conclusion of their mission in early March 1967, Soviet of-

93 Shcherbakov, "Africa in Dreams and Reality".

94 "Directorate of Intelligence Weekly Summary", 28 July 1967, CIA-RDP79-00927A005900060001-3, CIA-ERR.

95 "Iz dnevnika A.I. Romanova. Iz zapisi besed c. O. Avolovo o sovetskoi voennoi pomoshchi Federal'nomu pravitel'stvu Nigerii 5 i 12 iulia 1967 g." [From the diary of A. I. Romanov. Record of S. O. Awolovo's conversations about Soviet military assistance to the Federal Government of Nigeria on 5–12 July 1967], Moscow, 12 July 1967, f. 0579, p. 11, p. 13, d. 4, l. 48, 50–52, AVP RF, in: *Rossia i Afrika*, pp. 500–501.

96 "Directorate of Intelligence Weekly Summary", 3 January 1969, CIA-RDP79-00927A006800050001-4, CIA-ERR.

ficials directly analogized Ojukwu to Tshombe and Shell-BP to the Union Minière. They ignored the socialist rhetoric of Biafra's leadership, characterising them instead as "extreme nationalists".⁹⁷ In this way, the Soviet Union cast itself as standing against the balkanisation of African states through its support of a unified Nigeria. Furthermore, the relative speed with which the Soviet Union made its deliveries played a major role in what Maxim Matusevich calls the "triumph of pragmatism". As he explores in a chapter called "Strange Bedfellows", Soviet-Nigerian connections proliferated rapidly during the war.⁹⁸ The Soviet Union's steadfast support for the federal government led to Lagos' decision to sign a long-term technical and economic cooperation agreement in addition to the aforementioned cultural agreement signed in March 1967. These agreements not only firmly established Soviet economic interests in Nigeria but also granted the Soviet Union an additional Consulate General in Nigeria's north as well as three new cultural establishments across the country.⁹⁹ According to Gowon himself, they also facilitated further military support by the Soviet Union throughout the war.¹⁰⁰ At the close of the war, Lagos signed a scientific cooperation agreement with the Soviet Union as well as the protocol governing the economic and technical cooperation agreement.¹⁰¹ As a consequence of this rapid improvement in relations, Nigerian students made up the largest proportion of sub-Saharan African students

97 "Memo from D. F. Hawley", London, 1 April 1967, Colonial Office 1027-124, TNA; "Nigeriiskii uzul" [The Nigerian knot], *Pravda*, no. 74, 15 March 1967.

98 M. Matusevich, "Strange Bedfellows: An Unlikely Alliance Between the Soviet Union and Nigeria During the Biafran War", in: A. D. Moses and L. Heerten (eds.), *Postcolonial Conflict and the Question of Genocide: The Nigeria-Biafra War, 1967–1970*, New York: Routledge, 2018, pp. 207–208; See also S. V. Mazov, "Sovetsko-nigeriiskie otnosheniia nakanune i v nachale grazhdanskoj voyny v Nigerii, 1966–1967 gg. (po materialam rossiiskikh arkhivov)" [Soviet-Nigerian relations on the eve and beginning of the Nigerian Civil War, 1966–1967 (Based on Russian Archival Materials)], *Istoriia* 11 (2020) 8. Something which goes unaddressed by both Matusevich and Mazov is that Soviet Union did covertly hedge its bets. Before the declaration of the Republic of Biafra, there were clandestine discussions over the provision of military and police equipment to Biafra should it achieve independence. "Soviet Military Aid to the Eastern Region of Nigeria", London, 3 March 1967, FO 181-1203.

99 So much so that Moscow was content to ignore Gowon's continuation of his predecessor's arrests of communists and leftists in Nigeria. "Soviet and Chinese Communist Relations with Africa", College Park, no date (sometime between 1970 and 1971), Program Files on Soviet Foreign Policy, Africa, General Pre-1970 Chronology, RG 59, NARA II.

100 J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977, p. 80.

101 "The President's Daily Brief", 16 January 1970, CIA-RDP79T00936A007900130001-6, CIA-ERR.

in the Soviet Union from 1967 to 1975.¹⁰² One of Africa's most important countries – one which had resisted socialist advances for the entirety of its independence to that point – drew close to the Soviet Union for the first time primarily thanks to the Soviet Union's decision to provide limited but strategically significant military support to the federal government in a time of need.

The Chinese government's experience of the Nigerian Civil War was very different. In the context of the disruption brought about in its foreign affairs work by the Cultural Revolution, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hastily took a position diametrically opposed to that of the Soviet Union. Chen Yi personally attacked the federal government on 18 September 1968, on the eve of the OAU meeting which decided in the federal government's favour against the Biafran separatists. He accused the Soviet Union of "going as far as openly working with American and British imperialism to support the Nigerian Federal Military Government in carrying out the large-scale massacre of the Biafran people".¹⁰³ China's support for Biafra was backed up by arms. This was carried out via a scheme whereby Tanzania directly gave its own arms to Biafra while Beijing committed itself to replacing those arms in Tanzania with its own for free.¹⁰⁴ Nyerere's government was the first government in the world to recognize the Republic of Biafra, and he called on the rest of the world to help it. From then on, Chinese arms were shipped in significant quantities to Biafra via Tanzania. The Biafran leader Ojukwu openly praised China's help in this regard, leading to the speculation that China was directly involved in gun running. Zhou later claimed no aid was being provided to Biafra, but also stated that as it was waging a war of liberation, it could not be ruled out entirely.¹⁰⁵ Just a day prior to Chen Yi's statement, Zhou had already elaborated on this policy. When questioned on the current situation of liberation movements in Africa by a sceptical Zambian delegation, Zhou raised the situation Nigeria specifically, stating:

102 C. Katsakioris, "Creating a Socialist Intelligentsia", *Cahiers d'études africaines* 57 (2017) 2, pp. 259–288.

103 "陈毅副总理设宴热烈欢迎南也门代表团" [Vice Premier Chen Yi hosted a banquet to warmly welcome the delegation of South Yemen], *People's Daily*, 19 September 1968.

104 This must have been a convenient way for Nyerere to update his army's weaponry. This also explains the arrival of Czech and East German arms noted by early British reports on the situation. "China/Guinea", London, 22 April 1969, Foreign and Colonial Office (FCO) 65–251, TNA; "Communist China's Presence in Africa", 20 June 1969, CIA-RDP79-00927A007100070002-7, CIA-ERR.

105 It was also noted by this report that, because China was not a member of the UN, it would not be bound by the arms embargo imposed by the UN. "China/Guinea", London, 22 April 1969, FCO 65–251, TNA.

Our position is certain. Wherever there is oppression, or wherever the progress of popular liberation is being trodden upon, we will provide support. If Nigeria can adopt a method of national unity based in equality between the peoples (of Nigeria), we will respect the policy of non-interference from before [. . .] as this is what we announced our principles were when we visited Africa.¹⁰⁶

While Zhou might have believed China's "position was certain", it did not appear to be so. Unlike the Soviet Union's resolute support for the federal government, China's support for Biafra was ephemeral and unpopular even with its closest allies.

For example, Guinea resolutely endorsed the OAU line on secession as inimical to African interests. Guinea also held that Biafra was primarily supported by what it considered to be reactionary governments in Africa.¹⁰⁷ While receiving a Guinean delegation in October 1968, Chen Yi was chided by his guests, who told him that the "Sino-Soviet rivalry should not be obtruded into African domestic affairs", meaning Biafra. Chen Yi was then apologetic for his statement the previous month. He told his guests: "In Africa, the struggle of the anti-imperialist revolutionary forces against imperialism, modern revisionism and their lackeys is very complicated."¹⁰⁸ China was largely silent on the issue after this and never recognized Biafra, as Tanzania had done. US observers at the time believed that China's odd stance was the result of Julius Nyerere's support of the movement, not any deeply held commitment to the Biafran cause.¹⁰⁹ However, just as the Soviet Union's position on the successive coups in Nigeria was undergirded by its pre-existing relationship with Nigeria, regional politics, and the bipolar dynamic of the Cold War, there were several clear political and ideological reasons why this is not a sufficient explanation.

Most obviously, until it found itself largely isolated from the West as a result of its brutal blockade of Biafra, Nigeria still recognized Taipei, not Beijing. As observed by Alaba Ogunsanwo and later Bruce Larkin, China's support for separatist and other "freedom fighters" was reserved for two types of movements in this period. The first were those in open struggle against white-minority regimes. The other was limited support to movements within countries which still recognized Taipei. Such support ended whenever those countries switched recognition, as Ni-

¹⁰⁶ 《周恩来年谱:1898 – 1976》 [Chronicle of Zhou Enlai: 1898–1976], p. 1232.

¹⁰⁷ In addition to South Africa and Rhodesia, this included Gabon and the Ivory Coast, two pro-French governments. Gabon in particular participated in the covert provision of French weapons to Biafra. French meddling in Nigeria was no doubt also on their minds.

¹⁰⁸ "Memo from G. G. H. Walden", London, 8 October 1968, FCO 21–58, TNA.

¹⁰⁹ "Communist China's Presence in Africa", CIA-ERR.

geria did in 1971 in a bid to ameliorate its own growing international isolation in the wake of the siege of Biafra.¹¹⁰

The Biafran War also provided a context in which China might directly confront the Soviet Union. While Nigeria held no relations with Beijing aside from commercial ones, it was becoming closer and closer to the Soviet Union, largely as a consequence of Soviet support for the federal government against Biafra. Meanwhile, Biafra became vocally anti-Soviet following Moscow's decision to arm the federal government in 1967. Its anti-Soviet stance eventually evolved and Ojukwu made open appeals for support from Beijing as the sole communist country which might understand its plight. Moreover, following Chen Yi's chiding by the Guinean delegation in October 1968, while Chinese press largely fell silent on Biafra, it did continue to mention Biafra whenever it was convenient for criticising Soviet foreign policy.¹¹¹

Concurrently, the ambient radicalism of the Cultural Revolution and pressure on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to prove fealty to Mao's line cannot be ignored. Biafra was engaged in a veritable people's war, and in Zhou's words, "(w)herever there is oppression, or wherever the progress of popular liberation is being trodden upon, we will provide support". In the context of the Cultural Revolution, this should be taken literally, as to do otherwise might result in being accused of capitulating to the revisionists.¹¹² Previously held principles of non-interference and respect for sovereignty had been overturned in favour of anti-revisionist radicalism and adventurism. A member of the Chinese leadership arguing *not* to support the Biafran struggle for liberation against the revisionist arch-nemesis of the CCP risked being accused of being a hidden enemy, a mortal risk to take during the Cultural Revolution.

110 See A. Ogunsanwo, *China's Policy in Africa, 1958–71*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1974; B. Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949–1970: The Foreign Policy of the People's Republic of China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.

111 See this for a characteristic example of Biafra being lumped in with a laundry list of "revisionist" military adventures: "大肆进行对外扩张和武装侵略 – 勾结美帝妄图重新瓜分世界 – 苏修疯狂玩弄军事冒险绝没有好下场 全世界人民和苏联人民愤怒反对苏修的狂妄侵略野心" [Wantonly carrying out foreign expansion and armed aggression – Colluding with US imperialism in an attempt to divide the world – The Soviet revisionists are madly toying with military adventures which will never come to a good end – People all over the world and the Soviet Union angrily oppose the arrogant aggressive ambitions of the revisionists], *People's Daily*, 22 March 1969.

112 See J. Niu, "1962: The Eve of the Left Turn in China's Foreign Policy", *Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) Working Paper No. 48* (2005).

5 Conclusion

While the Soviet Union immediately criticized the Revolutionary Committee during the 1965 Algerian coup, its connections with the country not only went largely undamaged but quickly resumed their expansion as a result of its status as the de facto alternative to Western economic and military assistance. The PRC, as acknowledged by Chen Yi, was at a profound disadvantage in this regard. In fact, in Algeria, Moscow was able to both reap the rewards of avowedly supporting the popular Ben Bella, thereby strengthening its standing in the Afro-Asian movement, and make inroads on its new path of enhancing linkages between itself and the militaries of developing countries. The 1966 coup against Nkrumah was undoubtedly a heavy blow against both the Soviet Union and the PRC's work in Africa, but it also affirmed the need for a change of course which, for the CPSU, was already well underway. Moreover, the overthrow of Nkrumah easily found an explanation among the Soviet intelligentsia, then preoccupied with a renewed critique of personality cults. Meanwhile, in Beijing, Nkrumah's fate served to exacerbate growing paranoia on the eve of the Cultural Revolution.

The efficacy of responding to the "coup contagion" by doubling down on building up connections between Moscow and the political and military elite of African countries passed its first real test in Nigeria. S. V. Mazov argues against Matusevich, writing that calling the Soviet Union's choice to support the Nigerian federal government a "triumph of pragmatism" is a vast oversimplification and that the integration of Soviet personnel and expansion of its presence in Nigeria resulted from it having "learned the lessons" of its experience in Algeria and Ghana.¹¹³ In this light, prioritising direct connections between Moscow and its partners in Africa and elsewhere rather than outward regime orientation was perfectly compatible with Soviet ideology at the time, and at the same time, this allowed it to capitalize on the phenomenon of coups then sweeping the developing world, at least in the short term.¹¹⁴ Chen Jian is likely correct that the reduction in the number of states supporting PRC accession to the United Nations in 1966 was a result of its insistence on dragging the Sino-Soviet dispute into Afro-Asian fora and diplomatic missteps like its abandonment of Ben Bella, not to mention its "aggressive foreign policy" as evidenced by its training of guerillas in

¹¹³ Mazov, "Soviet-Nigerian Relations on the Eve and Beginning of the Nigerian Civil War".

¹¹⁴ For the quagmire that developed out of this approach, see R. Yordanov, *The Soviet Union and the Horn of Africa during the Cold War: Between Ideology and Pragmatism*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016.

Ghana as documented and published by the NLC.¹¹⁵ It does appear that the Soviet Union was, if not more pragmatic, more flexible and adaptable in its nuanced application of its principles to concrete circumstances in Africa at the time than the PRC was, subject as it was to the domestic ideological imperatives of the Cultural Revolution.

115 Chen, "China, the Third World, and the Cold War", p. 93.

Part II: **Turning Points**

Introduction

The second section of this volume concerns the ‘turning point’, as part of the “Second Cold War” or “Second Scramble for Africa”,¹ that saw the decolonization of Portugal’s African colonies, including Angola and Mozambique in 1975, and the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980. From an ‘African’ point of view, this was a decisive phase in the political destiny of southern Africa and in the political radicalization of sub-Saharan Africa. From the point of view of the Third World, it was part of a third revolutionary wave of successful revolutions, seven of which took place in sub-Saharan Africa (Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Angola, and Zimbabwe).² From the point of view of the actions of non-African communists in Africa, this phase corresponds to, and is inseparable from, a “broader offensive against imperialism, against forces of reaction and war, under the leadership of the USSR”, which was characterized by a committed and widespread multi-dimensional intervention in Africa.³

The Portuguese Revolution of April 1974, two months after the beginning of the Ethiopian Revolution, transformed the political landscape of Southern Africa, opening “the door to guerrilla triumphs in five African Portuguese colonies and Zimbabwe” and “ushering in the first major third world and sub-Saharan revolu-

1 A. Drew, “Comparing African Experiences of Communism”, in S. Pons, N. Naimark and S. Quinn-Judge (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Communism*, vol. II: *The Socialist Camp and World Power 1941–1960s*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 534–538; T. Gültstorff, “Between Economic Interests and Cold War motives – German activities in the Central African Region during the Second Scramble for Africa”, in: C. Békés and M. Kalmár (eds.), *Students on the Cold War: New Findings and Interpretations*, Budapest: War History Research Center, pp. 218–219. See also F. Gerits, “The Ideological Scramble for Africa. The US, Ghanaian, French and British Competition for Africa’s Future, 1953–1963”. PhD Thesis, Florence, EUI, p. 4; J. K. Nyerere, *The Second Scramble*, s.l.: 1962; D. T. Osabu-Kle, “African Blood for Imperialist Interests: The First and Second Scrambles For Africa”, <https://carleton.ca/africanstudies/wp-content/uploads/African-Blood-For-Imperialist-Interests.pdf>.

2 F. Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, second ed., London: Verso, 1984 [first ed. 1983], pp. 86–61; G. C. Novati, “Communist Party in Sub-Saharan Africa”, in: S. Pons and R. Service (eds.), *A Dictionary of 20th-Century Communism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022, p. 222.

3 Hilger, “Communism, Decolonization and the Third World”, p. 337. See also *Documents Adopted by the International Conference of Communist and Workers’ Parties* (Moscow, June 5–17, 1969). USSR Novosti Press Agency, Moscow, 1964; S. Pons, J. Fürst, M. Selden (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Communism*, vol. III: *Endgames? Late Communism in Global Perspective, 1968 to the Present*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 17–18.

tionary crisis of the 1970s". In the five Portuguese colonies, through an undemocratic modus operandi, the transfer of power was assumed by the leadership of Marxist-leaning liberation movements.⁴ This was a departure from the perspective and action of the Portuguese Communist Party, which, in the course of the Carnation Revolution, became, from mid-1974 to mid-1975, a party in power, including in Angola. Together with sectors of the military left, it was able to play an important role in the authoritarian transfer of power to the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau, to FRELIMO in Mozambique and to the MPLA in Angola. Thanks to the PCP, it was possible to maintain exclusive Portuguese ties and interests in these newly independent African countries for a few years.⁵ As happened in the Italian case, the PCP may have used its strong regional influence in the south of Portugal (the Alentejo) to extend its diplomacy and parallel co-operation with the established power in the new states of Lusophone Africa until the 1980s.⁶

Angola was one of those African countries that, according to Marina Ottaway's controversial perspective, had "Marxist-Leninist leaders [that] appeared to blend orthodoxy and self-interest in their own brand of Afrocommunism".⁷ Helder Adegar Fonseca and João Ribeiro describe the action of multiple communist actors from the western and 'eastern' camps in the process of transferring and consolidating the MPLA's power in Angola (1974–1977). They show how the history of decolonization can be biased if it focuses on the agency of the colonisers and external anti-colonisers in the process of transfer of power. Seen from an "African" perspective, Cuban and global East involvement in the "scramble" for

4 Halliday, *Making of the Second Cold War*, p. 86.

5 For instance, the company COTECO (Sociedade de Cooperação Técnica/Society for Technical Cooperation), which included 'retired Portuguese officers' linked to the PCP, as Mendes Correia and Rosa Coutinho, maintained a long-standing programme of technical and military cooperation with the government of Angola from 1979 onwards, cf. "José Eduardo dos Santos", *Jornal de Angola*, 13 September 2017. See also Rosa Coutinho's intervention at the first MPLA Congress in Luanda, as guest of honour: "Actividades Anti-MPLA em Lisboa criticadas no Congresso de Luanda", *Diário de Notícias*, 10 December 1977, p. 6.

6 An example of these practices could be the discreet (secret) and militarily protected assistance given to military personnel and senior MPLA leaders in regional hospitals (Évora, Portalegre) in the early 1980s, assisted by doctors 'returned' from Angola (1975–1976), sympathisers of the MPLA and of the PCP, followed by an health recovery stay on local farms owned by 'friends'. These events have taken place, but the extent of involvement beyond the Angolan embassy is still not entirely clear [testimony of a hospital administrator from Évora].

7 M. Ottaway, "Afrocommunism ten years after: crippled but alive", in: *Issue. A Journal of Opinion* 16 (1987) 1, pp. 11–17. Other African countries were turning to Marxism-Leninism at this time:

Angola⁸ gave the MPLA a new leading role, emphasising its long-standing strategy, with the collaboration of the Portuguese communists, to seize exclusive political power during the transition. Fonseca and Ribeiro suggest that the involvement of the socialist community in Angola and Mozambique was not exclusively driven by ideological stimuli and disinterested solidarity. Then Berthold Unfried's chapter concerns the evolution, institutional framework, and practical aspects of the civil dimensions of Cuba's intervention in Angola and Ethiopia. He presents new data on ideological, organisational, and modus operandi aspects of Cuban civilian 'internationalism' in Africa and argues for a Cuba-specific model of 'disinterested' and transformative internationalism.

Barbora Menclová then discusses the flourishing of diplomatic, political, and economic relations and cooperation between Czechoslovakia and two of the new African states that emerged from decolonization of the Portuguese Empire. The assessment of Czech state and institutions agency with and in Angola and Mozambique show how a small communist state endeavoured to take advantage of the 'unique opportunity' that Lusophone decolonization seemed to represent for the 'socialist communities' and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON).⁹ Menclová evaluates Czechoslovakia's relative interest in the two countries and seeks to explain why cooperation was more successful with Mozambique, a country considered less significant than Angola in Czechoslovakia's sub-Saharan Africa policy.

In this period, other Western communist parties, on the road to a "Eurocommunist" path, reaffirmed their anti-colonial position, supporting "national solutions", transfers of power, revolutions or irredentist demands, as in the case of Eritrea, as long as they distanced themselves from revolutionary solutions and direct political and military interventionism by non-African actors like Cuba and the Soviet Union. The PCI used the Italian regionalization of 1970 to promote a parallel diplomacy and a new model of socialist solidarity not directed by the state: political support, propaganda, and social and hospital assistance was given by Emilia Romagna for African recipients, including various liberation move-

Benin, Congo, Madagascar, and Somalia also officially embraced that ideology, but their adherence was more rhetorical than effectively constitutionalised.

8 E. George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965–1991: From Che Guevara to Cuito Cuanavale*, London: Frank Cass, 2005, p. 60.

9 AMSZ/Departament V (państwa Azji, Afryki i Bliskiego Wschodu): 8.81_W1_1975: "Sprawozdanie z pobytu w Angoli w celu przekazania pomocy wojskowej dla MPLA" [Report of (Kwiryń Greła's) stay in Angola to provide aid to the MPLA (PKSZNAA)], 13.12.1975.

ments in southern Africa, such as the MPLA and FRELIMO,¹⁰ and, from 1976, SWAPO and ANC.¹¹

We need more substantive historical studies on the long political, military, and economic occupation, presence and cooperation of the large and small non-african socialist countries in the African countries that experienced it. We need research agendas and new sources, to revisit political hot topics. These might include Cuban and Soviet political and military influence, the “Nito Alves coup”, or the ‘spurious Cuban victory’ in Angola.¹² We need exploration of the economic bilateral or multilateral [CMAE] ties between non-african socialist communities and Africa, and discuss the “business of solidarity” thesis, that is that, between 1954–1991, a “global economy of developmental aid and technical cooperation competed with, and eventually eclipsed, socialist internationalism’s emphasis on anti-imperialism and global economic justice”.¹³ Such research-based cognitive deepening will allow for a more robust understanding of the medium and long-term effects of the efforts of projecting different socialist models of modernity both in the African Third World and in the communist countries involved in that process.

10 Borruso, “The Italian Communist Party and the Horn of Africa”, pp. 228–234; S. Pons, *I comunisti italiani e gli altri. Visioni e legami internazionali nel mondo del Novecento* [The Italian communists and the others: visions and international links in the 20th century world], Turin: Einaudi, 2021, p. 260; R. Lambote, “Angola: oil wealth threatens Angola Independence [*Humanité/Noticias*, 26 January 1974]”, *Translations on Africa (JPRS)*, 1503, 13 August 1974; “PCE [Spanish Communist Party] and PPS [Morocco’s Party of Progress and Socialism] Urge Decolonization of Spanish Territories (AL-BAYANE, Casablanca, in French, 16 October 74, 1, 4)”, *Translations on Africa (JPRS)*, 1549, 22 November 1974; Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, “A Refusal to Become ‘Black Russians’ or ‘African Cubans’”, *The New York Times*, 8 December 1976, p. 27; W. P. Esterhuyse, “The International Political Status of the African National Congress”, *Africa Insight* 19 (1989) 1, pp. 28–37.

11 W. Minter and R. Hengeveld, “Western Europe, South Africa, and Transnational Solidarity Networks, 1960–1994”, in: A. J. Temu and J. N. Tembe (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Struggles: Contemporaneous Documents, 1960–1994*, vol. IX, Dar-es-Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2014, pp. 142–145; A. Lissoni and A. Pezzano (eds.), *The ANC between Home and Exile: Reflections on the Anti-Apartheid Struggle in Italy and Southern Africa*, Naples: Università degli studi di Napoli (DAAM); see also the contribution by Arianna Pasqualini, in this book.

12 See also George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, pp. 3, 213–256.

13 P. Q. Wright, “The Business of Solidarity. Socialist Yugoslavia and Development Aid in Non-Aligned Africa (1954–1991)”, PhD Thesis, Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois, 2020, p. 3; M. Trecker, *Red Money for the Global South: East-South Economic Relations in the Cold War*, London: Routledge, 2020.

Helder Adegar Fonseca and João Fusco Ribeiro

7 Communists as Agents of Decolonization in Angola's Transition to Independence (1974–1977)

With regard to Angola, an enormous mistake has been made in considering it, for many if not all purposes, as just one chapter in a work called “decolonization”. Because I believe that Angola deserves a separate work and that it was a mistake to try to apply identical ideas, principles, and practices to territories that are so different from each other. Angola deserved its own reflection, not necessarily for neo-colonialist purposes, but because its reality, its land, its people, its political movements, and its wealth had nothing, nothing at all, to do with that of the other Portuguese colonies. [. . .]. I will complain to history about what I've seen done here.¹

Carlos Teixeira da Mota, Portuguese Diplomat, Luanda, 1975

The Angolan decolonization process was characterized by extensive external involvement, influence, and intervention by various state and non-state actors. In addition to the military and diplomatic advantages that this internationalization provided to Angola's competing nationalist movements, the issue of *external* agency was also actively used by these movements as a powerful weapon of political delegitimization by accusing internal rivals of “non-Africanity”² – e.g., the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) as an “instrument of the Soviets and the whites”,³ the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) as a “tribal group supported by the Americans”,⁴ and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) as a “puppet of South Africa”.⁵ Among the

1 A. D. Silva (org.) *Carlos Teixeira da Mota, O Primeiro Diplomata Português em Angola (Junho 1975–Maio 1976)* [Carlos Teixeira da Mota, The First Portuguese Diplomat in Angola, June 1975–May 1976], Lisbon: Tinta da China, 2020, hereafter referred as *Carlos Teixeira da Mota's Diary* (extracts quoted are from notes of 17 January and 18 October 1976)

2 See J.-M. Mabeko-Tali, *Rótulos Atribuídos, Rótulos Assumidos: Memórias e Identidades Políticas em Angola, da Luta Armada Anticolonial ao 27 de Maio de 1977 (1960–1977)* [Labels attributed, labels assumed: memories and political identities in Angola, from the anti-colonial armed struggle to 27 May 1977 (1960–1977)], Lisbon: Guerra e Paz, 2023.

3 The National Archives (TNA)/Access to Archival Databases (AAD)/US Department of State (USDS): D740305-0639, “Angola. Holden Roberto/Easum Conversation”, 24 October 1974.

4 Social History Archive (AHS), Social Sciences Institute (ICS)/José Laranjo (JL), *Movimentos Nacionalistas (Nationalist Movements)* /61, “XV Anniversary, 1972”, p. 19.

5 Tchiweka Documentation Association (ATD)/Lucio Lara Archive (ALL): b-04108, “Mutumbula”, n. d., p. 1.

non-African *external* actors, the combined actions of socialist states, non-ruling communist parties, and leftist movements significantly shaped the outcome of the transfer of sovereignty in Angola.

Due to the geopolitical importance that the Angolan question acquired in the strategic panorama of the Cold War in 1974, academic literature began to deal with the effects of the decolonization process as early as 1975–1978.⁶ Since then, approaches dealing with the foreign policy and interventionist dynamics of global and regional actors in the context of the transition process of Angolan independence have been a field of considerable historiographical production.⁷ In this literature, there is broad consensus on the role of non-African communist actors in the progress and outcome of the transfer and consolidation of power by the MPLA in the Angolan transition.⁸ But the actions and choices of the Angolan partners should not be under-

6 An essential list of this first generation should include: G. Wasserman, “The Politics of Consensual Decolonization”, *African Review* 5 (1975) 1, pp. 1–15; J. Marcum, “Lessons of Angola”, *Foreign Affairs* 54 (1976) 3, pp. 407–425; K. Adelman, “Report from Angola”, *Foreign Affairs* 53 (1975) 3, pp. 558–574; C. Legum and T. Hodges, *After Angola: The War over Southern Africa*, London: Holmes & Meier, 1976; T. Bruneau, “Out of Africa and into Europe. Towards an Analysis of Portuguese Foreign Policy”, *International Journal* 32 (1977), pp. 288–314; A. Mazrui, *Africa’s International Relations: The Diplomacy of Dependency and Change*, London: Heinemann, 1977; R. Hallet, “The South African Intervention in Angola (1975–1976)”, *African Affairs* 77 (1978) 308, pp. 347–386; J. Valenta, “The Soviet-Cuban Intervention in Angola (1975–1976)”, *Studies in Comparative Communism* 11 (1978) 2, pp. 3–33; W. Burchett, *Southern Africa Stands Up: The Revolutions in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa*, New York: Urizen Book, 1978.

7 O. A. Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Makings of Our Times*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005; E. Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013; P. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa 1959–1976*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002; P. Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria and the Struggle for Southern Africa (1976–1991)*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016; D. Spikes, *Angola and the Politics of Intervention: From Local Bush War to Chronic Crisis in Southern Africa*, Jefferson: McFarland, 1993; E. George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965–1991: From Che Guevara to Cuito Cuanavale*, London: Frank Cass, 2005; V. G. Shubin, *The Hot ‘Cold War’: The USSR in Southern Africa*, London: Pluto Press, 2008; N. Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation: The Soviet Union and the Collapse of the Portuguese Empire in Africa, 1961–1975*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021; S. R. Butler, “Into the Storm: American Covert Involvement in the Angolan Civil War, 1974–1975”, PhD Thesis, University of Arizona, 2008; T. M. Sá, *Os EUA e a Descolonização de Angola* [The US and Angola’s Decolonization], Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2011; S. O’Sullivan, *Kissinger, Angola and US-African Foreign Policy*, New York: Routledge, 2020; G. Winrow, *The Foreign Policy of the GDR in Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; P. Wright, “The Business of Solidarity. Socialist Yugoslavia and Development Aid in Non-Aligned Africa (1954–1991)”, PhD thesis, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 2020.

8 P. Gleijeses, “Havana’s Policy in Africa, 1959–76: New Evidence from Cuban Archives”, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 5 (1995), pp. 5–20; Westad, *The Global Cold War*,

estimated.⁹ Just to cite one example: the then high-ranking member of the ruling elite of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), Zita Seabra, wrote in her memoirs:

The comrades of the PAIGC, MPLA and FRELIMO had fought for independence with arms in hand, and their struggle had given a decisive impetus to our liberation, to the fall of the Portuguese fascist regime. [. . .] We therefore had to make our revolution in Portugal and contribute to the transition of power in the former Portuguese colonies to the PAIGC, the MPLA and FRELIMO [and, with them,] we were connected and in communication. [. . .] In all the former colonies, power had passed directly into the hands of comrades who were linked to the international communist movement, [who were] supported by the Soviet Union.

Such transitions were also “extremely important political victories” for the PCP. In the spring of 1975, the “armed forces were completely undermined and divided . . . [and] the PCP had played a decisive role” in all these processes.¹⁰

A second characteristic of the relevant literature is that it offers segmented perspectives, centred on the actions of specific external actors in the framework of a Portuguese metropolitan-centric view of the Angolan decolonization process.¹¹ Information about the concrete involvement of certain communist actors is unbalanced: besides Alex Macleod’s seminal contribution, there is little on the PCP’s role in the decolonization process.¹²

Employing entangled and comparative lenses, this chapter explores the agency of communist actors in the complex, uncertain, and politically fluid process of Angola’s transition to independence. Our aim is to identify the communist actors, the evolutionary relationships cultivated with the MPLA, and the typology

pp. 207–249; P. Gleijeses, “Marxist Revolutions and Regimes in Latin America and Africa in the 1970s”, in: S. Pons, J. Fürst, and M. Selden (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Communism*, vol. III: *Endgames? Late Communism in Global Perspective, 1968 to the Present*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 102–106; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, pp. 230–273; A. J. Temu and J. N. Tembe, *Southern African Liberation Struggles: Contemporaneous Documents, 1960–1994*, 9 vols, Dar-es-Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2014; Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation*, pp. 167–210.

9 A good example of this ambiguity, in the case of FRELIMO (Mozambique) versus the USSR, is mentioned by Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 243; Westad, “Moscow and the Angolan Crisis”, p. 29.

10 Z. Seabra, *Foi Assim* [That’s how it was . . .], Lisbon: Aletheia, 2007, pp. 163, 249, 295, 316; see also “Annex 2: Summary of the interview with Eng. Ernesto Mulato UNITA’s Vice President [Luanda, 2007]”, in: Temu and Tembe (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Struggles*, vol. II, p. 192.

11 This type of bias in the Soviet perspective was identified by Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation*, p. 199.

12 A. Macleod, “Portrait of a Model Ally: The Portuguese Communist Party and the International Communist Movement, 1968–1983”, *Studies in Comparative Communism* 17 (1984) 1, pp. 31–52; Sá, *EUA e a Descolonização de Angola*, pp. 92–105, 167–176.

of interactions produced by these partnerships (friends, allies, patrons, collaborators, intermediaries, and facilitators).¹³ We examine how communist actions impacted the pace, timing, intensity, and model of the transition from colonial rule to sovereign state. We pay particular attention to the interplay, exchanges, and coordinated strategies between the MPLA's and non-African agents of decolonization as well as their convergences and divergences on the Angolan crisis.

Our chronology extends from 25 April 1974 to 10 December 1977, from the opening of the transition process to the consolidation of power by the MPLA as the MPLA-Labour Party (MPLA-PT), and a Afrocommunist party and state. This timespan allows us to glimpse whether this was the strategy of the MPLA leadership from the outset or whether it was the result of the dynamics of the political process. We draw on several categories of sources, including state diplomatic documentation from Portugal, Cuba, the Soviet Union, and Eastern bloc countries; military and intelligence reports; MFA negotiation transcripts and meeting notes; diaries, memoirs, and autobiographies; newspapers, bulletins, and communiqués, including an extensive collection of information extracted from a wide range of international media. Systematic cross-exploration of new archives and material from recent historical biographies on several of the key players provide information that complements, clarifies, or challenges established interpretations.

This chapter does not follow the classic Portuguese-centric stages attributed to Angola's decolonization,¹⁴ an institutional periodization that guides the narra-

13 It should be noted that support for the MPLA in the communist world, though overwhelming, was not universal (e.g. Romania, China, and North Korea): G. M. Carter and P. O'Meara (eds.), *International Politics in Southern Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, pp. IX–XV; L. Watts, "The Third World as a Strategic Option: Romanian Relations with Developing States", in: P. Muehlenbeck and N. Telepneva (eds.), *Warsaw Pact Intervention in the Third World: Aid and Influence in the Cold War*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, p. 112; J. Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015, pp. 183–209; J. Owoeye, "The Metamorphosis of North Korea's African Policy", *Asian Survey* 31 (1991) 7, pp. 640–641.

14 On the phases of "Portuguese decolonization" as a process of metropolitan leadership, see, e.g., M. A. Oliveira (ed.), *A Descolonização Portuguesa. Aproximação a um Estudo* [Portuguese decolonization: an approach to a study], vol. II, Lisbon: Instituto Amaro da Costa, pp. 3–53, 121–131; N. MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, London: Longman, 1997, pp. 195–246; G. Khadiagala, "Negotiating Angola's Independence Transition. The Alvor Accords", *International Negotiations* 10 (2005), pp. 293–309; J. S. Cervelló, "Da África à Europa: quando Portugal descolonizou" [From Africa to Europe: when Portugal decolonized], in: M. Loff and M. Pereira (eds.), *Portugal: 30 Anos de Democracia (1974–2006)* [Portugal: 30 Years of Democracy (1974–2006)], Porto: Ed. Universidade do Porto, 2006, pp. 103–113; CEH-MPLA (ed.), *História do MPLA* [History of the MPLA], vol. II (1967–1976), Luanda: CDIH-CC-MPLA, 2014, pp. 169–243; F. T. Pimenta, *Descolonização de Angola e Moçambique. O comportamento das minorias brancas (1974–1975)* [Decoloniza-

tive in the belief that these stages, marked by the decolonizer, had the same relevance for all political actors. Nor does it follow a Cold War “periodization” of Portuguese decolonization, which interrupts specific entanglements of the Angolan case, sidelining the concrete expectations, actions, and perspectives of the main African local actors.¹⁵ Our perspective emphasizes the political dynamics that involved the MPLA’s trajectory and the main non-African “left” and communist players with the greatest presence in Angola’s transition. The first section analyses the action of the political left and in particular the Portuguese political-military left and the PCP, which was particularly active in leading the transition process until its fragmentation at the end of July 1975. The second section focuses on the action and intervention of the “internationalist friends” and partners of the communist states, in particular the Soviet bloc and Cuba, which, rekindled on the eve of the Alvor Accords, was decisive for the MPLA’s seizure of power.

1 The MPLA, “Portuguese Friends”, and an Exclusive Transfer of Power

By May 1974, there was broad sociological sympathy and a certain political intimacy between the new elites of the Portuguese civil, political, and military left and the MPLA, its leaders and, in particular, Agostinho Neto’s circle,¹⁶ despite growing disagreement over the ways¹⁷ and speed¹⁸ of decolonization. In contrast to the UPA-FNLA, which bore the anathema of the 1961 massacre at the start of

tion of Angola and Mozambique. The behaviour of white minorities (1974–1975)], Goiânia: Ed. UFJ, 2014, pp. 71–111; A. O. Pinto, *História de Angola. Da Pré-História ao Início do Século XXI* [History of Angola. From prehistory to the beginning of the 21st century], Lisbon: Mercado de Letras, 2016, pp. 721–933; P. J. P. Correia, “Da Descolonização. Do proto-nacionalismo o pós-Colonialismo” [Decolonization. From proto-nationalism to post-colonialism], PhD thesis, Coimbra University, 2017, pp. 169–228; P. A. Oliveira, “Decolonization in Portuguese Africa”, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.41>.

15 N. Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation: The Soviet Union and the Collapse of the Portuguese Empire in Africa, 1961–1975*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021, pp. 167–200.

16 Seabra, *Foi Assim*, p. 250.

17 A. J. Telo, *História Contemporânea de Portugal, Do 25 de Abril à Actualidade* [Contemporary history of Portugal, from 25 April to the present day], vol. II, Lisbon: Presença, 2008, pp. 152–153; L. N. Rodrigues, *Marechal Costa Gomes. No centro da tempestade. Biografia*. [Marshal Costa Gomes. At the centre of the storm. Biography], Lisbon: A Esfera dos Livros, 2008, p. 147.

18 J. Vieira, *Mário Soares. Uma Vida* [Mário Soares. A Life], Lisbon: A Esfera dos Livros, 2013, p. 305.

the armed struggle and the near-ignorance of UNITA's existence, the MPLA and Neto got good press and benefited from a very favourable and proactive general climate in the metropolis of the "belatedly" decolonizing empire, stemming from student, political, and prison camaraderie, ideological affinities, and a web of both longstanding and newly formed personal and family connections with the Portuguese left. The view that power should be quickly transferred to the MPLA was vocal and often published.¹⁹ Like the PCP,²⁰ members of the Portuguese Provisional Government and the MFA had been in "unofficial contact" with the MPLA since May 1974 and developed a persistent sympathy for Agostinho Neto and the so-called "Presidential faction".²¹ By July 1975, however, this quasi-unanimity of the militant metropolis, with political hostility to the other Angolan political actors as its counterpoint, was exhausted. The PCP was moving towards "the second phase of the socialist revolution" and the preparation of "a military and civil coup", while the moderate political and civilian sectors, led by Mário Soares and the Socialist Party, were distancing themselves both from the internal revolutionary path underway and from the not yet unfinished process of Angolan decolonization.²²

It was in this metropolitan context that a long meeting took place between Ernesto Melo Antunes, the foreign minister of the Portuguese Provisional Government and member of the Council of the Revolution, and the MPLA leadership. Although the minister had no formal ties to the PCP, he established private communication channels and shared information with the party early in his political career.²³

The meeting took place shortly after the MPLA had driven the FNLA out of Luanda with an army supplied by the Soviet Union, a recent FAPLA brigade

19 25 April Documentation Centre (CD25A)/António Belo Collection (FAB)/Manuel Silva Barata Sub-Collection (SbMSB): D8, "Reunião de Melo Antunes, com dirigentes dos Movimentos de Libertação", 13 May 1975; H. Ruas (ed.), *A Revolução das Flores* [The revolution of flowers], vol. I, Lisbon: Aster, 1977, pp. 250–275; Rodrigues, *Marechal Costa Gomes*, p. 188; P. Correia, "A descolonização no pensamento de Ernesto Melo Antunes" [Decolonization in the thought of Ernesto Melo Antunes], in: CPHEMA (Dir.), *Liberdade e Coerência Cívica: O Exemplo de Ernesto Melo Antunes* [Freedom and civic coherence: The example of Ernesto Melo Antunes], Lisbon: Ancora ed, 2015, pp. 57–78.

20 ATD/ALL/D0189.000.121, "Telegrama de Manuel Jorge a A. Neto (Quilamba)", 20 May 1974.

21 Cervelló, "Da África à Europa", pp. 114–115; Correia, *Do lado Certo*, p. 168.

22 Cervelló, "Da África à Europa", pp. 103–113; D. Castano and M. I. Rezola, *Conselho da Revolução 1975–1982. Uma Biografia* [Council of the Revolution 1975–1982], Lisbon: Ed. 70, pp. 103–120; Rodrigues, *Marechal Costa Gomes*, pp. 255–289; Seabra, *Foi Assim*, pp. 244, 263, 271–275.

23 Seabra, *Foi Assim*, pp. 208, 271.

trained in Soviet Crimea,²⁴ and, according to the account of Rui Bebian, the support of the “first contingent of Cuban soldiers and a lot of heavy weaponry”.²⁵ Antunes said in the meeting that “all agreements are already outdated”. For Neto, what “remained to be seen was whether the progressive Portuguese government” would abandon its “incomprehensible” policy of “positive neutrality”, which seemed to the MPLA to be “in practice . . . nothing”, in favour of active complicity. He added: “We, the MPLA, feel increasingly isolated and less supported by what we considered our only allies – the MFA (Armed Forces Movement). The MFA wants to leave Angola to its own devices. That’s why we have taken [our] measures. These incidents [“Battle of Luanda”] are the result of our disappointments.”²⁶ Antunes evoked a recent past not limited to “the MFA’s sympathies for the MPLA”: Portugal’s inevitable recognition of the three liberation movements [MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA] “which Africa and the world recognized” and which were tacitly accepted by the MPLA, and he reaffirmed Portugal’s fidelity “to the commitments made, including the pacts we signed in order for the three movements to compete peacefully with each other”. With regard to the MPLA, however, he noted that “our sympathy has often been shown [in the recent past]: the MPLA has solved its problems thanks to our support”.²⁷ He continued to explain that contact with the MPLA had always been easier, but nonetheless:

We feel uneasy when the MPLA takes the initiative [to seize power by force]. This is because we see those we consider our friends behaving in a disturbing way, which is not the result of dialogue between us. We are surprised by the strategy we see in the MPLA, which is causing us terrible embarrassment at all levels, even in Portugal. That’s why we’re worried – we’re even more worried about the behaviour of our friends. In previous months, when the FNLA attacked, we were worried, but it’s not the same worry. On the one hand, there has been less violence, and on the other hand, we feel more comfortable acting because we have less affinity with the FNLA. A friend causes us more trouble than an enemy. The MPLA’s line causes us terrible embarrassment, which can have serious consequences, even in Portugal.”²⁸

²⁴ Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation*, p. 177.

²⁵ R. Bebian, “Guerra Civil em Luanda – a experiência de um militar militante” [Civil War in Luanda – The experience of a military militant], https://ces.uc.pt/ficheiros2/files/setentaeequatro_pt-Sob%20fogo%20cruzado%20da%20independencia%20a%20Guerra%20Civil%20de%20Angola.pdf (accessed 23 March 2023). Rui Bebian is a Portuguese academic historian. In July 1975, he was in Luanda as militiaman officer in the Portuguese armed forces. See also Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation*, p. 185.

²⁶ National Archive of Torre do Tombo (ANTT)/Ernesto Melo Antunes Collection (EMA): Cx. 124, Pt. 4, “Relato de Conversa. Reunião em 14 de julho de 1975 entre o MPLA e a parte Portuguesa, em Belas, Luanda”, 14 July 1975 [copy available in CD25A/FAB/SbMSB: Doc. 11].

²⁷ ANTT/EMA: Cx. 124, Pt. 4, “Relato de Conversa”.

²⁸ ANTT/EMA: Cx. 124, Pt. 4, “Relato de Conversa”. The term “friend” was commonly used in these political circles as a sign of great closeness. See this book, chapter 4, pp. 70–71.

In his memoirs, Antonio de Spínola referred to a report he had received from Luanda at the beginning of August 1974. In it, the members of the ruling Angolan military Junta under the leadership of Admiral Rosa Coutinho and the future High Commissioner Leonel Cardoso were included in the list of ten military officers “identified as leading elements of the local MFA with Marxist tendencies”.²⁹ When Peter Loebarth, a representative of the Afro-American Labour Centre (AALC), visited Luanda in October 1974 and “met at length with two leaders of the military Junta whom he described as bright young leftists”, he said that “the Junta [. . .] considers itself a *fourth independence movement*”.³⁰

From August to November 1974, the MPLA as Neto’s faction was a particularly direct beneficiary of the actions of the Junta Governativa de Angola (JGA). In response to the formation of the pro-MPLA Provisional Government of Angola (GPA),³¹ on 3 September, the MPLA accepted a tacit ceasefire agreement, and announced a meeting of the Central Committee to discuss “the question of a common front with the FNLA” and, more importantly, the decision to move its headquarters to Angola as part of a “consolidation programme” for Angolan independence.³² This was the starting point for an autonomous MPLA strategy to achieve leadership and hegemony of power in the transition process.³³

In the following months, support for the MPLA from the JGA took on enormous importance. Examples include the unofficial distribution of resources, including the funding of activities,³⁴ the militant occupation of the official radio sta-

29 António de Spínola, *País sem Rumor. Contributo para a História de uma Revolução* [A country without direction: contribution to the history of a revolution], Lisbon: Editorial Scire, 1978, p. 318. TNA/AAD/USDS: D750077.0492, “Conversation with Senior Portuguese Air Force Officer”, 5 March 1975.

30 TNA/AAD/USDS: D740288-0534, “Portuguese Attitudes towards Angolan Liberation Groups”, Kinshasa, 10 October 1974 (*italics in original*).

31 The JGA [Junta Governativa de Angola] was sworn in on 24 July 1974 and ruled until 27 January 1975. Its composition was a choice between MFA-Metropolis [MFA-M] and MFA-Angola [MFA-A]. See G. Ribeiro, *A Vertigem da Descolonização: Da Agonia do Exódo à Cidadania Plena* [The vertigo of decolonization: from the agony of exodus to full citizenship], Lisbon: Inquérito, 2002, p. 73. TNA/AAD/USDS: D740288-0534, “Angola Junta appoints Cabinet”, 6 September 1974; *Notícia*, n° 772, 21 September 1974; *Diário de Luanda*, 18 September 1974.

32 TNA/AAD/USDS: D740247-0918, “MPLA Considers Transfer of Headquarters”, Dar es Salaam, 6 September 1974.

33 ATD/ALL/ D0200.000.027, “Final Declaration of the Inter-Regional Conference of MPLA militants”, 12–19 September 1974; F. T. Pimenta, *Angola, os Brancos e a Independência* [Angola, the whites and independence], Porto: Afrontamento, 2008, p. 404.

34 In addition to the subsidy of 30,000,000 escudos that was allocated to each of the liberation movements on a monthly basis after the ceasefire was formalized, there were reports of the existence of “cash payments made for various purposes” by the JGA to the MPLA, through a “lady

tion, newspapers (*ABC*, *Diário de Luanda*, both funded by the Angolan state) and, especially, military support.³⁵ In early October 1974, the president of the Junta, Rosa Coutinho, reported in person to the Council of State on the evolution of the decolonization process in Angola:

When I arrived in Luanda [late July 1974], the MPLA was militarily very weak, even though it was the movement best equipped in terms of senior and middle personnel. We could even say that *it couldn't catch a cat by the tail*. I was the one who armed and equipped it, with material from the Portuguese Armed Forces, to put it on an equal military footing with the FNLA and UNITA. That, I think, was my duty as Portugal's highest representative in Angola: to give all the liberation movements full equality of opportunity.³⁶

This included direct support for the formation of a new MPLA army, whose founders were recruited from the “considerable contingent” (1500) of Angolan “officers, sergeants, and squads” (“coloured” and “white”) who took part in the Luanda demonstration in mid-July 1974. In reality, the military situation of the Neto faction in Cabinda and northern Angola in mid-1974 was extremely precarious, while the eastern front was essentially in the hands of the dissident Chipenda.³⁷ A new army had to be created: the People's Armed Forces of Liberation of Angola (FAPLA), which was institutionalized in mid-September 1974 during the Interregional Conference of MPLA militants (12–20 September, Moxico). Its secret patron was the president of the JGA, Rosa Coutinho.³⁸

who in recent months has been Admiral Rosa Coutinho's secretary”. See *Notícia*, N° 791, 8 February 1975; Correia, *Do lado certo*, p. 209.

35 *Notícia*, N° 772, 21 September 1974 and N° 791, 8 February 1975; A. Belo, *Angola e a Independência. Diário da Transferência da Soberania* [Angola and independence: diary of the transfer of sovereignty], Lisbon: Colibri, 2022, p. 89.

36 D. F. Amaral, *O Antigo Regime e a Revolução. Memórias Políticas (1941–1975)* [The Old Regime and the revolution: political memoirs (1941–1975)], Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1995, pp. 312–313 (italics in original).

37 National Defense Archive (ADN): CEMGFA (CEMGFA, Office of the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces): Cx. 39, Pt. 5–9: “Situação em Angola: Exposição do General-Comandante-Chefe das Forças Armadas de Angola: Situação em Cabinda e no Norte de Angola. Reunião em 30 de Janeiro de 1974”, 1974; ANTT/ASC: Cx. 42, Pt. 1, “Relatório de Situação 2/74 do Secretariado-Geral da Defesa Nacional”, January 1974.

38 Following Edmundo Ferreira, “some of these soldiers remained undercover in the Angolan Armed Forces and the MFA” (Testimony by Edmundo Ferreira, an Angolan who took part in the military demonstration in Luanda in July 1975). See also M. Júnior and M. M. Difuiila, *História Militar de Angola* [Military history of Angola], Luanda: Kilombelombe, 2015, p. 196; F. Agostinho, “Guerra em Angola: As Heranças de Luta de libertação e a Guerra Civil” [War in Angola: the legacies of the liberation struggle and the Civil War], MA Dissertation, Lisbon: Academia Militar, 2011; *Diário de Lisboa*, 16 July 1974; *Diário de Luanda*, 24 September 1974.

The installation of the first FNLA, MPLA, and UNITA delegations in Luanda, between 4 and 10 November was accompanied by and stimulated a new and prolonged wave of strikes and in-fighting; it promoted reorganization, the suspension of activities, and even the integration of some leaders of the pacifist parties into the liberation movements; and, according to Cervelló, some of the “forces excluded from the political process attempted the last manoeuvres to prevent decolonization as planned”.³⁹ In this atmosphere, the MPLA sought to achieve two objectives in line with its strategy. The first was the successful military occupation of Cabinda through a “military coup” on 2 November 1974 “under the leadership of Commander N’Dozi” and with the participation of the “progressive sector of the Portuguese armed forces” stationed in the enclave. A long period of cooperation between the MPLA and the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) in the administration of the territory was established. In the eyes of the Liberation Front of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC), this was the moment when Cabinda was “forcibly annexed” by Angola.⁴⁰

The second objective was the attempt to control militarily and politically the country’s capital. According to Carreira, “at the beginning of November 1974, when it definitely turned out that unification with the FNLA and UNITA was impossible, the most revolutionary group in the MPLA Zone decided to occupy Luanda in order to oppose the strengthening position of UNITA and the always dangerous FNLA”. The capital was taken over on 8 November, but the MPLA failed in the palatial coup with the demand for leadership of the Provisional Government.⁴¹

In this situation, with the particular diplomatic commitment of Jonas Savimbi, president of UNITA, negotiations took place, first in Mombasa between the three Angolan liberation movements to establish a common platform, and then in

39 The signs of such an “attempt” are unclear, and the “three focal points” identified by Cervelló are contradictory. Cervelló, “Da África à Europa”, p. 117. See also *Diário de Luanda*, 1 to 15 November 1974, and *A Província de Angola*, 1 to 22 November 1974.

40 A. França and Celina França, *O Amor e a Guerra Colonial “Escreve-me cartas bonitas” – Cabinda, Angola 1973–1975* [Love and colonial war: ‘Write me beautiful letters’ – Cabinda, Angola 1973–1975], Lisbon: Colibri, 2022, pp. 174–176; Comandante Bolingó e João Lourenço, *Cabinda Baluarte Invencível da Revolução Angolana*, Luanda: Mindel, 1979, p. 14; Cervelló, “Da África à Europa”, p. 117; “In Memoriam Tenente-General José Lopes Alves”, *Revista Militar* 2597–2598 (2018), p. 1; “Comunicado da FLEC (Liberville)”, *Diário de Luanda*, 7 November 1974; A. Gonçalves, “Golpe Militar no Enclave de Cabinda”, *Notícia*, Nº 779, 9 November 1974; “Comunicado do MPLA sobre os incidentes de Massabi (Cabinda)”, *Diário de Luanda*, 20 November 1974; ATD/ALL: D0573.001.006, “Recorte Declarações do Coronel Lopes Alves. Província de Angola”, 6 November 1974; *Diário de Luanda*, 2 to 10 November 1974; *Notícia*, Nº 782, 28 December 1974.

41 *Diário de Luanda*, 2 November 1974.

Alvor to find an agreement with the Portuguese government about the transfer of power. Holden Roberto claimed that “the texts of the so-called ‘Alvor Accords’ of 1975 were exclusively prepared by the FNLA [. . .] and subsequently adopted by all the signatories”,⁴² but the evidence shows that the outline and content of the agreement was a proposal put forward by the MPLA at a “strictly confidential” meeting in the Algerian capital on 18–19 November 1974, based on a “priority” recommendation by Samora Machel, Julius Nyerere, and Kenneth Kaunda. The delegations led by Neto and Antunes, sharing the spirit of “implanting new regimes with a progressive ideal”, agreed on a “political scheme” proposed by the MPLA. The Portuguese side insisted on the inclusion of UNITA in the process and expressed willingness to support a transitional government with an MPLA prime minister if UNITA and the FNLA also agreed.⁴³

The delegations also agreed that “cooperation with the MFA”, and a “political alliance (‘common programme’) between the progressive forces of Angola and Portugal” were essential for “genuine decolonization”. The Portuguese side accepted the need to “strengthen the military power” of the MPLA – the indispensable condition for “guaranteeing the progressive political achievements” (Iko Carreira), showed its willingness to “ensure the cooperation of the FAP (Portuguese Armed Forces)”, to facilitate the “transfer of military personnel and weapons from abroad”, and to jointly seek “solutions on a case-by-case basis”. For the MPLA, it was clear that the agreement with UNITA and the FNLA would be no more than a “tactical alliance”.⁴⁴

On 24 January, on the eve of the transitional government taking office in Angola, the Polish diplomat Jan Bojko reported back to Warsaw on his conversations with the Portuguese Consul General in Kinshasa:

The Portuguese were surprised that the Alvor agreement was reached relatively quickly and easily. They expected difficulties, especially from the FNLA. They fear that behind this “conciliatory” position of the FNLA and the forces that support it there is a certain danger. All the more so because the reactionary forces failed to outmanoeuvre the MPLA and relegate it to the role of a secondary partner. It is true that the departure of the former high commissioner in Angola, Rosa Coutinho, due in part to pressure from the FNLA and right-

42 J. P. N’Ganga, *Holden Roberto: O Pai do Nacionalismo Angolano* [Holden Roberto: father of Angolan nationalism], vol. I. 1923–1974, Sao Paulo: Ed. JNP-Parma, 2008, p. 269.

43 A. A. Santos, *Quase Memórias. Do Colonialismo e da Descolonização* [Almost Memories. Of Colonialism and Decolonisation], vol. II, Lisbon: Casa das Letras, 2006 p. 169; Arquivo Histórico da Presidência da República (AHPR)/GB/0205, Comissão Nacional de Descolonização [CND]: “Acta da Reunião do dia 23 de Outubro de 1974”, p. 3; J. Ribeiro, “História da UNITA: da Fundação ao Acordo de Alvor (1966–1975)” [History of UNITA: from the foundation to the Alvor Agreement (1966–1975)], PhD Thesis, University of Évora, 2023, p. 299; N’Ganga, *Holden Roberto*, p. 269.

44 ANTT/EMA: Cx. 49, Pt. 18, and Cx. 125, Pt 6: “Conferência com MPLA”, 18 November 1974.

wing groups among the white population, will hamper the MPLA's activities in Angola, but the MPLA continues to enjoy the sympathy and support of the army forces in Angola. The majority of middle-ranking officers are on the side of the MPLA. Proof of this is the easy cooperation between the MPLA and the Portuguese army in putting down the riots organized by the FLEC in Cabinda, and the current cooperation in putting down Daniel Chipenda's militias [. . .].

The Portuguese consul also told him that Neto's remaining in Luanda is "particularly unacceptable to Holden and Mobutu, who want to take political and military control of the Angolan capital".⁴⁵

At a press conference, hours after the signing of the agreement, two MPLA leaders made it clear that there was no unity between the liberation movements. The "tactical alliance" was not long-lasting.⁴⁶ Alvor's Achilles heel was that it allowed the liberation movements to maintain private armies. The public agreement and the secret annex signed on 15 January⁴⁷ did not limit the number of troops each liberation group could maintain in Angola: strengthening military camps and capacity along with the political delegations outside initial agreed or 'authorised' areas quickly became a priority for each of the liberation movements. The map below (Figure 7.1) shows the result of this expansion in mid-March 1975, beyond the areas recognised and authorised in Alvor, highlighting the consolidation of the MPLA's occupation of Cabinda, which also advanced in eastern and coastal Angola, where the FNLA expanded throughout the north, UNITA in the centre and south and the 'MPLA (Chipenda faction)', already allied to the FNLA, established itself in the southeast region.

A report from the intelligence services noted that "all liberation groups are now putting great emphasis on their military forces and are working to increase their troop strength".⁴⁸ In mid-January 1975, the liberation movements' armies totalled 41,700 men, prepared or in training: FNLA 21,000; MPLA-Neto 10,000; MPLA-Chipenda 2,000; UNITA 8,700; not including the FLEC military contingent of 1,200 Cabindas. Two months later, there were more than 90,000 men, only semi-prepared, 82 per cent inside Angola, namely in the north and Cabinda, the latter exclusively controlled by the MPLA (Table 1). This tendency for the private armies

⁴⁵ Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych (AMSZ)/Departament V (państwa Azji, Afryki i Bliskiego Wschodu): 8.81-W1-1975/ "Notatka z rozmowy z konsulem generalnym Portugalii w Kinshasie Monteiro oraz 2 oficerami portugalskimi przybyłymi z Angoli w dniu 24.01.1975 r.", 1975.

⁴⁶ CD25A/FAB/Conselho Coordenador do Programa [do MFA] em Angola (CCPA)/Actas I (1975): D31, *Acta*, 31 March 1975; Santos, *Quase Memórias*, vol. II, pp. 171–173. Unfortunately, a cognitive history of the CCPA's action remains to be compiled.

⁴⁷ TNA/AAD/USDS: D750060-0589, "Unpublished Annex to Alvor Independence agreement", 20 February 1975.

⁴⁸ ADN: CEMGFA; Cx. 39, Pt. 6: "Situação em Angola", 17 March 1975.

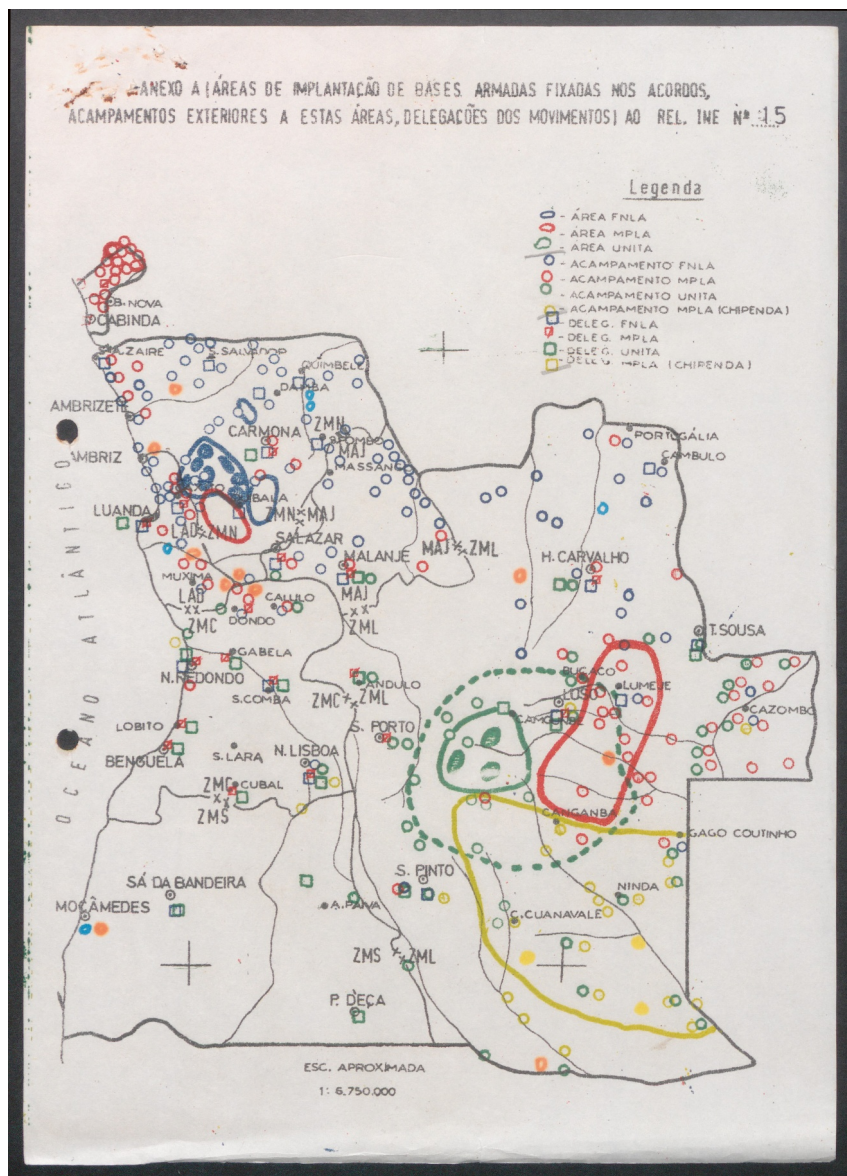


Figure 7.1: Map of Angola showing areas of deployment of armed bases fixed in the Alvor Agreement, camps outside these areas, and delegations of the Liberation movements (18 March 1975).

Source: ADN/CEMGFA/019/0039/Pt. 6 (Situation in Angola, March 1975) and AHM/FO/43, 2/840/ Pt 29: QG-CCFAA Information Report nº 15 (5 March 1975) and nº 17 (20 March 1975), attached maps. Image courtesy Arquivo Histórico Militar (AHM), Lisbon.

Table 1: Angola military personnel of the liberation movements, by regions (March 1975).

Areas	Cabinda			North [Front I]			North [Front II]			East/South/Centre [Front III]			TOTAL		
	Liberation Movements	Prepared	Training	Prepared	Training	Prepared	Training	Prepared	Training	Prepared	Training	Total	%	Total	%
FNLA	Inside			7500	1000	1800	800	800	15000	10100	16800	26900	28,8		
	Exterior			8000	4000	1000		1000	2000	10000	6000	16000	17,1		
MPLA-Neto	Inside	15000		1600	3700			1800	4400	18400	8100	26500	28,4		
UNITA [2]	Inside							7700	13000	7700	13000	20700	22,2		
	Exterior						200	1050	1250	1050	1450	2500	2,7		
Chipenda Group	Exterior							750		750		750	0,8		
FLEC	Exterior	5 Military Companies [1]						5 Military Companies [1]		5 Military Companies [1]		93350	100		
TOTAL		15000	0	17100	8700	2800	1000	12350	35650	47250	45350	93350	100		
%		16,1	0,0	18,3	9,3	3,0	1,1	13,2	38,2	50,6	48,6	100			

Source: ADN:ENGFA.GC; Cx 39, Pt 6: “Situação em Angola. Março de 1975”. Figures for April 1975, see Belo, *Angola e a Independência*, p. 187.

[1] R. Zaire, military base Kitona.

[2] Mid-April 30 or 40 thousand soldiers available or in training (TNA/AAD/USDS; D750126-0848; Unita's growing military strength, 11 April 1975).

of the liberation movements to increase in strength contrasted with the situation in the Portuguese army, which massively discharged “all Angolans from service, white and black, except for those career people who want to remain”. The African military and paramilitary forces were also demobilized at an accelerated rate or offered to the liberation movements, including contingents from Zambia and Zaire.⁴⁹

The first attempt to seize power by force took place on 5 March: the preparation of a coup d'état by the MPLA, “local Portuguese troops”, including clandestine FAPLA members in the FAA as well as 63 “PCP elements” “recently arrived in Luanda”; these were “labelled of military interest” with “trips paid for by Casa de Angola” or travelling on military air transport, giving their destination address as “MPLA headquarters”. The coup plan was to “eliminate some elements of the transitional government and the High Commissioner” and “hand over power to the MPLA”. The coup was denounced by the High Commissioner’s services, dismantled, investigated, and hidden from the public.⁵⁰

The aborted May coup, in which the President of UNITA refused to participate,⁵¹ and the successful seizure of Luanda in July 1975 were part of the MPLA’s “new plan” and “triumphalist line”⁵² in a development characterized by the progressive deterioration and radicalization of political life in Angola, the recurrence of military incidents of great intensity and violence, the political impasse and the failure of the transitional government to function. The three liberation movements were only interested in “the struggle for power” in the growing territorial dispute, with control of the capital naturally being an objective that the FNLA and the MPLA particularly sought.⁵³ In July, the MPLA took military control of Luanda, expelling the FNLA and then UNITA. What MPLA leaders told Antunes at the meeting on 14 July should be seen as the first epilogue of the MPLA’s military path. The MPLA was presented by Iko Carreira as “the only representative of the progressive forces in Angola” and the only movement capable of “leading Angola towards a democratic and popular regime” and prevent secession. Antunes, who

49 TNA/AAD/USDS: D750109-0506, “GOP and Angola Future”, 28 March 1975.

50 CD25A/FAB/ CCPA/Actas I (1975), D11-12, *Acta*, 6 March 1975: D14, *Acta* 12 March 1975 [“Conselho de Guarnição”]; D17, *Acontecimentos de 5 de Março 1975*; D29, “Acta”, 26 March 1975; Belo, *Angola e a Independência*, p. 158. On the covert presence of MPLA personnel within the FAA, see footnote 38.

51 TNA/AAD/USDS: D750144-0011, “Developments in the MPLA”, 24 April 1975 and D750158-0007, “Report of Attempted MPLA Coup”, 5 May 1975; Belo, *Angola e a Independência*, p. 203.

52 TNA/AAD/USDS: D750144-0011, “Developments in the MPLA”, 24 April 1975; CD25A/FAB/ CCPA/ Actas II (1975): D14, *Acta*, 8 June 1975.

53 CD25A/FAB/ CCPA/Actas I (1975), D5, *Acta*, 21 March 1975; D31, *Acta*, 31 March 1975: D42-45, *Acta*, 3 May 1975, and *Acta*, 28 May 1975.

accused the MPLA of dishonesty in the application of previous agreements, saw advantages “in a clear agreement with our friends”, but conceded that the Portuguese side had “exhausted its negotiating capacity” and was prepared to “resort to international bodies” in order to impose a “political solution”.⁵⁴ Neto already had an opposing view: “the FNLA has no role to play in Angola”, it “must be crushed”; UNITA “is nothing as a political and ideological expression [i.e.] it only has expression as a representative of the interests of the settlers – it can stay, as long as someone believes in them [. . .]”. It was also his understanding that the MPLA would take responsibility for “defending the progressive forces”, negotiations could continue, especially with UNITA, but practical solutions to the crisis did not involve “internationalizing the conflict” which would promote neo-colonialism.⁵⁵

Antunes explained a few years later:

At the end of the Fourth Provisional Government, in mid-July 1975, when I was in Angola at the height of the struggle between the movements, and Luanda was dominated by the MPLA and being militarily defended by Portuguese forces against an imminent FNLA offensive backed by Zairian regular forces (on my express orders), I defended the thesis, both in Angola and later in Lisbon, that the Alvor agreements had been completely overtaken by reality and that Portugal should denounce them, abandon the thesis of “active neutrality” and boldly and clearly support the MPLA (with or without a link to UNITA), a thesis justified at the time by the relative neutrality of this movement in the violent confrontations between the MPLA and the FNLA, and by the imperative practical need to isolate the FNLA, a movement that was increasingly clearly trying to turn Angola into a satellite of Zaire and subordinate it to imperialism.⁵⁶

It was this thesis that Antunes presented to the Council of the Revolution in Lisbon (17 July), which sanctioned it on 30 July.⁵⁷ On this day, Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, whom the PCP was trying to recruit, returned from a stay in Cuba, at the invitation of Fidel de Castro,⁵⁸ during which the Cuban leader confided that he was preparing a robust military intervention in Angola: “Carvalho clearly saw Cuba as the most convenient alternative to military reengagement by Portuguese troops. He advocated, in his meeting with Castro, that Cuba should not only help

54 ANTT/EMA: Cx. 124, Pt. 4: “Relato de Conversa. Reunião em 14 de julho de 1975 entre o MPLA e a parte Portuguesa, em Belas, Luanda”, 1975.

55 Ibid.

56 “Processo de descolonização. Melo Antunes rompe o silêncio em entrevista ao Expresso”, *Expresso* (Revista), 17 November 1979.

57 Rezola, *Melo Antunes*, pp. 403–405.

58 Statement by Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho: Arquivo RTP, Documentário “África Vermelha”, Part II, 1998.

the MPLA but do so on a large scale by sending combat troops.” Cuban leaders asked for at least tacit approval from the Portuguese president, General Francisco da Costa Gomes, and Castro seems to have used these explicit or tacit signs from the Portuguese MFA leaders to try to overcome Soviet reservations. Antunes, minister of foreign affairs, was informed by the Portuguese ambassador in Cuba.⁵⁹

The Revolutionary Council immediately decided to send a delegation led by Admiral Rosa Coutinho to Luanda. At the time the group from Cuba, led by Colonel Raul Díaz-Arguelles, arrived in Luanda to set up the Cuban military mission, the Portuguese delegation met separately with representatives of UNITA and the MPLA. They announced the replacement of the High Commissioner and local military commanders demanded by the MPLA in order to “change the atmosphere between the FAP and the FAPLA” and discussed solutions for the administration, the military and the transitional government with the MPLA representatives.⁶⁰

On 9 August diplomat Carlos Teixeira da Mota recorded in his diary:

At the [Luanda government] palace, I see a heavy security presence, including machine guns on the roof. There was shooting and confusion all night. The MPLA had bombed the houses of FNLA ministers, two of whom I met in the office of the High Commissioner’s aide. I also learnt that the Portuguese army, on the express orders of the President of the Republic, had supplied arms to the MPLA, which had provoked protests from the soldiers themselves [. . .]. I also discovered that my idea that the only possible reaction to the High Commissioner [General Silva Cardoso] would have been to arrest the Admiral [Rosa Coutinho] and send him back by plane was shared by elements of the armed forces who had lobbied their superiors in this direction.⁶¹

At a time when the main external communist actors were soon to change, in Lisbon, the intimacy between the MPLA-Portuguese Triumvirate and the Provisional Government became more pronounced. The Angolan issues – like those related to the suspension of the Alvor agreement, the powers of the new high commissioner (Admiral Leonel Cardoso), negotiations with UNITA for an alliance, and the unilateral declaration of independence – were developed in several meetings between Paulo Teixeira

59 B. C. Reis, “Decentering the Cold War in Southern Africa. The Portuguese Policy of Decolonization and Détente in Angola and Mozambique (1974–1984)”, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 21 (2019) 1, pp. 9–10; Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation*, pp. 187–188; P. Moura, *Otelos: O revolucionário* [Otelos: The revolutionary], Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2012, pp. 275–277; J. Milhazes, *Golpe Nito Alves e outros momentos da História de Angola vistos do Kremlin* [Nito Alves coup and other moments in Angola’s history seen from the Kremlin], Lisbon: Aletheia, 2012, p. 41.

60 CD25A:FAB/SbMSB: D17: Reunião do Conselho da Revolução sobre a situação em Angola. Lisboa, 5 August 1975; Ramon Espinosa [Martin], *La Batalla de Cabinda* [The Battle of Cabinda], Havana: CEVO, 2012, p. 31.

61 Carlos Teixeira da Mota’s Diary, p. 100.

Jorge, the president of the republic, and the government, with a representative of Agostinho Neto even taking part in restricted sessions of the council of ministers.⁶²

2 “Internationalist Friends” and the Seizure of Power

The first half of 1974 saw, at the political level, internal divisions in the MPLA deepen, from two factions (Neto’s Directorate and Chipenda’s Eastern Revolt) to three (Active Revolt) in terms of the type of orientation, strategy, and ethnic representation in the leadership of the movement. Militarily, the People’s Army for the Liberation of Angola (EPLA), although well trained and equipped, had lost its operational presence in the interior of Angola, where it had been “neutralized” (apart from “sporadic” military actions in Cabinda in the first two months after 25 April). The EPLA was mainly in exile – in the Republic of Congo, under the control of the Directorate (500/750 guerrillas), and in Zambia (Eastern Front, 1500/2000 guerrillas), where it was controlled by the Chipenda faction. In northern Angola (MPLA’s First Military Region), the EPLA was limited to a very small force of 250–280 guerrillas, only 30 per cent “poorly” armed, “almost neutralized”, without resupply capacity, with a “high degree of psychological demoralization” and affected by the “loss of potential they had suffered”. As a result, the MPLA lost the financial and military support of some of its main external sponsors (the USSR and Eastern bloc countries). The Soviet leadership had not appreciated the failure of the military alliance between the MPLA and FNLA around the Supreme Council for the Liberation of Angola (CSLA) and the subsequent political and military “weakening” of the movement, which allowed the Portuguese military to “transfer part of its repressive forces from Angola to Guinea-Bissau”. This led the USSR to “practically suspend aid to the MPLA” for the first six months of 1974.⁶³

It was the action and influence of the PCP within the Soviet bloc and the MFA and, as we have seen, the action of the Second Provisional Government through Antunes, and the Junta chaired by Coutinho, that made it possible to “rebuild” the MPLA as a liberation movement, with Neto’s faction alone recognized and sup-

⁶² CD25A:FAB/SbMSB: D18, “Reunião Presidência das República. 20–21-22/08/1975”, 1975, p. 23.

⁶³ ADN: CEMGFA: Cx. 39: Pt. 7: “Situação em Angola: Exposição do General-Comandante-Chefe das Forças Armadas de Angola: Situação em Cabinda e no Norte de Angola. Reunião em 30 de Janeiro de 1974”; and Pt. 8: “Memorando: Situação Militar no TO. Áreas de Preocupação e Vulnerabilidade”, 1 July 1974; ATD: ALL: 0144.000.089, “Projecto da Carta do CSLA”, December 1972; Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation*, pp. 173–174; J. Milhazes, *Golpe Nito Alves*, pp. 31–36.

ported politically, militarily, and financially. In February 1975, the Polish ambassador in Kinshasa, having visited Luanda on the occasion of the “celebrations of the 14th anniversary of the beginning of the armed struggle of the MPLA on 4 February”, reported that the MPLA had the support of the people in the city and was “very likely to take a leading role in an independent Angola”. He had visited two MPLA urban bases and seen first-hand that the FAPLA military was in good order, disciplined, and in training. The ambassador strongly recommended that the Polish government provide the assistance requested by the MPLA leadership (military and civilian vehicles, military field equipment, and medicines) and he sent his conclusions to the ambassadors of the USSR and East Germany and to the chargé d’affaires of Czechoslovakia.⁶⁴

In September 1975, the FNLA published a well-documented report “on the Soviet intervention in Angola” in which it claimed that the USSR, the PCP, and the MPLA had coordinated their efforts for a “strategic takeover” of the country even before the signing of the Alvor Agreement. The FNLA’s argument was that the massive increase in military aid that the MPLA received from the Soviet bloc from mid-1975 was evidence of “careful and far-sighted preparations” that dated back to Moscow’s pre-Alvor Agreement decision to support the MPLA’s military action for a unilateral seizure of power.⁶⁵ USSR military support for the MPLA was restored between August and September 1974 – at a time when the MPLA’s internal unity was being strengthened, the restructured MPLA was defining a new strategy to occupy Angola, and the FAPLA was being formed. In August 1974, the Tanzanian press reported the arrival of a Soviet airplane with the first tranche of a six-million-dollar shipment of military equipment, which was sent to Angola by sea, air, and land routes in the following months.⁶⁶

The time had come to ask the internationalist friends of the MPLA for more support. The prospects for further Soviet support took on a new dimension in early December when, according to Soviet documents, Neto “revealed” that the meeting in Algiers with a Portuguese delegation in November 1974 not only laid down the outlines of what would become the Alvor Agreement, but also a “secret

⁶⁴ Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN)/Komitet Centralny Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej (KC-PZPR)/ 2/1354/0/2.8.1/LXXXVI: “Notatka z pobytu w Luandzie/Angola/od 2 do 7 lutego 1975 roku”, 1975.

⁶⁵ AHPR/GB/1619, *Descolonização-Angola*, vol. III: “L’Intervention des Sovietiques en Angola, FNLA, Angola, Septembre 1975”, 1975, pp. 5–6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* On the USSR military support August–September 1974, see A. S. Júlio (ed.), *História do MPLA*, vol. II. (1967–1976), Luanda: Ed. CDIH (MPLA), 2014, pp. 259–260; J. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, vol. II. *Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare* (1962–1976), Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978, pp. 252–253.

agreement between the MPLA and the MFA to coordinate their policies and prevent the FNLA from coming to power". As Neto told Ambassador Slipchenko, stationed in Dar es Salaam, "the MFA's chief negotiator, Major Melo Antunes, fully supported the MPLA because behind the FNLA stood Mobutu and the United States, who were attracted by the scent of Angolan oil". Thus, Neto claimed, the Portuguese had given the MPLA access to military airfields, roads, and army vehicles in Angola. This enabled the MPLA to quickly obtain Soviet military aid, which it urgently needed to strengthen its military wing. The president of Congo-Brazzaville, Marien Ngouabi, was also in agreement with the plan.⁶⁷ Westad mentions that, in early December, Moscow drew up an elaborate plan for supplying the MPLA with "heavy weapons and large amounts of ammunition", with the Congo earmarked "as the point of transit". This plan must have been discussed with an MPLA delegation led by Carreira, who at the end of December, "faced with the hostility of the FNLA, which was simultaneously receiving large quantities of arms from China and financial support from the USA", undertook a tour of friendly countries to "study the possibilities of increasing military aid". According to Carreira, this delegation received a promise from Moscow to train and arm a brigade. It also received support in the form of war material from Yugoslavia and Algeria.⁶⁸

The USSR's plan for military support of the MPLA appears to have been an extensive operation carried out in two phases. Table 2, which contains data from ship and aircraft manifests, shows that USSR arms deliveries to the MPLA became more frequent and more extensive, initially between April and June 1975 and in a second phase between August and November 1975. There were also deliveries from East Germany and Yugoslavia. According to Schleicher's account, GDR military supplies to Angola and Mozambique "were further augmented" in 1974 and 1975. In both cases, the GDR's military support for the MPLA and FRELIMO increased dramatically before independence.⁶⁹ But the GDR's "concentrated propaganda assistance" was particularly important for the MPLA's and Agostinho Neto's image in Angola at the beginning of the transitional government period: "tens of thousands of posters, leaflets, badges, T-shirts with MPLA emblems and

⁶⁷ Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation*, pp. 173–175.

⁶⁸ Júlio (ed.), *História do MPLA*, vol. II, pp. 259–260.

⁶⁹ H.-G. Schleicher, "The German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the Liberation Struggle of Southern Africa", in: A. J. Temu and J. N. Tembe (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Struggles: Southern African Liberation Struggles: Contemporaneous Documents, 1960–1994*, Dar-es-Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2014, vol. VIII, p. 497. See also FOIA: CIA: "East Germany: Soviet Partner in the LDCs. An Intelligence Assessment", GI 83.10201S [CIA-RDP97R00694R000200780001-3], October 1983; G. A. Glaspey, "East Germany in Black Africa. A New Special Role", *The World Today* 36 (1980) 8, pp. 305–312.

A. Neto's picture mobilized all the youth. They created an enthusiastic atmosphere around MPLA and A. Neto."⁷⁰

Yugoslavia's financial, military, and political support for the MPLA was particularly important in mid-1974, shortly before the resumption of Soviet support. It increased with the internal consolidation of the movement, with the recognition of Neto as leader of the MPLA by Portugal and after the Algiers Agreement between the MFA and the MPLA. As in the case of the USSR, in early December 1974, at the request of the MPLA, which wished to become "the main military movement in the country" (Pedro van Dúnen, head of military logistics of the MPLA), Yugoslavia reconsidered its support plan and significantly increased its military aid (1.7 million) to equip and arm two units of 1000 soldiers delivered in 1975 (see Table 2) as well as a small amount of financial aid and political support to try to resolve the tensions between the MPLA and Zambia and Tanzania that were hindering the transfer of arms by land from Dar es Salaam to the interior of Angola. At an internal meeting preparing to receive an MPLA delegation, in July 1975, it was decided that Yugoslavia had been able to respond to previous requests, but that the lack of verifiable independent information on the situation in Angola and the exhaustion of funds for this purpose in 1975 would make it difficult for Yugoslavia to respond positively to "a final request by the MPLA for new military aid" submitted in May.⁷¹

The military supplies from the communist bloc countries to the MPLA in the first phase appear to be linked to the MPLA coup attempts in May and June and the conquest of Luanda in the first week of July 1975. The Soviets continued generous support in the second phase. According to the testimony of a Russian spy, the Soviet military had been concentrating weapons in Congo-Brazzaville since at least August with the "tacit approval of the Portuguese authorities in Luanda".⁷²

In its September 1975 report on "L'Intervention des Sovietiques en Angola", the FNLA said that Moscow had asked Cuba to send advisers and technicians. Eight Cu-

70 AMSZ/Departament V/8.81-W1-1975: "Sprawozdanie z pobytu w Angoli w celu przekazania pomocy wojskowej dla MPLA", 1975, p. 13.

71 J. P. Carvalho, *Jugoslávia nas Encruzilhadas do 25 de Abril* [Yugoslavia at the crossroads of 25 April], PhD thesis, Coimbra University, 2018, pp. 551–554. On contradictory perspectives, see M. Lazic, "Comrades in Arms: Yugoslav Military Aid to Liberation Movements of Angola and Mozambique, 1961–1976", in: L. Dallywater, Ch. Saunders and H. A. Fonseca (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War 'East': Transnational Activism 1960–1990*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019, p. 170; J. Čavoski, "Yugoslavia's Help was Extraordinary". Yugoslavia's Political and Material Assistance and the MPLA's Rise to Power, 1961–1975", *Journal of Cold War Studies* 21 (2019) 1, pp. 125–150.

72 Milhazes, *Golpe Nito Alves*, pp. 62–69.

Table 2: Military material supplied by the “East” to MPLA: Some data for 1975.

Date (1975)	Transport	Unloading site	Material
18 March	Cargo ship (?)	Luanda	Soviet “arms shipments”
March	8 Soviet aircraft [AM-12, AM-24, IL-19]	Brazzaville	Soviet military equipment
April	Cargo ship [Papacostas]	Luanda	Soviet arms and ammunition (150 tonnes)
April	Chartered aeroplane in East Africa	Luso, Angola	Delivery of almost 100 tonnes of material to the MPLA
April	Yugoslav planes	Angola	22 tons of weaponry
April	Cargo ship [Sunrise]	Luanda, Pointe-Noire	Soviet military equipment (ammunition and uniforms)
April	Cargo ship [Postoyna, Yugoslav]	Luanda	From Yugoslavia: a full cargo of weapons and war material. (weapons, ammunition, jeeps, trucks, communication gear, ambulances, etc.) Only able to unload lorries and SA-7 rockets “because the High Commissioner forced the ship to set sail. The rest of the cargo was later deposited in Pointe-Noire.”
May	7 Soviet aircraft	Pointe-Noire	Soviet military equipment
3 June	Cargo ship (Mila Gojsalic, Yugoslav)	Dar es Salaam	From Yugoslavia: 200 tonnes, weapons, ammunition, and other war material
12 June	Cargo ship (Captain Anistratrenko)	Pointe-Noire	Soviet “arms shipments”
June	6 Soviet aircraft	Pointe-Noire	Soviet military equipment
June	Cargo ship (Karl Liebknecht)	Dar es Salaam	Soviet military equipment (lorries and spare parts)
June	Cargo ship (Elbe)	Luanda	East Germany arms and ammunitions

Table 2 (continued)

Date (1975)	Transport	Unloading site	Material
27 July	Barge '5 de Fevereiro'	Benguela	300 tons of weaponry, coming from Pointe-Noire
August	2 Czechoslovak vessels	Luanda	Czechoslovak military equipment
August	6 Soviet aircraft	Pointe-Noire	Soviet military equipment
August	8 Soviet (including Iosif Doubrovinsky), Yugoslav, and East German ships	Pointe-Noire	Soviet, Yugoslav, and East Germany arms, ammunitions and explosives ("The platforms at Point-Noire are full of boxes of weapons of all sizes, addressed to the MPLA.")
August	Soviet vessels/fishing boats	Angolan coast	Soviet ships unloaded military cargoes at sea, entrusting them to "chalutiers de pêche" who unloaded them on the Angolan coast.
August	Cargo ships (various)	Lobito port	Numerous unloading of Soviet and Soviet bloc war material carried out
25 September	Cuban vessel Vietnam Heroico	Pointe-Noire	20 armoured vehicles, 30 army trucks, 120 Cuban Soldiers
Late September	Cuban vessels	Pointe-Noire	War material and 900 cuban troops
October	Russian military planes (40 Flights)	Congo Brazzaville	Soviet arms
October	3 Cuban vessels	Pointe-Noire	Cuban Troops and war material were being disembarked
October	Cuban vessel La Plata	Pointe-Noire	Cuban troops and war material
4–7 October	Cuban vessels Islas Coral and Vietnam Heroico	Porto Amboim	unloaded 700 cuban soldiers and war material; after a brief billet, half went to Angola, the remainder was sent to the border area of Cabinda.
16–18 October	Soviet planes, from Cuba	Brazzaville	800–1000 Cuban troops, 2 Cuban medical doctors. 21–15 October transported to Angola

Table 2 (continued)

Date (1975)	Transport	Unloading site	Material
17–19 October	Two planes (no registration numbers) from Pointe-Noire	[Angola]	Transport of troops and arms. Each plan made three trips
23 October	Soviet planes from Cuba	Maya Maya airbase (Brazzaville)	Carrying material and 480 “black Cuban soldiers”
26 October	Soviet planes from Cuba	Maya Maya airbase (Brazzaville)	Carrying material and 160 cubans, departed for Angola the same day
29 October	Soviet planes from Cuba	Maya Maya airbase (Brazzaville)	Carrying material, 300 cubans and 60 Angolan pilots who have followed training in Cuba
Late October	Congolese military plane	Pointe-Noire	Made three flights to Guinea-Bissau to pick up Cuban troops and material (to Launda by boat)
Late October	Three soviet planes	Maya Maya airbase (Brazzaville)	Carrying military supplies and Cuban personnel
Last week October	12 newly arrived soviet Mig 21	Maya Maya airbase (Brazzaville)	

Sources: AHPR/GB/1619, *Descolonização-Angola*, vol. 3: “L’Intervention des Sovietiques en Angola, FNLA, Angola, Septembre, 1975”; CD25A/FAB/CCPA/Actas I (1975), D16, “Acta”, 19 June 1975; TNA/AAD/USDS: D n/a, “Cuban Clandestine Military support for MPLA. In Angola for Ambassador on Charge from Asst Secy Rogers”, 20 November 1975; *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, vol. XXVIII, Southern Africa: D132; “Report Prepared by the Working Group on Angola, No. 75”, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v28/d132>; J. Milhazes, *Golpe Nito Alves e outros momentos da História de Angola vistos do Kremlin*, Lisbon: Aletheia, 2012, pp. 37–69; M. Lazic, “Comrades in Arms: Yugoslav Military Aid to Liberation Movements of Angola and Mozambique, 1961–1976” in: L. Dallywater, Ch. Saunders, and H. A. Fonseca (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War “East”: Transnational Activism 1960–1990*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019, p. 170; J. Čavoski, “Yugoslavia’s Help was Extraordinary’. Yugoslavia’s Political and Material Assistance and the MPLA’s Rise to Power, 1961–1975”, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 21 (2019) 1, pp. 125–150; N. Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation: The Soviet Union and the Collapse of the Portuguese Empire in Africa, 1961–1975*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021, pp. 173–175; Lloyd’s Shipping Indexes, World, 1975; A. Belo, *Angola e a Independência. Diário da Transferência da Soberania* [Angola and independence: diary of the transfer of sovereignty], Lisbon: Colibri, 2022, pp. 296, 405, 413, 417, 423–424, 427.

bans who arrived in Luanda on 3 August 1975 were not journalists, as the MPLA claimed.⁷³ They were Cuban military officers led by the experienced Colonel Raúl Díaz-Argüelles. Using the Portuguese pseudonym Domingos da Silva, he was to set up the Cuban military mission in Angola “to pin down on the ground with the leaders of the MPLA exactly what aid they wanted, the objectives they expected to achieve with this aid, and the stages in which the aid should be given”.⁷⁴

In addition to the USSR and Yugoslavia, Cuba was also one of the countries to which the MPLA turned for help at the end of 1974. While Carreira was received in Moscow, Neto met the Cuban ambassador in Dar es Salaam and a group of Cuban military specialists who had experience of the liberation struggle in Guinea-Bissau. It was, as Gleijeses noted, “[t]he first high-level contact between the MPLA and Cuba following the coup in Portugal”. This meeting initially led to the group being sent on a secret mission across the Zambian border and under the cover of Portuguese identity papers to Luanda to make contact with the MPLA leadership and assess their military needs and capabilities.⁷⁵ This was done with the knowledge and consent of Coutinho. The mission took place when the Alvor Summit was taking place. A formal request for aid sent by Neto to Fidel Castro on 26 January 1975 included “the training and maintenance of a cadre school and an ideological school, the training of trade unionists; financial support for the transport of war material; the creation of a ‘company of security personnel’; equipment and weapons for an intervention brigade; transmitters; uniforms for 10,000 men, 2 pilots and 1 aeronautical engineer”. Neto added: “We also urge that the Communist Party of Cuba use its influence with other countries that are its friends and allies, especially from the socialist camp, so that they grant useful and timely aid to our movement, which is the only guarantee of a democratic and progressive Angola in the future.”⁷⁶

According to the Cuban archival sources to which Gleijeses had access, nothing was accomplished before the second half of 1975, apart from sending ten to twelve Angolans to Cuba for special training in March and April. In May 1975, the MPLA in Brazzaville added a new request for Cuban assistance in arms transport and “asked about the possibility of a broader and more specific aid program”.⁷⁷ In mid-

⁷³ AHPR/ GB/1619, *Descolonização-Angola*, vol. III, p. 9.

⁷⁴ P. I. Taibo, *Archanges: douze histoires de révolutionnaires sans révolution possible* [Archanges: twelve stories of revolutionaries without the possibility of revolution], Paris: Métailié, 2001, pp. 301–332; Gleijeses, “Havana’s Policy in Africa”, p. 9.

⁷⁵ Gleijeses “Havana’s Policy in Africa”, pp. 7–8.

⁷⁶ Wilson Center Digital Archive [WCDA]: “Letter from Neto to Cuban leadership, Dar-es-Salaam”, 26 January 1975.

⁷⁷ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, pp. 246–247, 254.

June, the MPLA's request to the Portuguese army to "prepare 30,000 men in two stages of 15,000 men each" (officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates) was formally rejected.⁷⁸ A few days later, Neto met in Mozambique with a Cuban delegation led by Commander Armando Acosta and consisting of Central Committee official Carlos Cadelo and Oscar Oramas, then director of Africa in the Cuban Foreign Ministry, and repeated his request. According to Oramas, who became the first Cuban ambassador to Angola: "From that moment on, the supreme leadership of the Cuban Revolution decided to materialize its support for the MPLA."⁷⁹ A month later, part of this Cuban delegation in transit in Lisbon received instructions from Havana, where Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho (MFA) was staying at the invitation of Fidel de Castro, "to wait for five senior military officers from Cuba", the group of Coronel Raul Díaz-Argüelles, and to fly to Luanda: "Neto wanted Cuban military instructors. He did not have a precise figure in mind, but he was thinking of no more than a hundred men who would be spread out among many small training centres. He also wanted Cuba to send weapons, clothing and food for the recruits."⁸⁰

There are some problems with this account. We do not know exactly what went on between the MPLA and the Cuban embassy in Brazzaville, whose ambassador Lazaro Sekale had been visiting the authorities in Luanda and the MPLA since May.⁸¹ At the beginning of July, "Cubans, Portuguese and Mozambicans" were "sighted in Caxito" among the ranks of the FAPLA.⁸² Likewise, a historian who served in the Portuguese army as a "military-militant" of the MFA in Luanda also noted the presence of Cuban troops in the city:

Twice I took part in columns of army vehicles organized by progressive soldiers that went to the MPLA barracks to deliver Portuguese weapons or weapons that had been confiscated during minor conflicts with the FNLA and UNITA. The climax came on 9 July 1975, shortly after the arrival in Luanda of a first contingent of Cuban soldiers and a large number of heavy weapons. On that day, open fighting broke out between the MPLA and the FNLA, which led to the expulsion of the FNLA from the city two days later.⁸³

78 CD25A/FAB/CCPA/Actas II (1975), D11-12, *Acta*, 19 June 1975.

79 Oscar Oramas, Interview, 8 November 2020.

(<https://misiones.cubaminrex.cu/pt/articulo/entrevista-ao-primeiro-embaixador-de-cuba-em-angola-pelo-dia-da-independencia>).

80 Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, pp. 246–254; Gleijeses "Havana's Policy in Africa", pp. 7–9.

81 "O embaixador de Cuba em Kinshasa, Lazaro Sekale, foi ontem recebido pelo Alto-Comissário e pelo Ministro do Colégio Presidencial, Lopo do Nascimento", *Província de Angola*, 10 May 1975.

82 TNA/AAD/USDS: P840178-2071, N750002-0192, VANCE-MOBUTU: Angola. Second meeting, 20 July 1975, p. 2.

83 R. Bebianno, "Guerra Civil em Luanda", p. 9. On July 20, Cuban, Mozambican and Portuguese troops were integrated into the operational forces of the MPLA in Caxito. Cf. Belo, *Angola e a Independência*, p. 285.

And the memoirs of Neto's personal physician and friend, Arménio Ferreira, are also revealing about the timing of the Cuban presence in Angola. Ferreira, who had been a PCP militant since the 1950s and then a MPLA militant, was president of the African National League in Lisbon and Neto's representative in Portugal in 1975. Ferreira claims that the Cuban ambassador in Lisbon, Francisco Astray Rodriguez, acting as Neto's intermediary and in complete secrecy, sent a delegation to assess the military situation and determine the necessary assistance for the MPLA. On their return to Lisbon, the delegation received Neto's request for a complete Cuban mission. Ferreira added: "The first 350 Cubans come through here [Lisbon airport] and I'm the one who gave them the safe conducts, because I was the MPLA representative [. . .]. The Portuguese government knew nothing."⁸⁴

Cuba had already carried out operations of this type and scope, such as the deployment of a Special Instruction Group in Algiers in 1963, also with 350 men.⁸⁵ The Cuban military mission that arrived in Luanda on 3 August and coincided with the stay in that city of the MFA delegation led by Coutinho, was formalized on 21 August in Havana on the occasion of the visit of a Portuguese military delegation led by Coutinho, at the invitation of Raul Castro.

It was agreed that it would be necessary to send a contingent of some four hundred and eighty Cuban instructors to set up four training centres and to train some forty units (infantry battalions and artillery batteries). The armaments and all the supplies required by the military schools and the units to be organized in the planned cycle were provided by Cuba.⁸⁶

Seeking further support, the MPLA set out in search of systematic assistance from the socialist countries of Europe. In the second half of August, a delegation led by Carreira, commander of the MPLA armed forces, embarked on an extended trip to the USSR, the GDR, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. The focus of the Angolan requests was almost exclusively of a military nature, with the aim of equipping and training 40,000 men and getting them ready to fight in the shortest possible time, as the MPLA leadership was expecting a major confrontation with the FNLA as early as September. As part of this Eastern European tour, Carreira was received in Warsaw between 27 and 29 August by Stanisław Kania, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, and held extensive talks with representatives of the Polish Committee of Solidarity with the Peoples of

⁸⁴ Interview with Arménio Ferreira, by Victor Nobre, 11 July 2000 (<https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/entrevista-a-armenio-ferreira/>).

⁸⁵ P. Gleijeses, "Cuba's First Venture in Africa. Algeria, 1961–1965", *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28 (1996) 1, pp. 159–195.

⁸⁶ M. Ramon Espinosa, *La Batalla de Cabinda* [The Battle of Cabinda], Havana: CEVO, 2012, pp. 13, 30–32.

Asia, Africa, and Latin America.⁸⁷ During discussions with the Polish delegation, Carreira argued that the Portuguese had proved to be an unreliable partner because the political instability in Lisbon had made the Portuguese authorities incapable of making decisions or taking control of the situation in Angola. The MPLA viewed the intertwining of the revolutionary situation in Portugal and the transition process in Angola to be decisive for the political outcomes in both countries. Carreira claimed that the MPLA had consistently worked to convince progressive forces in Portugal to strengthen the MPLA's position. In turn, once in power, the MPLA would support Portugal's progressive government. However, this option proved unsuccessful because the Portuguese had "made a mistake" by "not fully trusting the MPLA". Instead, they began a "political game simultaneously with the MPLA and UNITA to secure their interests" – an allusion to the pressure Lisbon exerted in an attempt to force a coalition between the MPLA and UNITA. This suggests that the MPLA leadership had lost confidence in the ability of the Portuguese progressive forces to support them in a unilateral seizure of power.⁸⁸

As the date of independence approached, and with it the need for Portugal to have a valid interlocutor for the transfer of sovereignty, pressure for a coalition between the MPLA and UNITA increased. Such an accommodation, based on an African solution, was viewed favourably by Moscow, which believed that the nominal participation of UNITA would contribute to the political stabilization of the Angolan crisis.⁸⁹ At the end of August 1975, the Portuguese authorities held talks in Lisbon with delegations from both movements with the aim of negotiating a ceasefire and securing a functioning transitional government.⁹⁰ The negotiations ultimately failed, as no common ground could be found and the clashes between the two movements in eastern Angola increased in intensity.⁹¹

Following the Portuguese diplomatic failure to find a formula for Angolan unity, which included the mediation of a delegation from the Romanian Communist Party led by Stefan Andrei, Secretary of the Central Committee,⁹² a delegation of representatives from Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia, and Tanzania travelled to Luanda on 18 September. The delegation called on the MPLA to form a coalition

87 AMSZ/Departament V/8.81-W1-1975: "Minister Spraw Zagranicznych, Prezes Rady Ministrów PRL Towarzysz Piotr Jaroszewicz", 1975, pp. 1–3.

88 AMSZ/Departament V/8.81-W1-1975: "Notatka z drugiej części rozmów, przeprowadzonych z delegacją MPLA w Polskim Komitecie Solidarności w dniu 28 sierpnia 1975 r.", 1975, pp. 1–6.

89 AMSZ/Departament V/8.81-W1-1975: "Tow. Szyszko, Tow. Nowak depeszą nr 334 z 15 bm. podaje, 1975", p. 1.

90 *Diário de Lisboa*, 30 August 1975, p. 2.

91 *Diário de Lisboa*, 5 September 1975, p. 2.

92 TNA/AAD/USDS: D750315-0367, "Romanian Delegation Visits Angola", 11 September 1975.

with UNITA and the FNLA – a proposal that Neto rejected.⁹³ After the unsuccessful efforts of the Conciliation Committee from the Organization of African Unity,⁹⁴ a final coordinated attempt at a coalition agreement was made in October by High Commissioner Leonel Cardoso, who asked TASS correspondent Igor Uvarov to deliver a message to Moscow urging the Soviets to press the MPLA to agree to a shared transfer of power.⁹⁵ During the same period, diplomatic pressure was also exerted in the same direction by Julius Nyerere in a personal meeting with Jonas Savimbi in Dar Es Salaam.⁹⁶ As Telepneva suggests, in late October, Neto's intransigence in accepting an alliance with UNITA and the international backlash triggered by the South African invasion prompted the Soviets to consider recognizing a unilateral declaration of independence by the MPLA.⁹⁷ On 15 October, Warsaw was informed by the head of the African Department of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Moscow's decision to immediately recognize Angola as a "sovereign state" following the MPLA's unilateral announcement, even if independence was proclaimed before the official date of 11 November.⁹⁸ Consequently, Warsaw followed suit and adopted a similar stance.⁹⁹

On 21 October, an MPLA delegation led by Saíde Mingas travelled to the United Nations (UN) to gain support from member states for a unilateral declaration of independence. At a meeting with the heads of the representatives of the socialist countries to the UN, Mingas accused the new Portuguese moderate government of increasingly favouring the "front of internal reaction and imperialist interests". According to Mingas, Lisbon's resistance in recognizing the MPLA as the "only authentic representative of the Angolan people" was a symptom of Portuguese ambitions to support a neo-colonialist coup in order to hand over power to the FNLA. The Polish delegation, however, considered this assessment to be an exaggeration aimed at bolstering the support of the socialist countries.¹⁰⁰

93 TNA/AAD/USDS: D750323-0434, "Angola. Four presidents Mission to Angola and Portugal", 17 September 1975; TNA/AAD/USDS: D750331-0271, "Lusaka Summit Representatives visit the MPLA", 24 September 1975.

94 TNA/AAD/USDS: D750360-1150, "OAU Committee Arrives", 14 October 1975; Belo, *Angola e a Independência*, pp. 408–409.

95 Shubin, *The Hot 'Cold War'*, p. 48.

96 AHD/ 3/MNE-SE-DNPEC/DGNP-POI/009: 000065, "Aerograma Recebido da Missão de Portugal na ONU, N°698", 1975, p. 1.

97 Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation*, pp. 191–192.

98 AMSZ/Departament V/8.81-W1-1975: "Tow. Szyszko, Tow. Nowak depeszą nr 334 z 15 bm. Podaje", 1975, p. 1.

99 AMSZ/Departament V/8.81-W1-1975: "Szyfrogram Nr. 8580", 1975, p. 1.

100 AMSZ/Departament V/8.81-W1-1975: "Informacja ze spotkania z delegacją MPLA w dniu 17 października 1975 r. z szefami misji krajów socjalistycznych przy ONZ", 1975, p. 3.

On the Soviet side, the ambassador to Portugal, Arnold Kalinin, met with Costa Gomes and appealed to the president to support the MPLA in its decision to proclaim independence and form a national government.¹⁰¹ The new moderate Portuguese government faced significant internal pressure from the media, which overwhelmingly supported the MPLA,¹⁰² and from the PCP in parliament, which consistently challenged the official policy of neutrality by claiming that Neto's movement was the only legitimate representative of the Angolan people.¹⁰³ But despite internal and external pressure from communist actors, the Portuguese government adhered to its policy of not transferring power to a single liberation movement.

After several deployments of military personnel and war material in September and October (Table 2), the Soviet Union and Cuba decisively stepped up their military engagement at the beginning of November. On 7 November, a group of Cubans who had been trained by Soviet instructors at Pointe-Noire on sophisticated portable surface-to-air missile systems arrived in Angola. That same day, six Soviet BM-21 "Grad" multiple rocket launchers arrived in the port of Luanda, transported by the Cuban ship *La Plata*. At the same time, Havana initiated the airlift of special forces to Luanda, with logistical stopovers for refuelling in Barbados, Bissau, and Brazzaville, which arrived on 9 November. On 10 November, 4000 Cuban troops and the Soviet heavy equipment they operated proved crucial in supporting the FAPLA in defeating the FNLA's advance to capture the capital on the eve of independence.¹⁰⁴

As the battle for Luanda raged on the afternoon of 10 November, High Commissioner Leonel Cardoso proclaimed, "with effect from zero hours on 11 November the independence of Angola and its full sovereignty vested in the Angolan people"¹⁰⁵ – thus recognizing the existence of the new state without acknowledg-

101 ANTT/EMA/Cx. 7, Pt. 8: "Reunião do Embaixador Soviético em Lisboa com Costa Gomes", 3 November 1975.

102 TNA/AAD/USDS: D750379-0057, "Pressures mount to change GOP Angolan policy", 31 October 1975.

103 Debates Parlamentares/ 3ª República/ Assembleia Constituinte/ Série 01/ I Legislatura/ Sessão Legislativa 01/ Número 073, 1975, pp. 2329–2330.

104 Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, pp. 305–311; TNA/AAD/USDS: n/a, "Cuban Clandestine Military support for MPLA. in Angola for Ambassador on Charge from Asst Secy Rogers", 20 November 1975; R. Moss, "Castro's Secret War Exposed, How Washington Lost its Nerve and how the Cubans subdued Angola", *The Sunday Telegraph*, 30 January 1977.

105 TNA/AAD/USDS: D750393-0877, "Zambian Statement on the occasion of Angolan Independence", 11 November 1975.

ing its government.¹⁰⁶ The unilateral proclamation of the People's Republic of Angola (RPA) was recognized by the overwhelming majority of socialist countries.¹⁰⁷

On the eve of the proclamation of independence, the Polish Council of Ministers tasked Kwiryn Grela, the secretary general of the Polish Committee of Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America,¹⁰⁸ to deliver the military aid to the MPLA that Warsaw had promised at the end of August. Grela travelled to Luanda via Moscow, where he met the deputy chairman of the Soviet Committee of Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia and Africa, Aleksandr Dzasokhov. The deputy emphasized two arguments for Angola's strategic importance. The first was the regional geopolitical domino effect it could trigger. From the Soviet point of view, the victory of the MPLA's revolutionary project would be a "good example for similar solutions in Rhodesia and especially in South Africa" – an option that was seen as the "only correct solution to the problems of the whole of southern Africa". The second and no less important reason was the country's "enormous wealth, climatic conditions, structure of cities and population".¹⁰⁹

After the briefing in Moscow, Grela flew to Brazzaville, where he was responsible for the logistics of delivering the weapons to their final destination at the port of Pointe-Noire, transported by the Polish ship *Brodnica*. On his arrival in Pointe-Noire, Grela was impressed by "the atmosphere of military tension", and the scale of the socialist countries' commitment to supporting the MPLA and embarrassed by the contrast with the modest Polish level of assistance. On 26 November 1975, the ship *Brodnica* and its cargo, including additional military equipment that the MPLA had stored in the Pointe-Noire warehouses, reached the port of Luanda, where it was guarded by the Cuban military (see Figure 7.2). During his stay in Angola, which lasted until mid-December, Grela witnessed the large-scale and well-coordinated operation by the socialist community to arm the MPLA:

106 ANTT/ EMA: Cx. 49, Pt. 21: "Problemas Levantados pela Proclamação da Independência de Angola no dia 11 de Novembro", 1975, pp. 6–8.

107 Only three socialist countries did not recognize the RPA in the immediate aftermath of independence: Albania, China, and North Korea. China in particular argued that it would only recognize a government of national unity that included the FNLA and UNITA. AHD/3/MNE-SE-DNPEC/DGNP-POI/009: 000065, "Apontamento: Independência de Angola, Posição em 18/XI/1975", fl. 1–4; *Diário de Lisboa*, 10 November 1975, pp. 1, 20; and 11 November 1975, p. 1.

108 For a detailed contribution on the activities of the Polish Committee of Solidarity, see P. Gasztold, "Propaganda i pomoc dla Trzeciego Świata: działalność Polskiego Komitetu Solidarności z Narodami Azji, Afryki i Ameryki Łacińskiej, 1965–1990" [Propaganda and aid to the Third World: the activities of the Polish Committee for Solidarity with the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, 1965–1990], in: *Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i Materiały* XXI (2023), pp. 89–120.

109 AMSZ/Departament V/8.81-W1-1975: "Sprawozdanie z pobytu w Angoli w celu przekazania pomocy wojskowej dla MPLA, 1975", 13 December 1975, pp. 1–2.



Figure 7.2: The Polish cargo ship “Brodnica” in 1975, which was used to transport military equipment from the Eastern bloc. Source: Private collection of Malcolm Cranfield.

The extent of the involvement of the USSR, Cuba, and the GDR in helping the MPLA is enormous. This includes, in particular large-scale military assistance as well as technical assistance. It is estimated that in an exceptionally rapid manner, with the help of air brigades organized by the USSR and the GDR and military troops of the Congo Brazzaville, light weapons, ammunition, and small rockets were delivered to approximately 30–40 thousand people. [. . .] From conversations with representatives of the MPLA leadership – and especially with the minister of National Defence Iko Carreira – I conclude that the MPLA did not expect and was not prepared to use the enormous military aid it received in a lightning-fast manner from the USSR, Cuba, and other socialist countries [including Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia].¹¹⁰

Grela’s report also provides a broader overview of the aid the MPLA received at the time, particularly from African countries, such as Cuban-trained military contingents from Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and the Republic of Guinea as well as Nigerian funding, and highlights the economic opportunities and expectations that an “exceptionally favorable climate” in Angola offered for Poland and its

¹¹⁰ AMSZ/ Department V/ 8–81/ W-1/ “Sprawozdanie z pobytu w Angoli w celu przekazania pomocy wojskowej dla MPLA”, 1975: 18–19; TNA/AAD/USDS: n/a, “Cuban Clandestine Military support for MPLA in Angola for Ambassador on Charge from Asst Secy Rogers”, 20 November 1975.

business in the region in the near future: Cabinda oil as a strategic product for the success of the Pointe-Noire refinery under construction, which involved 300 permanent Polish experts and financial resources, a priority project that would be the main source of funding for Congo's socialist modernization plan, which Poles helped to develop; and Poland's "unique opportunity" to join the international "Coffee Trade Club" and participate in the development of Angola's maritime economy.¹¹¹

3 Conclusion: A Non-Democratic, Afrocommunist Outcome

On 11 November 1975, the phase of the political transition process in Angola ended for the decolonizer with the formal and final "handover" of sovereignty to the "Angolan People": the unilateral proclamation of independence by the MPLA and the creation of the People's Republic of Angola and the formation of a "Government of Popular Unity" or "National Unity" in Luanda. On the same day, the FNLA and UNITA signed a Kinshasa protocol "constituting a common front of political-military action to safeguard territorial integrity of the country", announcing the Democratic Republic of Angola and a formation of a "provisional government of national unity", but in the days that followed, this proved to be ephemeral, in contrast to the People's Republic of Angola and the single government of the MPLA formed in Luanda.¹¹²

This outcome merits some final remarks on the conquest of exclusive power by the MPLA in the process of power transfer. First, the course for the decolonization of Angola was set by an ever-increasing interaction and convergence between the local actors of the MPLA and the MFA as well as the Portuguese Provisional Governments II to V and the political-military sectors of the left.¹¹³

¹¹¹ AMSZ/ Departament V/ 8–81/ W-1/ "Sprawozdanie", pp. 8–9, 20–23.

¹¹² Carlos Teixeira da Mota's Diary, pp. 244–262; Belo, *Angola e a Independência*, pp. 454–460, O. Santos, *Os meus dias da Independência (Diário)* [My Independence Days (Diary)], Lisbon: Guerra e Paz, 2019; M. Howe, "Angola pullout marks end of a vast African Empire", *The New York Times*, 11 November 1975; "Retrospectiva Internacional", *Tempo* 274 (1976), pp. 30–50; L. Dash, "UNITA: Self-Criticism Deep in a Hidden Forest", *The Washington Post*, 12 August 1977.

¹¹³ A more localist interpretation is provided by S. Chan and M. Venancio, *Portuguese Diplomacy in Southern Africa 1974–1994*, Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs, 1996, p. 29.

The second concerns the MPLA's not exactly surprising relationship with the PCP and its circles of influence. In two critical moments – at the time of the exclusive recognition of the FNLA/GRAE by the Organization of African Unity and the threat of recognition by the USSR in 1963–64,¹¹⁴ and in the 1974 crisis –, “our good friends” were a crucial agency to protect and safeguard the MPLA. The Portuguese Communist Party not only formed a platform that helped the MPLA to establish a positive link with the Soviet world but was also the only communist party in the West that was directly involved in the decolonization of Africa from a position of power through the revolutionary power installed in the metropole and the revolutionary power installed in parallel in Angola. As a result, it was able to exert a decisive influence that led the MPLA to sole power at the time of the transition to independence.¹¹⁵ This influence, which lasted for about three years after independence, until the “Bissau meeting” (6 July 1978) between the Presidents of the two countries, Ramalho Eanes and Agostinho Neto, actively hindered diplomatic relations between the two states: “The main reason for this was that while Portugal did not recognize the MPLA, the PCP acted as Luanda’s unofficial ambassador in Lisbon, allowing the party one of a few positions of relevance it held in post-revolutionary Portuguese society”.¹¹⁶ This position also offered the PCP the opportunity to constitute itself as a privileged channel for economic, technical and military cooperation between Angolans and Portuguese, on the one hand by creating business companies or providing ideologically safe cooperating cadres, and on the other hand by favouring, for example, Cuban civilian cooperation to the detriment of the return of refugees from Portugal to Angola.¹¹⁷ Pacheco

114 H. A. Fonseca, “Pioneering connections and choosing partners: the ‘Other Europe’ in the first phase of ‘Angolan Revolution’ (1960–1963)”, in: Saunders, Fonseca, Dallywater (eds.) *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa*, pp. 52–56.

115 “Declarações de Rosa Coutinho na Assembleia Movimento Unitário Trabalhadores Intelectuais”, *Diário de Luanda*, 29.10.1975; CD25a/FAB/SSC: MSGS-1975: D. 148. “Mensagem do Alto Comissário para o Presidente da República”.

116 Chan and Venancio, *Portuguese Diplomacy in Southern Africa*, p. 39, 42; AHD:3MNE-SE-DNPEC DGNP-PAA-SNPU058: “Relações PCP-Angola” (1977); Carlos Teixeira da Mota’s Diary, pp. 301, 319–320, 337; D. Alberto, “Portugal perante o reconhecimento do Governo Angolano (1976). As visões politico-partidárias do PCP, do PS e do PPD” [Portugal recognising the Angolan government (1976). The political party views of the PCP, PS and PPD], *Relações Internacionais* 78 (2023), pp. 95–108.

117 “Exportações para Angola. Tradings queixam-se de Chantagem”, *Expresso*, 3 August 1991 (*A Semana na Africa*, nº 0, 6–12 August 1991, pp. 17–18); Rosa Coutinho, “Tirei Angola da boca do Mobutu”, *Público*, 15 Janeiro 1995 (*Notícias Africanas*, 91, 22 January 1995); Francisco Seixas Costa, “11 de Novembro”, in: *Duas ou três coisas (Notas pouco diárias)*, Sábado, 12 November 2022 (<https://duas-ou-tres.blogspot.com/2022/11/>); WCDA: [Raúl Castro] Report on his Visit to Africa, “Informe al Buró Político del Segundo Secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba

Pereira, a renowned historian of the PCP and biographer of its secretary general (Álvaro Cunhal),¹¹⁸ assessed this long association very negatively as “tragic” for Angola. However, for a systematic historical exploration of this topic, in Pereira words, we need a “dispassionate debate” that “presupposes the emergence of a new generation” of historians and the opening of the archives of organizations like PCP, MPLA, FRELIMO, and the countries of the then socialist community.¹¹⁹

A third comment has to do with the reasons for the military support of the socialist bloc countries throughout 1975, and in particular, the robust military intervention of some of these countries on the eve of 11 November with the deployment of Soviet military advisors and a Cuban Military Mission that deployed thousands of soldiers in Angola to fight alongside the MPLA, an intervention that lasted more than a decade. While it has been argued that this internationalist solidarity was a response to two “external threats”—the Zairian intervention alongside the FNLA, followed by the South African intervention in alliance with the FNLA-Chipenda faction and UNITA—new evidence suggests that the lines between ideological internationalist solidarity and economic interests were often blurred.¹²⁰ There has also been little systematic research on the FNLA in general, and in particular on its links to the “Zairean threat” and the profile and role of “mercenaries”.¹²¹ Questions also remain about the timing of the South African military intervention, which coincided with the negotiations in August and September between the MPLA and a South African delegation in Luanda about Angola’s southern border and the protection of South African interests in Cunene.¹²² It is plausible that it was Angolans and not the external powers (USA, USSR, China) who brought the Cold War to Angola. External involvement was

acerca de su visita a la Republica Popular de Angola, Republica Popular del Congo y Republica Popular de Guinea, ademas de su visita a la URSS”, 1976.

118 J. P. Pereira, *Álvaro Cunhal. Uma Biografia Política* [Álvaro Cunhal. A Political Biography], 4 Vols (1913–1968), Lisbon: Temas & Debates, 1999–2015.

119 “Pacheco Pereira em Maputo: PCP foi ‘tragédia’ no processo de descolonização”, *Expresso*, 1 October 2008.

120 AMSZ/Departament V/8.81-W1-1975: “Notatka ze spotkania z sekretarzem Radzieckiego Komitetu Solidarności z Krajami Azji i Afryki – G. E. Joanisianem w dniu 26 lutego 1975 roku”, 1975, pp. 1–4. AMSZ/Departament V/8.81-W1-1975: “Sprawozdanie z pobytu w Angoli w celu przekazania pomocy wojskowej dla MPLA”, 1975, pp. 8–9, 20–23.

121 Santos, *Os meus dias da Independência*, p. 28.

122 CD25A/FAB/ CCPA/Actas II (1975): D35, “Acta”, 17 July 1975 to “Acta” 67, 16 October 1975; AHPR: GB:1619, Descolonização-Angola, vol. I: “Carta de Elisio de Carvalho Figueiredo ao ‘Meu Comandante’, Angola, Camissombo”, 22 August 1974 On the regular secret diplomatic contacts between South Africa and post-independent Angola, see Ch. Saunders, “The South Africa-Angola Talks, 1976–1984. A Little-known Cold War Thread”, *Kronos, Southern African Histories* 37 (2011), pp. 104–19.

necessary to solve the internal crisis – seizing power by military means – rather than to counter the external threats that undoubtedly existed. The MPLA sought external support to overcome internal opponents and achieve hegemony over post-colonial Angola.

There is conflicting evidence on the Cuban intervention. On the one hand, Cuba's deputy foreign minister, Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, publicly admitted (in a speech in December 1975) that "there were already 230 Cuban military instructors in the MPLA in the spring of 1975".¹²³ On the other hand, the Cuban decision to set up a military mission in Luanda at the beginning of August 1975 was not only encouraged, approved, and supported by the Portuguese government, but was known in advance to the USSR: "The Cubans are said to have informed the Soviet Union of this démarche and to have proposed coordination with the USSR".¹²⁴ In this way, the most plausible interconnection is suggested by the simultaneity between Cuba's move to set up a military mission and the new wave of military supplies from the Soviet bloc. The evidence suggests that the MPLA's military diplomacy played an important, if not central, role in the co-operative alliance with the communist states and internationalist parties.

The action of this cooperative alliance continued, expanded, and became much more influential in the course of the path towards the "creation of a State of Popular Democracy in Angola"¹²⁵ in December 1977, with the institutionalization of the MPLA-Labour Party, as the "vanguard party of the working class", and the "leading force of the whole of Angolan society" for the "establishment of popular democracy and socialism". This concluded the Angolan transition process, with the integration of Angola into the political and economic space of communism, as an Afrocommunist state.¹²⁶ This path was rooted in the MPLA's political culture, and was chosen by the ruling elites in Luanda, just like the depth of the external communist intervention in Angola. However, the model of integration and the results may not have met the expectations of the MPLA leadership.

In a meeting with representatives of the Portuguese Socialist Party government in September 1977, Neto expressed his frustration with the expanding Soviet influence in the country, remarking that Moscow's approach in Angola amounted

¹²³ R. Moss, "Castro's Secret War Exposed, How Washington Lost its Nerve and how the Cubans subdued Angola", *The Sunday Telegraph*, 30 January 1977.

¹²⁴ Reis, "Decentering the Cold War", p. 10; Milhazes, *Golpe Nito Alves*, pp. 40–42, 59–68; Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation*, pp. 188–192.

¹²⁵ TNA/AAD/USDS: D750391-0133, "FRELIMO, MPLA, PAIGC and MLSTP Summit on Angola", 10 November 1975, "Reunião do CONCP [7–8 November, Lourenço Marques]", *Diário do Luanda*, 11 November 1975; Carlos Teixeira da Mota's Diary, pp. 246–247.

¹²⁶ Ottaway, "Afrocommunism Ten Years after", pp. 11–17.

to economic “pillaging”. The Angolan president expressed a desire to reduce dependence on the Soviets and the Cubans and saw the diversification of relations with the West as a step in this direction.¹²⁷ By the end of 1977, a decisive military victory over the FNLA, UNITA, and even the FLEC remained elusive. Recovery of the economy to pre-independence levels in April 1974 was still a long way off, while the Cuban Mission exercised control over important day-to-day decisions throughout the country. In April-May 1977, on the occasion of a visit by Agostinho Neto in search of broader economic and political co-operation, Polish reports pointed out, as a positive and promising contextual element, that

Cuban experts acting as advisors to department directors in all ministries [the “double” model] have the decisive vote on all economic issues. The delegate of the Central Committee of Cuba, member of the political bureau of the Central Committee of Cuba Jorge Risquet, has the decisive voice in all political and military decisions made by the Angolan leadership.

Risquet, the leader of the Cuban Mission in Angola, was described as both “a kind of ‘viceroy’ of Fidel” and “the second man after President Neto”.¹²⁸ Future research on the involvement of non-African communists in Angola using newly available sources could shed light on their complex role in the decolonization process and their influence on the creation of asymmetrical relations between the socialist bloc and the decolonized African states.

¹²⁷ TNA/AAD/US Department of State: P770152-2068, and D770349-0793, “GOP assessment of Angolan Situation”, 26 September 1977.

¹²⁸ Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Warszawie (IPN) / Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych (MSW) /BU/02011/206/ *Dotyczy: aktualnej sytuacji w Angoli*, 1977; AAN/ KC-PZPR, LXXVI, 679, “Sprawozdanie specjalnego wysłannika PAP, Mirosława Ikonowicza z podróży po Angoli”, 1977.

Berthold Unfried

8 Institutionalized Internationalism: Cuba, Angola, Ethiopia and the Socialist World (1975–1990)

1 Cuban *Internacionalismo* and the Socialist World System

As with all revolutions of a certain importance, the Cuban Revolution sent shock-waves through the world. The revolutionary government actively supported revolutionary efforts in Latin America and in Africa, in the 1960s emblemized by the independent guerrilla ventures of Che Guevara, in the 1970s within the framework of the socialist world (system).¹ In 1972, Cuba became a member of its economic organization, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) which also served as a framework for “development” activities for its non-European members. In the socialist world, a distinction was not made between three “worlds”, but rather between “socialist” states – outside of Europe Cuba, Vietnam, and Mongolia as members of the CMEA –, “developing” countries on a non-socialist path of development, and countries on a “socialist path of development” aspiring for membership in the CMEA. Both countries under scrutiny in this contribution – Angola and Ethiopia – fell into this last category. This “socialist path of development” was taken in the context of revolution and civil war. In Ethiopia, the military coup, which overthrew the millenarian imperial regime in 1974, evolved into a social revolution in the countryside. “Armed discussions” within

¹ The discussion, if the inter-continental world of socialist states could, in accordance with its self-denomination, purposefully be called a “socialist world system”, cannot be presented in this place. See C. Chase-Dunn (ed.) *Socialist States in the World-System*, Beverly Hills: Sage, 1982; Z. Gorin, “Socialist Societies and World System Theory: A Critical Survey”, *Science & Society* 49 (1985) 3, pp. 332–366; B. Unfried, “Sozialistisches Weltsystem? Wie tauglich ist diese Selbstbezeichnung für die historische Forschung? Eine Erörterung anhand der Praxis außereuropäischer internationaler Zusammenarbeit der DDR”, *Zeitschrift für Weltgeschichte* 1–2 (2022), pp. 183–207.

Note: This contribution is an outcome of the research project: “Entanglements Cuba-GDR: Mobilities, Exchanges, Circulations within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance” (lead researcher: the author, research collaborator: Claudia Martínez Hernández) FWF/Austrian Science Fund 2019–2023. I dedicate it to the memory of Emiliano Manresa, former head of the economic department of the Cuban administration in Angola, dialogue partner and friend, who died in Havana on the day this article was completed.

the leading military committee, the Derg, resulted in the leadership of strongman Mengistu Haile Mariam in “socialist Ethiopia” in early 1977. Until its overthrow in 1991, Mengistu’s self-declared “socialist” government had to deal with an invasion of the neighbouring state Somalia in 1977/78 and with an armed insurrection in Eritrea, then still a province of Ethiopia. In Angola, the People’s Republic of Angola was declared after the victory, with massive Cuban and Soviet assistance, of the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola, MPLA) in a civil war against rival movements of national liberation, in early 1976. Nonetheless, the war went on with the participation of South Africa and the South West Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO), the Namibian liberation movement, thus making it a South-West African war with global involvement, until the withdrawal of Cuban and Soviet forces 1990/91.

For its non-European member states, the CMEA acted as a development organization.² The CMEA’s 1962 “Fundamental Principles of the International Socialist Division of Labour” and 1971 “Complex Programme” set the objective of “aligning the developmental level of the CMEA countries”.³ In the CMEA, the Standing Commission on Technical Assistance and Cooperation (SKTUZ) was in charge of coordinating assistance to states on a “socialist path of development”. As a CMEA member, Cuba was a member of this commission. It was thus a recipient of assistance from the European CMEA member states, above all massively from the Soviet Union. At the same time, Cuba was a provider of assistance to states on a “socialist path of development” and acted as an advocate for the coordinated politico-economic collaboration of the CMEA with non-CMEA countries from the “Three Continents”.⁴ Cuba was not successful with its demand that the European

2 See B. Unfried, “Internationalism, Cooperation and Personal Entanglements between Cuba, the German Democratic Republic, and Angola in the Socialist World”, in: *Cold War History* (2024), pp. 1–24, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14682745.2024.2306402?scroll=top&needAccess=true> (accessed 8 October 2024); B. Unfried and C. Martínez Hernández, “Cuban *Internacionalismo*, a Cuban contribution to the history of internationalisms”, in: S. L. Lewis and N. Osei-Opare (eds.), *Socialism, Internationalism, and Development in the Third World*, New York: Bloomsbury, 2024, pp. 137–158, <https://www.bloomsburycollections.com/monograph?docid=b-9781350420175> (accessed 8 October 2024).

3 “Grundprinzipien der internationalen sozialistischen Arbeitsteilung vom 7.6.1962”, in: C. Gasteyger, *Europa zwischen Spaltung und Einigung 1945 bis 1993. Darstellung und Dokumentation*, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 1994, pp. 214–219; “Schrittweise Annäherung und Angleichung des ökonomischen Entwicklungsniveaus der Mitgliedländer des RGW”, in: Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe, *Komplexprogramm für die weitere Vertiefung und Vervollkommen der Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung der sozialistischen ökonomischen Integration der Mitgliedländer des RGW*, Moscow: APN, 1971, pp. 13–16.

4 Jorge Risquet to Fidel Castro, Luanda 13.7.1976, Wilson Digital Archive, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/jorge-risquet-fidel-castro> (accessed 7 May 2024).

CMEA member states align with the Cuban practice of sending personnel to politically friendly countries free of charge, nor with its pressure to admit more non-European states as members.⁵ In contrast to the Cuban position, from the second half of the 1970s the European socialist countries favoured a line of requiring payment for the export of their personnel services.⁶ Cuba became a major initiator of *Internacionalismo* (international solidarity) in the self-defined socialist world system on an intercontinental scale, but this was on its own initiative and based on bilateral agreements with the recipient country and other donors, mostly the Soviet Union.⁷ Strictly speaking, Cuban *Internacionalismo* was thus implemented in bilateral or trilateral cooperation beyond CMEA structures. The CMEA hardly appeared as an operational multilateral partner, at the best as a coordinator. In 1987, a CMEA-Angola Joint Economic Commission was founded as an attempt to lift cooperation to the multilateral level. The head of the GDR delegation, the deputy head of the GDR Planning Commission, Dieter Albrecht, was appointed chairman of the CMEA delegation at the first meeting of this CMEA-Angola Joint Economic Commission. Yet the GDR representatives themselves warned against any hope that the CMEA might become a multilateral actor in Angola: “From the experience of the GDR in cooperation with the CMEA, however, it should be made clear that in the interests of the swift implementation of the problems at hand, one should not wait for multilateral agreements.”⁸ The same scenario was seen in Ethiopia: whereas the European Union was visibly present as a “Western” donor, the Ethiopians complained that the CMEA as its socialist equivalent was not.⁹

During the CMEA era, Cuba maintained an attitude that could be described as Cuban socialist *tiers-mondisme*, an emphasis on the importance of the revolutionary countries of the “Three Continents” for moving socialism forward in the

5 SKTUZ-meetings 1977, SAPMO BArch, DL 2/16935.

6 Discussed in B. Unfried, “*Entwicklungshilfe*” und “*Internationale Solidarität*”: *Globalisierungsunternehmen in Zeiten der Systemkonkurrenz*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2024.

7 R. W. Stone, *Satellites and Commissars: Strategy and Conflict in the Politics of Soviet-Bloc Trade*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, following a line of debate opened by M. Marresse and J. Vanous, *Soviet Subsidization of Trade with Eastern Europe: A Soviet Perspective*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

8 Dieter Albrecht, Information über die Ergebnisse der 1. Tagung der Gemischten Kommission für die Zusammenarbeit RGW-VR Angola v. 6.–8.5.1987 in Luanda, SAPMO BArch, DY 3023/1464, fol. 359; Wolfgang Rauchfuß an Günter Mittag, Hinweise für das Gespräch mit Gen. Lopo do Nascimento, Mitglied des ZK der MPLA-Partei der Arbeit, Minister für Planung der VR Angola und Vorsitzender der VRA-Seite des GWA DDR/VR Angola, Berlin 28.6.1985, SAPMO BArch, DY 3023/1464, fol. 307.

9 Budakov, Attaché der sowjet. Botschaft in Addis Ababa, Background report on Ethiopia's Relations with Western Countries, 14.8.1978, Wilson Digital Archive, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111618>.

world. The Cuban comrades noted shortcomings and gaps in foreign policy cooperation and coordination between the socialist states, as the International Relations Department of the GDR State Party SED reported as Cuban attitude in the CMEA years. The Cubans believed that the problems of the “Third World” were underestimated by all European socialist states, which categorized revolutionary struggles for national and social liberation as “regional conflicts” and placed them under the jurisdiction of the major powers, which for their part sought to settle such disputes by peaceful means. This approach worked against the revolutionary process, analyzed the International Relations Department of the SED.¹⁰ Similarly during Cuba’s first phase of integration into the CMEA in the mid-1970s, the Economic Policy Department of the GDR embassy in Havana reported the diverging Cuban position: “Cooperation between the CMEA and other developing countries is often regarded in Cuba as insufficient and too slow.” The Cubans were of the opinion that the European CMEA countries put too much emphasis on economic profitability and securing raw materials rather than ensuring that this cooperation should be “more political in the long term”.¹¹ The International Relations Department of the SED considered that the PCC leadership believed “it was possible to change the balance of power in the world in favour of socialism most quickly and comprehensively through revolutionary changes in the ‘Third World’”. This development was to be accelerated through “generous material and military aid to a number of progressive states”.¹² The worldly wise East German comrades saw the Cuban “voluntarism” of the 1960s coming back via Cuba’s “tri-continental” policy in the CMEA.¹³

As the massive sending of Cuban personnel into the “Three Continents” attracted attention even at the time, a well-informed body of literature by Cuban émigré scholars in the USA came into existence. This study can build on the results of this remarkable research effort in the 1980s, which was even accom-

10 Abt. Internationale Verbindungen, *Kubanische Meinungen zur jüngsten Entwicklung in den europäischen Sozialistischen Ländern* (Quelle: Information der Botschaft Havanna), Berlin 6.4.1989, SAPMO BArch, DY 30/12859, fol. 85, 89. NB the adoption of the formerly avoided “Third World”-terminology in the final phase of the GDR.

11 Botschaft der DDR/WPA/Leiter Dr. Klaus Apel, Information zum Stand der Mitarbeit Kubas im RGW, Havanna 25.5.1976, SAPMO BArch, DY 30/27031.

12 Abt. Internationale Verbindungen, *Zur Haltung Kubas in internationalen Fragen*, Berlin, 9.12.1988, SAPMO BArch, DY 30/12859, fol. 29–30.

13 For this “tri-continental” heritage, see B. Unfried, “Das kubanische Momentum – Eine ‘Dritte Sonne’ im Himmel des Sozialismus? Die kubanische Internationale und das ‘Sozialistische Welt-system’”, *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung* 2026 (forthcoming).

plished without access to archive material.¹⁴ International relations scholar Piero Gleijeses wrote two seminal books on the basis of extensive studies in Cuban archives.¹⁵ A wealth of remembrances retrieved by interviews of Cubans in Angola as well as material from Angolan archives has been added to the Cuban archives mobilized by Gleijeses.¹⁶ This contribution complements the Cuban archival sources by using files from the Cuban foreign ministry and, above all, the archive of the Party's youth organization: the Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas (Union of Young Communists of Cuba, UJC). There are discrepancies in the existing literature concerning the two settings of Cuban intervention. The literature on Cuban *Internacionalismo* concentrates on the Angolan case. Ethiopia is rarely mentioned. Even at the time, a large amount of literature accompanied the Angolan endeavour, and Piero Gleijeses dedicated the majority of his seminal books based on Cuban archival material to this largest Cuban endeavour abroad, while Ethiopia received much less attention. Gleijeses treats the Ethiopian theatre of Cuban activity only *en passant*.¹⁷ Similarly, the archive material on which this study is based has a heavy penchant for the Angolan side. This creates something of an asymmetric comparison. In some circumstances, mostly concerning Ethiopia, Cuban archive material is supplemented by easily accessible East German material, as Cuba engaged in trilateral cooperation with the GDR in both cases.

14 J. Domínguez, *To Make a World Safe for Revolution: Cuba's Foreign Policy*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989, pp. 147–183; M. Erisman and J. Kirk, *Cuban Foreign Policy Confronts a New International Order*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991; J. Kirk and M. Erisman, *Cuban Medical Internationalism: Origins, Evolution, and Goals*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; S. Díaz-Briquets and J. Pérez-López, "Internationalist Civilian Assistance: The Cuban Presence in Sub-Saharan Africa", in: S. Díaz-Briquets (ed.), *Cuban Internationalism in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1989, pp. 52–54; S. Roca, "Economic Aspects of Cuban Involvement in Africa", in: C. Mesa-Lago and J. S. Belkin (eds.), *Cuba in Africa*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982; A. Hickling-Hudson, J. C. González, and R. Preston (eds.), *The Capacity to Share: A Study of Cuba's International Cooperation in Educational Development*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012; J. Feinsilver, "Fifty Years of Cuba's Medical Diplomacy: From Idealism to Pragmatism", *Cuban Studies* 41 (2010), pp. 85–104.

15 Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*; Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*. Gleijeses made the majority of the archive material available to him accessible at Wilson Digital Archive, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/>.

16 C. Hatzky, *Kubaner in Angola. Süd-Süd-Kooperation und Bildungstransfer 1976–1991*, Munich: De Gruyter, 2012.

17 Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, pp. 324–326.

2 Ethiopia

Cuba was a key player in Ethiopia from February 1977. A Cuban fact-finding delegation had already sent positive signals in October 1976.¹⁸ After the bloody “armed discussion” in the governing military committee Derg in February 1977, in which Mengistu Haile Mariam consolidated his power by physically eliminating his rivals, the new strongman turned to Cuba with a request for arms aid. Shortly afterwards, General Ochoa, the future commander of the Cuban troops in Ethiopia and Angola, came to Addis Ababa.¹⁹ In March 1977, Fidel Castro himself arrived in Ethiopia for a visit. His meeting with Mengistu was described as extremely cordial. Castro emphasized the similarities between the revolutionary process in Ethiopia and that in Cuba and assured Mengistu of the “complete solidarity of the socialist countries”.²⁰ “Se ha realizado una Revolución en Etiopía”, “a revolution has taken place in Ethiopia”, rather than a mere overthrow of one elite group by another, concluded a detailed report by Castro on the situation in Ethiopia in March 1977. He continued: “I believe that Mengistu is a true revolutionary and that the revolution now being carried out in that country is a true revolution.” And he added a historical association: “I believe that the Ethiopian revolution simultaneously embodies aspects of both the French and Bolshevik revolutions.” Castro proposed a number of levels of intervention: military and security assistance combined with “ayuda y cooperación” (aid and cooperation) and “asistencia técnica” (technical assistance).²¹ From November 1977, Cuban troops were flown into Ethiopia to fight against the Somali invasion, many of them from Angola.²²

In his book on the Cuban intervention in Angola based on Cuban sources and dealing only briefly with the Cuban intervention in Ethiopia, Piero Gleijeses states that Fidel Castro was originally concerned about overstretching Cuban forces in Africa and only made the decision to intervene three months after the first Ethio-

18 N. Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race and the Cold War*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016, p. 188.

19 Telegramm Guerke an Axen, Markowski, Oskar Fischer, Addis Abeba, 21.2.1977, SAPMO BArch, IV 2/2.033/119, fol. 4.

20 Telegramm Stelzer an ZK/Abt. IV/Dr. Willerding, 21.3.1977, über Gespräche Castro-Mengistu, SAPMO BArch, IV 2/2.033/119, fol. 11.

21 Síntesis analítica sobre la situación en Etiopía. Proposiciones, marzo 1977, Wilson Digital Archive, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/collection/42/horn-of-africa-crisis/document/117924> (accessed 19 February 2015).

22 P. Gleijeses, “Cuba and the Cold War, 1959–1980”, in: M. P. Leffler and O. A. Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. II, *Crisis and Detente*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 339.

pian request. A senior official in the SED's International Relations Department recalled that it was Werner Lamberz, with whom he had personal relations, who convinced Castro to become involved in Ethiopia.²³ Lamberz was a dynamic personality in the inner circle of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) leadership who had discovered a passion for Africa comparable to Fidel Castro's commitment. Lamberz dreamed that Ethiopia might become an African Cuba.²⁴

Cuban military aid was linked to the condition that Cuban troops would not take part in action against the Eritrean Liberation Front, with which Cuba had previously maintained political relations. This remained the case despite Mengistu's fierce protests.²⁵ In the exuberance of victory against the Somali invasion, the Ethiopian military leadership continued the war in Eritrea, even though the Cuban troops refused to participate. Involvement in this conflict, which Lamberz, in line with the Soviets and the Cubans, also regarded as unresolvable by military means, together with frustration at the Ethiopian military leadership's resistance to counselling, was to lead to increasing disillusionment with the "socialist" course of the Ethiopian military government. Cuban efforts to influence this course by political intervention backfired and led to the recall of the Cuban ambassador (see below). Once the military threat from Somalia was over, Mengistu showed little inclination to take the advice of his Cuban-Soviet-East German supporters. One axis of the alliance between the GDR, Cuba, and Ethiopia was the close relationship between the leaders: Castro, Mengistu, Honecker, and Lamberz, got on very well with each other. Castro judged Mengistu to be a serious, simple, and convinced revolutionary leader. Lamberz and Castro were befriended. The relationship between Mengistu and Fidel Castro was also described by the GDR embassy as characterized by "extraordinary cordiality and deep friendship". Mengistu was regarded as a calm, logical, and therefore calculable counterpart to the volatile Gaddafi among the allies in Africa. Erich Honecker and Werner Lamberz were fascinated by the Ethiopian revolution and maintained a personal relationship with Mengistu Haile Mariam. This revolution in a peasant country reminded them of the Soviet revolution of 1917.²⁶

23 Interview with the deputy chairman of the International Relations Department of the CC of the SED, Friedel Trappen, 19 May 1999, cited in H.-J. Döring, *Es geht um unsere Existenz*, Berlin: Links Verlag, 1999, p. 282; Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, pp. 45–46. Concerning this sequence, see the documents from Soviet and Cuban archives at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/collection/42/horn-of-africa-crisis>.

24 B. Unfried, "Friendship and Education, Coffee and Weapons. Exchanges between Socialist Ethiopia and the German Democratic Republic", in: *Northeast African Studies* 1 (2016), pp. 15–38.

25 Blitztelegramm Langer 6.1. (1978), SAPMO BArch, DY 30/69567.

26 Telegramm Stelzer an ZK/Abt. IV/Dr. Willerding über Gespräche Castro-Mengistu, Addis Ababa, 21.3.1977, SAPMO BArch, IV 2/2.033/119, fol. 11.

Together with the Soviet Union and the GDR, Cuba was the main supporter of the Ethiopian revolution. After the victory in the Somali war, the reputation of Cuba, which had provided the core of the combat troops, even eclipsed that of the Soviet Union. In addition to a maximum of 12,000 Cubans in the military sector (after the Ogaden campaign this was reduced to 5,000 and less), according to East German reports, 671 Cuban advisors and experts were working in the civilian sector in Ethiopia in 1980.²⁷ Cuban civilian assistance to Ethiopia was concentrated in the health and education sectors. Cuban doctors worked as teachers at Addis Ababa University and in the Medical College of Jimma in the South-West. There were also several Cuban medical missions working in the countryside, organized in “brigades” of medical personnel comprising doctors, nurses, and medical assistants. The number of these medical “brigadists” reached a peak of 300 in the early 1980s and declined to around 200 at the end of the decade.²⁸ In the other direction, immediately after the victory in the Ogaden War in 1978, Mengistu sent 1,200 young war orphans and children, “victims of the feudal regime” (beggars), to be rehabilitated in Cuba, where they were to receive further schooling and learn “revolutionary spirit, commitment and discipline”. They were followed by a second, equally large group.²⁹

The European socialist states engaged in a long-term development programme with “Socialist Ethiopia”. Its industrialization strand included the construction of entire plants. Economic cooperation was also provided with between 200 and 300 Cuban assemblers working alongside 27 GDR engineers and 4000 Ethiopian workers in the cement plant construction project in Mugher.³⁰ This was

27 For the military: P. Gleijeses, “‘La causa más bonita’: Cuba y Africa 1975–1988” [“The Most Beautiful Cause”: Cuba and Africa 1975–1988], in: P. Gleijeses, J. Risquet, and F. Ramírez (eds.), *Cuba – Africa. Historia común de lucha y sangre*, Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2008, p. 2. In the course of the 1980s, the number of Cuban military personnel was reduced to 3,700, see Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, p. 324. For civilians: Botschaft der DDR in der Rep. Kuba, Zu einigen Aspekten der Beziehungen Kubas mit den Schwerpunktländern Afrikas – Angola, Äthiopien und Moçambique – im Jahr 1979, Havanna, 17.4.1980, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin (hereafter PAAA), ZR 1409/88.

28 Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López, “Internationalist Civilian Assistance”, pp. 60–61; Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, p. 325, for the peak of 300, drawing on Cuban sources; “Cubanos en Etiopía”, *Colaboración Internacional* 30 (1987), pp. 4–8, giving the number of 200 Cuban medical personnel in Ethiopia.

29 Botschaft der BRD/Busse, Addis Abeba, 12.5.1978, PAAA, Auswärtiges Amt (AA), 25287.

30 Bericht über den Stand der Realisierung der DDR-Vorhaben Zementfabrik New Mugher, Textilkombinat Kombolcha und des langfristigen Importabkommens mit dem Sozialistischen Äthiopien, Berlin, 13.6.1983, SAPMO BArch, DL 226/50, fol. 214–218; the greater number of Cuban assemblers in: SAPMO BArch, DL 226/60, fol. 60; see also the fragmentary documentation in: National Archives Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, 17/18/47/03 Mugher Cement Factory 1982–1984.

a spillover effect of the joint GDR-Cuban project to build a cement factory in Cienfuegos, where the “Heavy Machinery Combine Ernst Thälmann” (SKET) Magdeburg was also the general contractor.³¹ An Ethiopian delegation had visited this project in Cuba as a precautionary measure and had also learnt about the terms of the contract.³² In 1983, a visit to the construction site by a representative of the East German special economic sector Koko (Commercial Coordination), the Cuban special representative for Ethiopia, Curbelo, and the responsible Ethiopian minister of industry together with the Ethiopian general directors spoke of good and timely cooperation. This special sector of the GDR’s foreign trade had been involved to solve problems with completing the construction of this prestige project within the scheduled time. Against the background of constant failures on the part of the general contractor SKET Magdeburg, the personnel deployed showed, according to East German reports, a “high level of performance and commitment”.³³ When a lack of intense labour on the part of the Cuban assembly brigade delayed completion, this was resolved in a discussion between the party secretaries. Half of the Cuban fitters were party members. Their party secretary appealed to “proletarian internationalism” to ensure that they honoured their commitments.³⁴ The coordination of the East German, Cuban, and Ethiopian specialists and labour force was by and large successful, and a prestigious project of socialist cooperation was carried out.³⁵ This is an example of trilateral cooperation and the intercontinental circulation of a big construction project together with the personnel in the socialist world. Whereas the East German contribution was financed by a governmental soft loan, high-level government decisions meant the Cuban input was free of charge. As the Cuban ambassador to Ethiopia remembers, the Ethiopians were not particularly grateful for this decision. They rather took it for granted.³⁶

31 Schalck an Mittag, Berlin (1980), SAPMO BArch, DL 226/57, fol. 426.

32 AHB Invest Export/Raschmann, Antrag zur Bestätigung der Ratifizierung des Vertrages über die Lieferung der Zementanlage Mugher/SÄ, Berlin, 29.9.1980, SAPMO BArch, DL 226/57, fol. 438; see H. G. Dagne, *Das entwicklungspolitische Engagement der DDR in Äthiopien*, Münster: Spektrum, 2004, p. 54.

33 Zum Vertrag Zementfabrik New Mugher, Berlin, 17.4.1985, SAPMO BArch, DL 226/49, fol. 86.

34 Grundorganisation der SED der Botschaft der DDR im Sozialistischen Äthiopien, Bericht über die Parteilarbeit im Zeitraum vom 1.1.–31.1.1984, 27.2.1984, SAPMO BArch, DY 30/14116.

35 This trilateral project is described at more length in Unfried, “*Entwicklungshilfe*” und “*Internationale Solidarität*”, pp. 138–144.

36 Interview with Antonio Pérez Herrero, Havana, 27 August 2015.

3 Angola

The Angolan endeavour of *Internacionalismo* was by far the largest of these programmes of Cuban foreign assistance. In many respects, Cuba was the leading force in the CMEA states' cooperation in and with Angola. As a whole strand of literature culminating in the monumental works of Piero Gleijeses has shown, Cuba acted at its own initiative and created its own logistics for the personnel secondment to Angola.³⁷ After the military rescue of the MPLA government in Luanda in "Operación Carlota", from November 1975 to March 1976, the focus moved towards building up sectors of the economy. In addition to the soldiers who were decisive in the war, the Cuban state started to send thousands of civilian "internationalists" (*Internacionalistas*). A report of April 1976 by Raúl Castro identified the lack of qualified technical and management cadres as the main problem of the new state. At this time, only 250 Cuban civilian "internationalists" were in the country. Castro proposed a massive increase.³⁸ In July 1976, a first cooperation agreement was signed, in which Cuba committed itself to a broad range of civilian assistance, and a mixed commission for economic and scientific-technical cooperation was established.³⁹ The number of Cuban civilian "internationalists" rose steeply. At the end of 1977, between 3,400 and 4,000 of them were already in the country.⁴⁰ In 1982, there were 5,000 Cubans working in Angola, with 1,500 of them in popular education (which included primary and secondary

37 As Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, has demonstrated on the basis of previous literature which had already argued similarly: W. LeoGrande, "Cuban-Soviet Relations and Cuban Policy in Africa", in: Mesa-Lago and Belkin (eds.), *Cuba in Africa*, p. 47; P. Shearman, *The Soviet Union and Cuba*, London: Routledge, 1987, and proven using the Cuban archive material he mobilized. Further new evidence for Cuban logistics via revolutionary Portugal is given by F. Camacho Padilla, "La trascendencia de la guerra colonial y el golpe de Estado del 25 de abril de 1974 en las relaciones entre Cuba y Portugal (1959–1975)" [The significance of the colonial war and the coup d'état of 25 April 1974 in Cuban-Portuguese relations (1959–1975)], *Relaciones Internacionales* 67 (2024), <https://www.academia.edu/126116219/>. For new evidence of the Cuban military build-up in Angola and its Portuguese connections, see the contribution by Helder Adegas Fonseca and João Fusco Ribeiro in this volume.

38 (Raúl Castro), *Acerca de la necesidad de una masiva ayuda técnica (civil) a RPA*, Luanda, 23.4.1976, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archive of the Cuban Armed Forces. Obtained and contributed to CWIHP by Piero Gleijeses and included in CWIHP e-Dossier No. 44, Wilson Digital Archive, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117918>.

39 E. B. Pavón, "La colaboración de Cuba con los países de África Subsahariana (1959–1988)" [Cuba's collaboration with the countries of sub-Saharan Africa (1959–1988)], MA thesis, Havana, ISRI 1989, p. 53. The text of this agreement is missing from Gleijeses' archival documentation in the Wilson Center.

40 Smaller number: Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, p. 80, based on an internal Cuban document which was only accessible to him; larger number: Pavón, "La colaboración de Cuba con los países de África Subsahariana", Annex VII.

schools), 400 doctors, a further 180 in the health sector, 200 agricultural specialists, and 120 in the university sector. European socialist countries' cooperation with Cuban universities spread to Africa. Cuban, East German, and Soviet university teachers rebuilt the University of Luanda after the exodus of the Portuguese teaching staff.⁴¹ Several hundreds of Cuban "internationalists" worked in Angola's higher education sector.⁴² The focus on education had a corollary in Ethiopia in joint Cuban-East German tertiary education projects – in both cases a trilateral cooperation including the GDR. Cuba, which had been a recipient of Soviet and East German assistance in this sector, became a multiplier of assistance in higher education.⁴³ While the experts from the European CMEA countries mostly acted as advisors or trainers, the Cubans also worked operationally, i.e. the teachers taught Angolan children in place of the missing Angolan teaching staff. This provision of personnel kept the Angolan state alive, or rather, it helped to build it up in the first place.

Economic development was less successful. After the first round of the Civil War, the Angolan intervention turned into a huge development programme. The Angolans asked for no fewer than 10,000 specialists from CMEA countries to work in an operational capacity – and not just as advisors or trainers. Their number was to increase to up to 30,000 within five years. The CMEA countries were thus expected to take over the role of the Portuguese in running Angola's economy. After the end of the first phase of the Civil War, a CMEA group of experts undertook an extended trip to Angola at the end of 1976 to define a framework for a development programme for the country. It programmed the dispatch of around 900 specialists from the CMEA countries.⁴⁴ By 1979, CMEA Secretary General Fadejew reported that, although not as many requested, more than 6,000 specialists had been sent from CMEA countries.⁴⁵ Two thirds of them were Cubans.⁴⁶

41 Vermerk über die Tagung der Handelsräte der ML RGW in der VR Angola am 22.4.1982, SAPMO BArch, DL2/10624; Hatzky, *Kubaner in Angola*, pp. 194, 230–231; Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López, "Internationalist Civilian Assistance", p. 62.

42 N. Jiménez, *Mujeres sin fronteras* [Women without borders], Havana: Editora Política, 2009, pp. 69, 96–97; Hatzky, *Kubaner in Angola*, p. 109.

43 B. Unfried, "Education as a Paradigm and as a Part of institutionalized 'International Solidarity' of the German Democratic Republic", in: I. Miethe and J. Weiss (eds.), *Socialist Educational Cooperation and the Global South*, Berlin: Peter Lang, 2020, pp. 69–89.

44 Aktivitäten der DDR im Rahmen der Beziehungen RGW-VR Angola, SAPMO BArch, DL2/10624. The number of 900 specialists apparently did not include the hundreds of Cubans already at work.

45 Niederschrift über ein Gespräch des Sekretärs des RGW, N. Fadejew, mit dem Mitglied des Politbüros, dem Sekretär des ZK der MPLA-Arbeiterpartei, dem Minister für Planung der VR Angola, José Eduardo dos Santos, 28.6.1979, SAPMO BArch, DL2/10624.

46 Koordinierung der Hilfe der RGW-Länder gegenüber der VR Angola (Juni 1978), SAPMO BArch, DY30/27059.

In an extensive exploratory mission to Angola in April and May 1976 preceding the CMEA mission, Raúl Castro had an eye wide open for the economic development potential of the country. He looked with admiration at the remnants of the Portuguese fishing industry.⁴⁷ Although we have no information about whether the Cubans or other CMEA countries managed to take over and operate this fish-processing industry, fishing agreements emerged between Angola and Cuba and the Soviet Union respectively in the second half of the 1980s.⁴⁸ This was part of a series of efforts, as in the case of coffee production (see below), to get enterprises up and running again, develop them, and eventually “get something out” of Angola on an economic level. Following Raúl Castro’s information, at the time of the visit, Cuba sent provisions, some bought for US-dollars, not only to feed its own troops but also for 25,000 Angolan military.⁴⁹ During his mission, which was complemented by an official visit to Moscow, he did not consider it opportune to reiterate his brother’s earlier demand that the Soviets contribute to the expenditure of keeping the Cuban troops in Angola.⁵⁰ Thus, and in view of the envisaged increase in civilian assistance to replace the military who were successively being withdrawn, economic relations with Angola had to become more balanced. Cuban cooperation needed to be established on a more sustainable basis. This was the rationale for the efforts to establish economic cooperation to replace unilateral resource transfers.

As the number of Cuban troops surged again in the second round of the Civil War and reached a peak of 55,000 at the end of the 1980s (from around 36,000 in 1976 and 25,000 at the end of the 1970s),⁵¹ the supply logistics for this huge number of people became a serious challenge. He had often found himself in “situaciones muy difíciles, muy difíciles” (very difficult situations), stated the commander of the Cuban troops in Angola, General Ochoa at his trial after his return

47 Raúl Castro, Informe al Buró Político del Segundo Secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba acerca de su visita a la República Popular de Angola (19 de abril a 7 junio de 1976), fol. 107–110, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117920> (accessed 12 September 2024).

48 My thanks go to Helder Adegas Fonseca for these hints along with a series of commentaries on the material side of the Cuban presence in Angola which enriched this article, as did the previous volume in this collection: Ch. Saunders, H. A. Fonseca, and L. Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023.

49 Raúl Castro, Informe al Buró Político del Segundo Secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba acerca de su visita a la República Popular de Angola (19 de abril a 7 junio de 1976), fol. 120, 141, Wilson Digital Archive, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117920>.

50 Ibid., fol. 50, Wilson Digital Archive, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117920>.

51 Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, pp. 9, 107, 215.

to Cuba in 1989. He was referring to black market transactions in ivory and rough diamonds intended to finance Cuban troop operations. He had conducted these transactions jointly with the chief of Cuban Security in Angola and the head of the Special Section for the Acquisition of Goods in circumventing the US embargo on certain military maintenance measures and arms purchases.⁵² But such informal barter trade operations did not mean that Cuba entertained considerable commercial relations with Angola. It seems rather that the contrary was true: the lack of regular supplies made these commanders resort to “informal” methods of provisioning in the economically unstructured terrain.

Angola's main export products were oil and coffee. The Cuban coffee and citrus specialists did not manage to really get agricultural production going again under the adverse circumstances of the Civil War. Jointly with East German specialists and friendship brigadists, the Cubans organized the harvest and transport of Angolan coffee. Tens of thousands of tonnes of coffee remained stored in the coffee warehouses from colonial times and could not be removed following the destruction of infrastructure. Cuban specialists managed to make these coffee stocks an operational asset again, a considerable achievement as coffee was the second most important export sector for Angola. However, an attempt to run the coffee plantations left behind by the Portuguese planters as state farms with Cuban participation had little success.⁵³ Cuban sugar specialists were also active in Angola and got the sugar refineries running again.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, Cuba's massive political and military support was not reflected on the level of economic relations. In addition to agreements on scientific and technical cooperation, Cuba also concluded agreements on economic trade relations (see below). Cuba maintained economic structures within the framework of its own civil administration: an *Oficina económica* (Economic Bureau) whose chairman was a *vice-ministro* of the Cuban Ministry of Labour, and a trade policy department in Angola. However, Cuba's share of commercial trade (alongside the Soviet Union) was the smallest of the CMEA countries in relation to other activities in Angola.⁵⁵ Business and trade was certainly not the Cubans' strong point.

52 Causa 1/89. Fin de la conexión cubana, Havana 1989, pp. 115, 286–287, 308, 310, 335.

53 AV Luanda/Packeiser, Einschätzung über die Entwicklung der Produktion und des Exports von Kaffee in der VR Angola, Luanda, 20 November 1986, Anlage 1, SAPMO BArch, DL2/13607; D. Ottaway and M. Ottaway, *Afrocommunism*, New York: Africana Publishing, 1981, p. 121.

54 E. Concepcion, *Por que somos internacionalistas* [Because we are internationalists], Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1987, p. 21.

55 See Unfried, “*Entwicklungshilfe*” und “*Internationale Solidarität*”, p. 179. Whereas the GDR in 1983 managed to import goods worth USD 55 million, boosted by oil imports, the GDR statistics registered no imports for Cuba and the Soviet Union, see Entwicklung des Außenhandelsumsatzes mit der VR Angola und sozialistische Länder, SAPMO BArch, DL 2/12798. The Cuban MINREX archives

The triangular relationship between Cuba, the Soviet Union, and Angola was by no means harmonious. Gleijeses demonstrated that there were fundamental strategic differences between the Soviet military advisors and the Cuban troop command.⁵⁶ Massive rivalries and conflict appeared between Cuban and Angolan MPLA-government troops.⁵⁷ In 1978, a period of alienation in Angolan-Cuban relations set in. The Angolans felt patronized and reminded of colonial times. After their success in the first round of the Civil War with the massive assistance of the Cuban troops, the MPLA government seemed to privilege an arrangement with the USA on the basis of a withdrawal of the Cuban troops.⁵⁸ In meetings with the Soviet partners, which were institutionalized (only) in the second half of the 1980s, Cuban representatives like Risquet openly spoke about the incapacity and the corruption of sectors of the Angolan government (“bandidos”).⁵⁹ The “Cuban comrades also have a somewhat different view than we do on certain issues relating to developments in Angola”, GDR State Security explained to its chief.⁶⁰ The internal factions within the MPLA, which exploded in bloody clashes in May 1977 (the Alves revolt), had allies on different sides in the Soviet Union and Cuba.⁶¹ But

and the GDR Ministry of Foreign Trade archives display some minor trade agreements between Cuba and Angola which do not constitute a noteworthy trade sector. The archives of the Cuban Foreign Trade Ministry *Comité Estatal de Colaboración Económica/CECE*, still available to Gleijeses some ten years ago, are no longer locatable today.

⁵⁶ Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, pp. 343–378.

⁵⁷ Only two examples: deep resentment by Angolan government forces in the strategically important oil enclave Cabinda against Cuban domination and against perceived privileges of Cuban troops, as related by the Cuban Defense Minister Raúl Castro: Informe al Buró Político del Segundo Secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba acerca de su visita a la República Popular de Angola (19 de abril a 7 junio de 1976), fol. 148–158, Wilson Digital Archive, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117920>; the angry letter by Fidel Castro to José Eduardo dos Santos, 20 September 1983, with massive reproaches about the Angolan army’s military conduct and performance: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/fidel-castro-jose-eduardo-dos-santos-0>.

⁵⁸ Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, pp. 98–109. Concerning US efforts to generate momentum for a solution based on a Cuban withdrawal via the “Non-Aligned Movement” also see D. Basosi, “‘Something that apparently troubles the Cubans significantly’: Jimmy Carter’s attempt to pressure Cuba ‘out of Africa’ through the Non-Aligned Movement, 1977–78”, *Cold War History* 24 (2024) 3, pp. 359–377.

⁵⁹ See, e.g., Reunión bipartita Cuba-URSS, 10.3.1987, fol. 52–54, Wilson Digital Archive, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/meeting-between-cuba-and-soviet-union-reunion-bipartita-cuba-urss> (accessed 12 September 2024).

⁶⁰ Material für Gespräche mit dem Innenminister der Rep. Kuba, Gen. Sergio del Valle Jimenez, Mai 1979, BStU Berlin, MfS ZAIG 5492, fol. 45.

⁶¹ N. Miller, *Soviet Relations with Latin America 1959–1987*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 116; R. Duncan, “Cuba’s Impact on Soviet Behavior in Sub-Saharan Africa. From

on the whole, cooperation worked in a way that made Angola for some time a showpiece of the CMEA countries' intercontinental assistance in Africa, led by the Cuba-Soviet Union axis.

The Cuban "internationalists", in comparison with their counterparts from European socialist countries, had a reputation for modesty and adaptability. They accepted the local living conditions without great material demands and were known for being able to work in unsophisticated conditions without expensive technical devices. They accepted much more frugal conditions than their East German colleagues.⁶² The "internationalists" lived in more modest settlements and thus cost considerably less than specialists from European CMEA countries. In Ethiopia, Cuban experts received a monthly allowance of 425 Birr (the local currency), while in contrast the Soviets got 1,000–1,250 Birr, local expenditures (housing, medical services), and half of their transport costs paid by the Ethiopians.⁶³ In Angola, the Cubans, including many women, worked on terms that the East Germans generally found unacceptable. The Angolan comrades were amazed at the "high demands for housing and living conditions" placed on them by the friendship brigades of the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ), the GDR youth organization, something reported by the secretary general of the GDR Foreign Ministry in 1977 – and not without sympathy for the Angolan position. The North Korean and Cuban comrades would apparently never have made such demands.⁶⁴ Cuban coffee specialists, transport workers, and military personnel, in cooperation with "friendship brigadists" from the GDR, helped to secure the (meagre) coffee har-

Brezhnev to Gorbachev", in: G. W. Breslauer (ed.), *Soviet Policy in Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, pp. 188–89; Domínguez, *To Make a World Safe for Revolution*, pp. 158–159; C. Hatzky, "Hierarchien? Die Sowjetunion, Kuba und Angola. Ein Fallbeispiel", in: J. Dülffer and W. Loth (eds.), *Dimensionen internationaler Geschichte*, Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012, pp. 398–399.

62 MfAA/Generalsekretär Alfred Neumann, Information über die Reise einer Delegation des MfAA in die Volksrepublik Angola, Berlin 1.9.1977, SAPMO BArch, DY 3023/1463, fol. 37; B. Unfried and C. Martínez, "El Internacionalismo, la Solidaridad y el interés mutuo. Encuentros entre cubanos, africanos y alemanes de la RDA" [Internationalism, Solidarity and Mutual Interest: Meetings between Cubans, Africans, and Germans from the GDR], *Estudios Históricos* 61 (2017), <http://bibliotecadigital.fgv.br/ojs/index.php/reh/article/view/68804/68285>; E. George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965–1991: From Che Guevara to Cuito Cuanavale*, London: Frank Cass, 2005, pp. 158–159.

63 Embassy of the GDR in Socialist Ethiopia, Abt. Addis Abeba, Handelsrat und Attaché für WTZ Haenel an MAH/Leiter Abt. WTZ mit Entwicklungsländern/Genn. Dr. Streber, Jahresanalyse über die fondsfinanzierte WTZ Äthiopien, 20.11.1989, SAPMO BArch, DL 3/74.

64 MfAA/Generalsekretär Alfred Neumann, Information über die Reise einer Delegation des MfAA in die Volksrepublik Angola, Berlin 1.9.1977, SAPMO BArch, DY 3023/1463, 37. Similar Angolan reports on the humility of Cuban material requests for housing in comparison to Soviet ones in Duncan, "Cuba's Impact on Soviet Behavior in Sub-Saharan Africa", p. 190.

vest, which was then exported, some to the world market and some to the GDR in barter trade.⁶⁵

Against the background of the CMEA's coordination difficulties, forms of tripartite and multipartite cooperation between the CMEA countries developed in Angola. The European CMEA countries, above all the Soviet Union, were essential for this large development programme for Angola. But in addition, lines of cooperation between the non-European CMEA members developed. Vietnam, since 1978 the third non-European member state of the CMEA after Mongolia and Cuba, offered to send 1,000 rice specialists to Angola in order to achieve self-sufficiency in rice in the country. Cuba cooperated with the Soviet Union and Vietnam in this programme.⁶⁶ War-torn Vietnam not only sent students and labourers to Europe for training, but also thousands of professionals to Africa to train African personnel.⁶⁷ The Cubans formed the backbone of international assistance for the "socialist"-inclined MPLA government. The Cubans were the first to be on the scene when the advance of the rival independence movements FNLA and UNITA threatened to cut off the MPLA's lifeline in the capital at the end of 1975. The massive deployment of Cuban troops decided the military situation in favour of the MPLA. Cuban civilian personnel followed on the heels of the military: coffee and sugar specialists, teaching staff, chicken farmers, citrus fruit experts, transport and construction engineers, and construction workers. Cuba's decisive contribution consisted of military assistance, assistance in the education and health sectors, and the education and training of several thousands of Angolans in Cuba. Several thousand Angolans received their secondary or higher education in Cuba.⁶⁸ Cuban expertise in the citrus sector and in industrial chicken rearing, to name just two examples, had been developed by the GDR. Now Cuban citrus and chicken rearing specialists came to Angola to pass on this expertise. Vietnam, Cuba, and the Soviet Union cooperated in the rice programme in Angola. Cuban soldiers in Angola were given the opportunity to go to the GDR as contract labour-

⁶⁵ Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, p. 327; Acuerdo Especial, 5.11.1977, Wilson Digital Archive, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117931> (accessed 13 October 2021).

⁶⁶ 109. EKA-Tagung (Jan. 1984), SAPMO BArch, DL 2/12798.

⁶⁷ A. Alamgir and C. Schwenkel, "From Socialist Assistance to National Self-Interest: Vietnamese Labor Migration into CMEA Countries", in: J. Mark, A. M. Kalinovsky, and S. Marung (eds.), *Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020, p. 105.

⁶⁸ Jiménez, *Mujeres sin fronteras*, p. 65, speaks of 8,000 Angolan graduates in Cuba, of which more than a quarter (around 2,600) were in higher education.

ers as a bonus after their arduous and dangerous service in Angola.⁶⁹ Other Cubans also went to the GDR and other CMEA countries for training and as contract labourers.⁷⁰ Cuban personnel thus circulated between Africa and Europe. These triangular and multiangular personal entanglements bound the European and the new non-European parts of the socialist world together more than the modest flow of goods.

4 Types of “Internationalists”

Within the CMEA, Cuba specialized in the sending of military and civilian personnel to revolutionary countries of the “Three Continents”. Cuba’s assistance services in the CMEA focused on the secondment of specialists, the Cuban representative explained, and were a specific feature of the Cuban contribution.⁷¹ In 1981, almost a fifth of the specialists (technicians) sent by CMEA countries into the world were from Cuba.⁷² The Cubans sent a whole range of specialists, including medical and educational personnel, agricultural experts, engineers, and construction workers.

A specific group of civilian “internationalists” were the Destacamentos Pedagógicos Internacionalistas (internationalist pedagogic detachments) of students who had not yet finished their university education and who were sent to teach in Angola as a practical part of their training. This model of sending brigades of pre-graduate students as teachers had already been tried out in Cuba in secondary-level boarding schools in the countryside (Escuelas Secundarias Básicas en el Campo).⁷³ Starting in 1978, prospective teachers of the Destacamentos Pedagógicos Internacionalistas were sent to Angola. As they were not yet fully trained teach-

69 B. Unfried, “Intercontinental Labor Migration within the Socialist World: Cuban Contract Laborers in the German Democratic Republic, 1975 to 1990”, *Yearbook of Transnational History* 5 (2022), p. 141; Carta de Juan Vicente Monzón, del Comité Nacional UJC, a Julio A. Peña Hernández, Jefe Sección UJC-OPJM del CCPCC, 8 November 1988, Archivo Central de la UJC, 4.0.8 Documentos enviados al PCC para su información, José Ramón Machado Ventura 15-1-464/3; S. Ritschel, *Kubanische Studierende in der DDR: Ambivalentes Erinnern zwischen Zeitzeuge und Archiv*, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2015, pp. 230–231.

70 Unfried, “Intercontinental Labor Migration within the Socialist World”, pp. 131–173.

71 Bericht über die Tagung der Verwaltungsleiter der MAH und der Staatlichen Komitees für außenwirtschaftliche Beziehungen der ML/RGW, Berlin, 29.9.-2.10.1981, SAPMO BArch, DL 2/20039.

72 A. Zimbalist and C. Brundenius, *The Cuban Economy: Measurement and Analysis of Socialist Performance*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989, p. 153.

73 Archivo Central de la UJC, Secretariado Nacional 1972, 4.0.2: Actas de reuniones: 4-2-110/2.

ers, they were sent free of charge even during this period, when Angola paid for Cuban personnel services. They comprised more than 2,000 altogether. More than half of them were women. This was a considerable part of a total of around 11,500 “internationalists” in Angola’s education sector.⁷⁴ Such detachments of student teachers were sent to Angola, but not to Ethiopia. The reason was the massive Angolan demand for teachers which could not be satisfied by graduate teachers alone. The Angolan educational system had broken down with the retreat of the Portuguese. Cuban teachers taught Angolan children in place of the missing Angolan teaching staff. In the first half of the 1980s, they represented more than three-quarters of the teachers in the secondary sector.⁷⁵ This was a new overseas sending channel for young people who were not yet fully trained. The Komsomol and the East German FDJ by contrast sent youngsters who had completed their training. The Destacamentos Pedagógicos Internacionalistas were an exception. Normally Cuba sent fully trained professionals and construction workers with a core of educational and medical personnel. Then there was the other and larger group of military “internationalists”.

In contrast to the Angolan case, the Ethiopian school system remained operational after the revolution. The Cubans sent experts to teacher training institutes and to the sector of tertiary education. Analogous to the medical brigades, a Cuban “contingente de la educación” consisted of 70 teacher trainers and staff for the establishment of the veterinary faculty of Debre Zeit.⁷⁶ But they did not send primary and secondary school teachers to Ethiopia.

5 The Selection Process

In principle, an “internationalist” mission was voluntary. 24,000 Cubans applied to a national recruitment campaign for internationalist missions in Nicaragua and 4,000 of them were selected, the majority female secondary and primary school teachers.⁷⁷ Others were approached to go on mission. Cuban interviewees recall that they were approached by the staff of their work unit, in the case of

74 Pavón, “La colaboración de Cuba con los países de Africa Subsahariana”, pp. 96–97; Hatzky, *Kubaner in Angola*, p. 109.

75 Following Angolan sources in: Hatzky, *Kubaner in Angola*, p. 232.

76 Cuba-Etiopía, *Colaboración Internacional*, 1980, p. 14.

77 Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, p. 321; similar figures in a speech by Fidel Castro in the Cuban periodical *Bohemia*, 7 December 1979, p. 57; Roca, “Economic Aspects of Cuban Involvement in Africa”, p. 172.

teachers by the Ministry of Education.⁷⁸ Leaders for the Cuban civil administration in Angola were often recruited informally by colleagues and comrades whose professional, political, or personal paths had intersected with their own. For example, the *vice-ministro* of the Cuban Ministry of Labour, Emiliano Manresa, was asked “in passing” by his old acquaintance, the head of the Cuban civil administration in Angola, Jorge Risquet, whether he would like to become head of its economic structure, the *Oficina económica*.⁷⁹

For the selection process, committees were formed under the leadership of the party, made up of representatives from the youth organization UJC, the “mass organizations” *Comités de Defensa de la Revolución* (political neighbourhood organizations, CDR), the *Federación de Mujeres Cubanas* (Federation of Cuban Women, FMC), the trade union *Central de Trabajadores Cubanos* (Central Federation of Cuban Workers, CTC), the local government structures, and the farmers’ organization. In the military sector, they were supplemented by representatives of the army.⁸⁰ However, some people refused to go to Angola when they were approached for the civilian or military mission.⁸¹ The national leadership of the UJC considered such an attitude to be a “serious political error”, the causes of which had to be investigated at the level of the *comités de base*, where such cases were brought.⁸² There was a certain social pressure to go to Angola, former “internationalists” recall. If individuals refused a proposed mission, they had to put forward a good reason for doing so.⁸³

At the beginning of the mission in Angola, the largely male composition of the “internationalists” was seen as a shortcoming. Young women were prevented from applying for an “internationalist” mission by family obligations, children,

78 Interview Berthold Unfried with Ester Moncada, “internationalist” teacher in Nicaragua, Havana, 19 October 2015.

79 Interview Berthold Unfried with Emiliano Manresa, head of the economic office of the civilian Cuban administration in Angola, Havana, 26 October 2015.

80 Carta de Secundino Guerra Hidalgo a Luis Orlando Domínguez, La Habana, 18.3.1976, Archivo Central de la UJC, Sección 5 Primer Secretario 1976, 7-4-220/1: 5.0.8 Documentos recibidos del Partido.

81 Carta de Secundino Guerra Hidalgo a Luis Orlando Domínguez, La Habana, 4.2.1976, Archivo Central de la UJC, Sección 5 Primer Secretario 1976, 7-4-220/1: 5.0.8 Documentos recibidos del Partido.

82 Acta 3 Reunión del Grupo de Colaboradores de la JMPLA, 1.10.1976, Archivo Central de la UJC, Sección de Cuadros, Documentos sobre Grupo de Colaboracion en la Rep. Popular de Angola, 8-3-245/1.

83 Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, p. 329.

and their marital status.⁸⁴ Children had to be left behind in Cuba, either with grandparents or other relatives, or in a state children's home. On the one hand, this was not unusual in Cuban society, but on the other hand, it was described by various "internationalist" parents as the "greatest sacrifice" that the mission demanded of them.⁸⁵ The surplus of men was also problematic for the cohesion of the Cuban collectives. The Cuban men were not supposed to enter into sexual relations with Angolan or Ethiopian women, as such relationships were regarded as potentially problematic, dangerous, and conflictual with the population. The surplus of men was reduced from the second half of the 1970s onwards through the massive use of female teachers, but it was never eliminated. This created some problems for the Cuban "internationalists" in Angola. How were these young men, who after all spent years in service abroad, supposed to satisfy their sexual and emotional needs? Apart from a liaison with a Cuban woman, there was really no way that conformed to the rules: intimate intercourse with Angolan women was just as frowned upon as intercourse with casual prostitutes because of the security problem and fear of sexually transmitted diseases.⁸⁶ Homosexuality was forbidden until the end of the 1970s and was a reason for repatriation when it was viewed as a symptom of a corrupted personality that would lead to a loss of authority in the collective.⁸⁷

6 Numbers and the Question of Remuneration

In addition to the maximum number of 12,000 Cubans in the military sector in the Somali war of 1977/78, there were several hundred Cuban advisors and experts working in the civilian sector in Ethiopia in 1980.⁸⁸ Of these, around 300 are said to have been doctors and medical assistant personnel, the same number as

⁸⁴ Francisco García Ferrer/Jefe del Grupo de Colaboradores to c.ro Luis Orlando Domínguez/Primer Secr. del Comité Nacional de la UJC, Luanda, 15.11.1976; Segundo Secretario to Primer Secretario, La Habana, 31.1.1976, Archivo Central de la UJC, Sección de Cuadros 1975/76 9.2.

⁸⁵ Interview with Nancy Jiménez, Havana, 18 March 2015.

⁸⁶ Hatzky, *Kubaner in Angola*, pp. 257, 293–298.

⁸⁷ Examples in Archivo Central de la UJC, Primer Secretario 1979, 4.0.9 Resoluciones 9-3-280/2

⁸⁸ Numbers of military: Gleijeses, "‘La causa más bonita’: Cuba y Africa 1975–1988", p. 2; numbers of civilian "internationalists": Botschaft der DDR in der Rep. Kuba, Zu einigen Aspekten der Beziehungen Kubas mit den Schwerpunktländern Afrikas – Angola, Äthiopien und Moçambique – im Jahr 1979, Havanna, 17.4.1980, PAAA, ZR 1409/88.

local doctors at the end of the 1970s.⁸⁹ This was at the apex of the Cuban personnel secondment to Ethiopia. Around 3,000 Ethiopian pupils and students studied in Cuba.⁹⁰ For comparison: in Angola, there were 336 Cuban doctors in 1979, 1,200 Angolan pupils and students studied in Cuba.⁹¹ This was more than in the GDR; both services were free of charge. A Cuban author with access to internal material gives a total of 5,341 civilian “internationalists” for the period of Cuban engagement in Ethiopia, the numbers for Angola were nearly ten times higher.⁹²

In the mid-1980s, there were almost 5,000 specialists from CMEA countries in Angola, as reported by the CMEA’s coordinating Standing Commission for Technical Assistance.⁹³ This was the highest number in a country on the “socialist development path”. The CMEA attempted to coordinate the secondment of specialists from the individual member countries and to establish standardized remuneration rates. The basis for this were the bilateral agreements between the Soviet Union and Angola: 50 per cent of the payment was to be made in convertible foreign currency, 50 per cent in Angolan currency. Cuba did not sign up to this arrangement, as it demanded nothing for its “internationalists” apart from the provision of accommodation and a modest sum in local currency.⁹⁴ In the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union granted a deferral of payments for its specialists,⁹⁵ which ultimately also meant that they effectively cost nothing. The other CMEA countries regulated the secondment of personnel through a contribution of the costs by the Angolan State. Even Cuba, which had basically provided its services free of charge, felt compelled to set remuneration rates payable in US-dollars by the Angolan state between 1978 and 1983. Indeed, the Cubans had always envisioned that Angola should successively take over an increasingly large proportion of the costs of its “internationalists”, from paying them “pocket money” in local currency in 1976, to covering part of their living costs in 1977, and culminating in

89 Botschaft der BRD in Addis Abeba/Pachelbel an AA, Ref. 320, 19.11.1979, PAAA, BAV 90-HAVA/25293; from the Cuban press: Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López, “Internationalist Civilian Assistance”, pp. 60–61; Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, p. 325; “Cubanos in Etiopía” *Colaboración Internacional* 30 (1987), pp. 4–8.

90 Domínguez, *To Make a World Safe for Revolution*, p. 161; Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, p. 326.

91 Numbers retrieved from Cuban Party Archives by Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, pp. 84, 86.

92 Pavón, “La colaboración de Cuba con los países de Africa Subsahariana”, Annex VII.

93 Bericht der SKTUZ über die 1986 geleistete Arbeit und ihre weitere Tätigkeit, Anlage Nr. 3 z. Prot. der 54. SKTUZ, Moskau, Mai 1987, SAPMO BArch, DL2/16976/2.

94 Anlage 1: Beratung konkreter Vorschläge über den möglichen Umfang, die Richtungen und Formen der Zusammenarbeit der ML RGW mit der VR-Angola (1977), SAPMO BArch, DL2/10624.

95 MAH/Bereich Entwicklungsländer, WTZ Angola/DDR April 1981–März 1985, Jahresanalyse 1985, SAPMO BArch, DL2/12797.

paying them fully from 1978/79.⁹⁶ As a result of these economic regulations, which represent an exception from the dominant political priorities of Cuban internationalism, the Angolan partner reduced the number of Cuban civilian specialists from 6,700 in the peak year of 1979 to 4,000 in 1980.⁹⁷ At the same time, around 6,000 experts from the rival system of the Nichtsozialistisches Wirtschaftsgebiet (Non-socialist Economic Area, NSW) are reported to have been working in Angola.⁹⁸ A new peak of 4,650 Cubans marked the year 1983, when these services again became free of charge, but the numbers of the 1970s were never reached again. In the second half of the 1980s, the number of Cuban civilian “internationalists” in Angola declined from around 2,800 in 1985 to 1,700 in 1989.⁹⁹ This downswing was accompanied by an equivalent upswing of Cuban “internationalists” in Nicaragua. In the 1980s, Nicaragua became a new focus of Cuban personnel secondment.

In view of the declining revenues of the Angolan state, particularly due to falling oil prices, Cuba again waived payments for its civilian personnel assistance in new regulations of October 1983.¹⁰⁰ Angola was to pay for their transport

96 Jorge Risquet to Fidel Castro, Luanda, 13.7.1976, Wilson Digital Archive, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/jorge-risquet-fidel-castro> (accessed 7 May 2024).

97 Acuerdo Especial, 5.11.1977, Wilson Digital Archive, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117931> (accessed 12 September 2024); Pavón, “La colaboración de Cuba con los países de Africa Subsahariana”, Annex VII; Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, p. 84, indicates 7,000 civilian “internationalists” in Angola in 1978.

98 From Cuban documents: Gleijeses, “‘La causa más bonita’: Cuba y Africa 1975–1988”, p. 37.

99 Pavón, “La colaboración de Cuba con los países de Africa Subsahariana”, Annex VII. In vivid contrast, the CIA report: Cuban Presence in Sub-Saharan Africa (15.6.1986), 18, CIA-RDP88T00768R000300330001-7 <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP88T00768R000300330001-7.pdf> (accessed 12 September 2024) gives the number for 1986 as 6,000 “civilian advisers”, thus more than three times the figure cited by Bestard Pavón for that year (1,850) and still nearly the double of the figure given by Gleijeses (3,337 for 1987, *Visions of Freedom*, p. 333). A document by the Cuban Oficina económica in Angola: *Cooperantes Cubanos en la RP de Angola hasta el 15 de oct. de 1985* mentions 1,870 *cooperantes* already present and 567 planned for that year, which makes a total of 2,437 such “internationalists”, SAPMO BArch, DL 2/12797, to which Pavón adds 400 “forestal” workers.

100 Gleijeses’ collection in the Wilson Center’s Digital archive mentions an agreement between Cuba and Angola: “Acuerdo Especial sobre las Condiciones Generales para la Realización de la Colaboración Económica y Científico-Técnica entre el Gobierno de la República de Cuba y el Gobierno de la República Popular de Angola”, 28.10.1983, without displaying its content. The regulation for the sending of Cuban “internationalists” free of charge was stipulated in two letters: Fidel Castro to José Eduardo dos Santos, 20.9.1983, Wilson Digital Archive, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/fidel-castro-jose-eduardo-dos-santos-0>, and José Eduardo dos Santos to Fidel Castro, 28.10.1983, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/jose-eduardo-dos-santos-fidel-castro>. The provision of Cuban specialists free of charge by virtue of “moral commit-

costs, accommodation, and food. According to Cuban sources, this resulted in a loss of income of around 20 million US-dollars per year for the Cuban state.¹⁰¹ An attempt was made to compensate for some of this revenue loss by granting concessions to Cuban fishing and timber companies. A study based on internal Cuban material indicates that between 160 and 500 Cuban personnel were employed annually in the forestry sector (“Angola forestal”) between 1983 and 1988.¹⁰² This probably refers to a Cuban forestry project in Cabinda mentioned in a bilateral meeting between Cuban representatives led by Jorge Risquet and the International Secretary of the CPSU, Boris Ponomarev, in Moscow at the beginning of 1986. At the same meeting, Risquet mentioned a flotilla of 14 fishing boats that Angola had acquired from Spain for use by the Cubans.¹⁰³ The Soviet Union also held such fishing licences in Angola. In the tripartite meeting of Angolan, Cuban, and Soviet representatives that followed shortly afterwards, the Soviet foreign minister lamented the fact that fishing had fallen from 500 to 130 million tonnes in 1985 and come to a complete standstill in 1986.¹⁰⁴ These are references to Cuban and Soviet initiatives to use their own personnel to extract value from the country as the Angolan state was unable to provide the commodities expected.

The Cuban negotiating position on the previous agreement (Acuerdo Especial) of November 1977 had been that Angola should make half of the payments for the “internationalists” in US-dollars and half in deliveries of commodities.¹⁰⁵ In the negotiations, the Cuban side could not enforce this position, as Angola sold all its

ment” was maintained at least through 1985, as noted by the East German authorities in Luanda: Niederschrift der Beratung der ML/RGW zu Problemen bei der Spezialistenentsendung in die VR Angola/TKB-Leiter Fey, Luanda, 25.10.1985, SAPMO BArch, DL 2/12798. Considering the trend whereby Angola paid less and less to its socialist creditors in the course of the 1980s, it is very likely that it remained in force until the end of the Cuban engagement.

101 Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, p. 229. Gleijeses takes the figure of USD 20 million from an internal document by the CECE which is not available in the Wilson Center’s digital archive. In his intervention in the trial of Ochoa in July 1989, Fidel Castro gave this figure for annual Cuban income loss: Causa 1/89, p. 445.

102 Pavón, “La colaboración de Cuba con los países de Africa Subsahariana”, Annex VII.

103 Situación política, económica y social de la RPA (Risquet), in: Reunión bilateral Cuba – URSS, Moscow, 24.1.1986, Wilson Digital Archive, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/meeting-between-cuba-and-soviet-union-reunion-bilateral-cuba-urss>.

104 Tripartita Cuba – URSS – RPA, Moscow, 27.1.1986, fol. 80–82, Wilson Digital Archive, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/meeting-between-cuba-soviet-union-and-angola-tripartita-cuba-urss-rpa>.

105 Conversación de Levy con Dilowa, 23.10.1977, Wilson Digital Archive, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/memorandum-conversation-between-levy-farah-and-carlos-rocha-di-lolwa> (accessed 29 September 2024).

main export products on the world market for convertible currency. The result of the negotiations was that half of Angola's payments were to be made in US-dollars and half in the local currency, kwanza. The kwanzas were intended for the local supply of Cubans in Angola. However, as there was little to buy for them in the country, these kwanzas piled up in the economic department of the Cuban administration in Angola.¹⁰⁶ The concessions for fishing and timber in the second half of the 1980s could have been a substitute for the deliveries of commodities that Angola was unable or unwilling to provide. It is not clear from the published materials whether the fish and timber obtained in this way were used to supply Cuba's own personnel in Angola – there were constant complaints from the Cuban side about the supply situation – or whether they were commercialized. In any case, in addition to the secondment of personnel, bartering, and aid, another line of resource transfer is recognizable: via concessions, similar to the US oil extraction companies in Cabinda, albeit on a much smaller scale.

Overall, three phases of Cuban economic involvement in Angola can be distilled from this evidence:

- 1975–late 1977: a first phase of civilian and military assistance largely free of charge, in which the aim was to substitute basic structures and thus keep the MPLA state alive.
- 1978–1983: a second phase of paid Cuban civilian assistance, which was accompanied by a significant reduction in civilian and military personnel.
- Post 1983: A third phase of again largely free civilian assistance albeit declining in numbers and a significant increase in military personnel, accompanied by an attempt to concur to the financing of Cuban involvement through extractive activities via concessions.

7 Political and Economic Interest

During the CMEA period, Cuba acted within the framework of the socialist world system, but on its own initiative, as has been demonstrated by the Angolan example.¹⁰⁷ While the Angolan endeavour can rather be seen as the Soviets being dragged into an adventure, Cuban intervention in Ethiopia arranged the Soviets.

Both endeavours brought Cuba great prestige in the "Three Continents". Nelson Mandela publicly praised the Cuban role in the overthrow of the apartheid

¹⁰⁶ Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, p. 84.

¹⁰⁷ See footnote 37.

regime.¹⁰⁸ The Ethiopian successor government to that which toppled the Mengistu regime acknowledged the Cuban role in the preservation of the multi-ethnic Ethiopian state.¹⁰⁹ But the Cuban interventions came at a heavy political and economic price for Cuba. The Carter administration put on ice plans for a normalization of its relations to Cuba.¹¹⁰ “Détente is buried in the sands of Ogaden” asserted US government National Security Advisor Brzezinski¹¹¹ (the Ogaden was the desertic Ethiopian province claimed by Somalia in its war against Ethiopia in 1977/78). Although Cuba received payment for its thousands of civilian “internationalists” from the Angolan government in the years 1978–1983, in Ethiopia they remained free of charge all the time with the Ethiopian government only providing accommodation and some “pocket money” in local currency. The economic costs of these 14 or 16 years of engagement greatly outweighed the economic benefits.

Similar to the Cubans, the Soviet Union maintained large military and civilian missions in both states. But there were more civilian Cuban than Soviet collaborators in both countries.¹¹² The Cubans launched comprehensive development programmes in both states with an emphasis on health and education. Part of the educational line was the sending of several thousand pupils and students to gain their education in the “internationalist schools” at all levels from primary to tertiary on the Isla de la Juventud in Cuba. That made Cuba, after the Soviet Union, the second most important educational centre for pupils and students of the “Three Continents” in the socialist world.¹¹³

Similar to the European socialist states, the Cuban state differentiated between the “internationalist” assistance sector, which corresponded to the East German “solidarity” sector, generally free of charge, “scientific and technical cooperation” at advantageous conditions, and the economic relations sector. The weighting between these sectors was unequal. There were barter protocols be-

108 P. Gleijeses, “Moscow’s Proxy? Cuba and Africa 1975–1988”, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8 (2006) 2, p. 51.

109 Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, p. 325.

110 Gleijeses, *Moscow’s Proxy?*, pp. 11, 46; Roca, “Economic Aspects of Cuban Involvement in Africa”, pp. 172–173, 180.

111 Cited in O. A. Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Makings of Our Times*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 282.

112 Comrade Koschew, 109. EKA-meeting (1984), SAPMO BArch, DL 2/12798.

113 The Cuban numbers are mentioned in documents of the Departamento de becas del MINREX, Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX), Havana. For the Soviet Union: C. Katsakioris, “Transferts Est-Sud: Echanges éducatifs et formation de cadres africains en Union soviétique pendant les années soixante”, *Outre-Mers* 94 (2007) 354–355, pp. 90–91, tables of the numbers of African students until 1980.

tween Cuba and Ethiopia and Angola.¹¹⁴ This created a sector of economic relations between Cuba and African countries in the area of expertise in the health and education sector, the construction industry, sugar production, and agricultural infrastructure.¹¹⁵ However, this commercial sector remained very small¹¹⁶ in comparison to the much more important sector of essentially unpaid assistance within the framework of “internationalism”. Cuba made no profit from its massive personnel secondments. The Cuban formula that its *Internacionalismo* was “desinteresado” is to be understood in this sense of economic disinterest. The political interest was to bring other countries onto the “socialist path of development” and into political-economic cooperation. The exceptions were oil-producing countries with convertible currencies, such as Algeria or Libya, which paid Cuban personnel, primarily construction and health workers, in foreign currency.¹¹⁷ Between 1978 and 1983, Angola, with its oil and coffee production which it sold on the world market for US-dollars, was one of these paying countries.¹¹⁸ In 1979, a 25 million US-dollar contract between the Cuban Construction Enterprise and the Angolan government was signed.¹¹⁹ At the end of the 1980s, accord-

114 Ethiopia: Memorandum a Viceministro Gerardo Mazola: Informe del cumplimiento del plan de trabajo de preparación del cro. Fernando Prats Mari, consejero en Etiopía, 10.6.1986, MINREX, Dirección de África Subsahariana, Archivos MINREX La Habana, Caja Etiopía; Angola: Agreements signed between Cuba and Angola in 1976 (extracts), in: O. Nazario and J. Benemelis, “Cuba’s Relations with Africa”, *Cuban Internationalism*, pp. 27–28. In Angola, Neto had proposed bartering Angolan coffee against Cuban sugar: Raúl Castro, Informe al Buró Político del Segundo Secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba acerca de su visita a la República Popular de Angola (19 de abril a 7 junio de 1976), fol. 145, Wilson Digital Archive, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117920>.

115 *Colaboración Internacional* 1985, p. 22.

116 Concerning Ethiopia, this also was the opinion of the CIA report: Cuban Presence in Sub-Saharan Africa (15.6.1986), 18, CIA-RDP88T00768R000300330001-7, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP88T00768R000300330001-7.pdf> (accessed 29 September 2024).

117 Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López, “Internationalist Civilian Assistance”, pp. 74–75; Roca, “Economic Aspects of Cuban Involvement in Africa”, pp. 171–172; Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, p. 327. The conclusion of the CIA report: Castro’s Reach into the Third World. The Cuban Economic Assistance Program. A research paper, 1.7.1985, pp. 7, 10, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90T01298R000300070001-4.pdf> (accessed 29 September 2024), that earnings from Cuban commercial services exports (mainly construction workers) “more than offset” expenditures for its free “economic aid” (p. 7), seems doubtful due to the lack of a basis for such an estimation. My thanks to Helder Adegas Fonseca for drawing my attention to this report.

118 Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, p. 327; Acuerdo Especial, 5.11.1977, Wilson Digital Archive, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117931> (accessed 29 September 2024). Before: Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López, “Internationalist Civilian Assistance”, pp. 52–54; Domínguez, *To Make a World Safe for Revolution*, pp. 154–156.

119 Roca, “Economic Aspects of Cuban Involvement in Africa”, p. 171.

ing to Fidel Castro, Cuba was providing public health services to nearly 30 countries, and only two (Algeria and Libya) were paying for them.¹²⁰ “Among Communist aid donors, only the Chinese program is comparable in terms of generosity”, concluded an analytical CIA report, well aware that Cuba also made a profit with its construction workers earning convertible currency in oil-producing countries.¹²¹

The Cubans guarded the Angolan oil production facilities in Cabinda run by US companies, the economic lifeline of the Angolan MPLA government. “No Cabinda oil without us” declared Jesús Montané, the member of the Central Committee responsible for international relations.¹²² But the Cubans did not make an economic profit from this oil. The Angolan minister of planning and later prime minister, Lopo do Nascimento, emphasized that Cuban troops had entered the country at the express request of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the MPLA. However, it was not the Cubans but the USA that raked in the profits in Angola (from oil production). The Cubans were “here with clean hands. Whoever has the concessions in our country is the Americans, not the Cubans. The profits that are taken away from Angola are not brought to Cuba. They are taken to the United States, they are taken to imperialist countries.”¹²³ Although the Angolan official did not mention that the revenues from the oil business were not only “taken away from Angola” by the US companies, but shared with the MPLA government, he did make an important point: Cuba and the Soviet Union did not convert their political dominance in Angola into economic advantages.¹²⁴ On the contrary, their political commitment cost them a lot, an internal Cuban document counted a hundred million US-dollars per year in the 1970s for the military mission alone.¹²⁵ This shows how political-economic aims dominated commercial ones.¹²⁶ Cuban cooperation in Angola revealed economic logics subordinated to

¹²⁰ Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López, “Internationalist Civilian Assistance”, p. 54.

¹²¹ Castro’s Reach into the Third World, III, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90T01298R000300070001-4.pdf>.

¹²² Botschaft der BRD Havanna, Havanna 12.10.1983, PAAA, BAV 90-HAVA/25291.

¹²³ Informationsmaterial MfAA, Informationsbericht aus Luanda, 23.5. (year missing), SAPMO BArch, DL2/10651.

¹²⁴ This is the conclusion of this contribution following the evidence presented here.

¹²⁵ Conversación de Levy con Dilowa, 23.10.1977, Wilson Digital Archive, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/memorandum-conversation-between-levy-farah-and-carlos-rocha-dilolwa>.

¹²⁶ This is probably also true for the more business-orientated, industrialized European socialist states. The GDR was able to obtain coffee and, to a lesser extent, oil from Angola, thereby saving or earning foreign currency. However, this did not mean that relations with Angola were not economically profitable overall. The East Germans complained that the Angolan state systematically pre-

political goals.¹²⁷ It made no sense to squeeze payments out of Angola in order to establish economic reciprocity, argued the Cuban representative Carlos Rafael Rodríguez at a CMEA meeting, when such measures entailed the risk of economic collapse of the country, thus countering all the military assistance. This was Cuba's reason for granting "exclusively free assistance" from October 1983.¹²⁸ The overall aim of the Cubans was to make Angola a showcase for the "socialist" development of an African country and bring the European CMEA countries onto a more "tricontinental" line. They tried to enhance the "world" claim in the self-termed "socialist world system".

8 Cuban Political Interventions

In both countries, divergences appeared between the Cubans and local government. This is not surprising given the scale of Cuban intervention which, in spite of the strong prescriptions of non-interference in internal matters of the host country, represented a massive political factor. The huge Cuban presence did not go without political dissent, sometimes combined with popular resentment. In Ethiopia, the Cuban refusal to fight against the Eritrean insurrection cooled down relations with Mengistu who, himself a (though low-ranking) military man, insisted on a military solution to that threat to his regime.¹²⁹ There was some resentment against the patronizing attitudes of certain Cubans in Angola and diver-

ferred to service its creditors from the "non-socialist economic sphere" before those from socialist countries. I would be surprised if this was much different in the Czechoslovak case. Invoicing personnel services did not mean that they were actually paid. In this respect, I am skeptical about the conclusions of the otherwise well documented with archive material article by B. Menclová, "Czechoslovak Experts in Independent Angola", in: Ch. Saunders, H. A. Fonseca, and L. Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023, pp. 141–172.

¹²⁷ In contrast to the USA, where the oil companies successfully resisted pressure from the Reagan administration to cut the oil-revenue lifeline of the Angolan government. In that case, business primed politics, see R. S. de Oliveira, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf of Guinea*, New York: Hurst Publishers, 2007, p. 182. For the Soviet side stressed in S. N. MacFarlane, *Soviet-Angolan Relations, 1975–1990*, Washington: National Council for Soviet and East European Research, 1992; Duncan, "Cuba's Impact on Soviet Behavior in Sub-Saharan Africa", p. 86.

¹²⁸ Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, 109. EKA-meeting (Jan. 1984), SAPMO BArch, DL 2/12798.

¹²⁹ Telegramm Botschaft der DDR/Birke v. 17.1.1978; Vermerk über das Gespräch des Gen. Friedel Trappen mit Gen. Raul Castro, Leiter der kubanischen Delegation zu den Feierlichkeiten zum 60. Jahrestag der Großen Sozialistischen Oktoberrevolution in Moskau, Berlin, 9.11.1977, SAPMO BArch, IV 2/2.033/121, fol. 9, 13.

gences between the two governments.¹³⁰ In May 1977, a wing of the MPLA under Interior Minister Nito Alves staged a coup against the party and government leader Agostinho Neto and was subsequently liquidated in a bloody repression. The basis of the Nito Alves uprising was massive resentment among the black MPLA rank and file, directed against the MPLA leadership around Neto, in which a disproportionately high number of mestizos was represented.¹³¹ MPLA leader Agostinho Neto qualified Nito Alves' and his wing's attitude as early as 1976 as "racism".¹³² This well-established rivalry resulted in conflicts that were lived out through armed conflict. The Cuban military actively supported Neto in this armed conflict and helped him stay in power, while Nito Alves apparently had supporters on the Soviet side. The Cubans had already been watching him suspiciously for some time.¹³³

In Ethiopia, Cuban political intervention was less successful. This was demonstrated by the "Gobeze Affair", a Cuban attempt to bring left-wing political opposition to the "socialist" military regime into dialogue after the great terror of 1977/78. This was linked to a further Cuban attempt at a negotiated solution to the Eritrea conflict, whose military solution in favour of the Ethiopian military government was considered impossible by both the Cuban leadership and Soviet representatives.¹³⁴ To this end, a representative of the decimated Ethiopian leftist opposition, Negede Gobeze, was smuggled in from Yemen. The background to this were Cuban attempts to promote the establishment of a civilian unity party as a

¹³⁰ Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, pp. 104–118; testimonies of resentment pp. 105, 109.

¹³¹ This emerges strikingly from conversations that journalist Lara Pawson conducted with Nito Alves' supporters 40 years after the events: L. Pawson, *In the Name of the People: Angola's Forgotten Massacre*, London: IB Tauris, 2016.

¹³² Towards the Cuban representative in Angola, Jorge Risquet: Jorge Risquet to Fidel Castro, Luanda, 13.7.1976, Wilson Digital Archive, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/jorge-risquet-fidel-castro> (accessed 7 May 2024).

¹³³ Raúl Castro, Informe al Buró Político del Segundo Secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba acerca de su visita a la República Popular de Angola (19 de abril a 7 junio de 1976), fol. 126–127, Wilson Digital Archive, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117920>; Raúl Castro an Fidel Castro, La Habana, 14.6.1977, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/memorandum-raul-castro-fidel-castro>; the CIA report: Cuban Presence in Sub-Saharan Africa (15.6.1986), 10, CIA-RDP88T00768R000300330001-7, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP88T00768R000300330001-7.pdf>; hints at links between Alves and the Soviets already mentioned in Raúl Castro, Informe.

¹³⁴ The Cuban refusal to participate in the Eritrean War is clear in Telegramm Botschaft der DDR/Birke v. 17.1.1978, und Vermerk über das Gespräch des Gen. Friedel Trappen mit Gen. Raul Castro, Leiter der kubanischen Delegation zu den Feierlichkeiten zum 60. Jahrestag der Großen Sozialistischen Oktoberrevolution in Moskau, Berlin, 9.11.1977, SAPMO BArch, IV 2/2.033/121, fol. 9, 13. Statement Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, Feb. 1978, in Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 281.

governing body in place of the military committee and to resolve the dangerous Eritrean conflict through negotiations. This Cuban attempt at political mediation failed and led to the expulsion of the Cuban ambassador.¹³⁵ This affair, the outcome of which was fairly embarrassing for Cuba, showed Ethiopia as a stubborn partner that was difficult to handle in affairs of both military and civilian policy.

Another embarrassing affair for the Cubans was the “Red Terror” of the Derg against Marxist intellectuals. That was the very unpleasant face of the Ethiopian revolution. As an agent of progress, the revolution abolished millenarian societal structures. But it acted with brutal violence, not only against the representatives of the old regime, but also against those leftist groups from which it borrowed its Marxist(Leninist) ideology. In 1977, the military leadership of Ethiopia began a campaign of extermination against civilian left-wing groups. These left-wing groups were destroyed both politically and physically.¹³⁶ Like the GDR, Cuba took a stand against these excesses of violence. The Cubans, who had security people in Ethiopia, were against the excessive terror directed against civilian left-wing groups and in favour of their participation in the government.¹³⁷ They called for “revolutionary legality”,¹³⁸ but their attempts to bring about reconciliation between the military government and the communist opposition party *Meison* led to the expulsion of the Cuban ambassador. The Cubans thus failed to change the policy of the Ethiopian military government, which was bringing discredit on it.

9 The Cuban Governance Structures on the Ground

In both countries, the Cubans built self-governing structures. These structures of civilian governance were the corollary of the independent military mission. They

¹³⁵ Acta, Addis Abeba, 28.4.1978, Archivos MINREX, Caja Etiopía. Botschaft der BRD, VS Nr. 516, Addis Abeba, 2.6.1978, PAAA, AA 25287; R. Lefort, *Ethiopie: la révolution hérétique*, Paris: F. Maspero, 1981, pp. 349–350; Domínguez, *To Make a World Safe for Revolution*, pp. 161–162; also mentioned in Ottaway and Ottaway, *Afrocommunism*, p. 148.

¹³⁶ Lefort, *Ethiopie*, p. 354: “L’histoire offre peu d’exemples de révolution qui aient dévoré avec une telle voracité et tant de cruauté, ses propres enfants.”

¹³⁷ Lefort, *Ethiopie*, pp. 349–350; Ottaway and Ottaway, *Afrocommunism*, p. 148; see the debate in a meeting between Cuban civil and military representatives in Ethiopia concerning that case: Acta, Addis Ababa, 28.4.1978, Archivos MINREX, Caja Etiopía.

¹³⁸ Cuban ambassador Valdes Vivó repeatedly warned Mengistu in personal talks that arbitrary terror would harm the revolution and its leadership both internally and externally: Telegramm Birke, Addis Ababa, 17.2.1978, SAPMO BArch, IV 2/2.033/121, fol. 119.

consisted firstly of governmental structures including an economic office and the heads of mission of the different sectors of collaboration, and secondly logistical structures such as Cubatécnica, the Cuban personnel implementation agency. There was also an accompanying state security apparatus. The governmental structures were complemented by party and youth organization (UJC) structures. The Cuban personnel was integrated into party organizations. As a large proportion of them were young people, the youth organization UJC complemented the party organizations. Its task was to supervise, educate, eventually punish and thus perfect its members. In Angola, these structures were more elaborate than in Ethiopia. They replaced non-existing or deficient Angolan structures for each sphere of everyday life. In Angola, at first, the head of the Cuban civilian mission was Jorge Risquet, the Africa specialist of the party leadership, a veteran of the 1965 Cuban internationalist military mission in Congo-Brazzaville and later Cuban minister of labour, who managed these huge Cuban structures.¹³⁹ The head of the civilian mission in Ethiopia was Raúl Curbelo, a man with a party career who advised Mengistu in matters of creating and leading a state party.¹⁴⁰

These Cuban structures abroad replicated Cuban party and everyday life in order to create points of orientation for the “internationalists”. The “internationalists” were part of a Cuban life-world in their countries of mission as Cuban enclaves provided the “internationalists”, many of whom had left the island for the first time in their lives, with a Cuban life-world in the very different Angolan and Ethiopian surroundings. This was “internationalism” in practice, the organizational expression of a special way of dealing with “intercultural encounters” by providing the Cubans in mission with a collective way of living and a framework of supervision in party collectives.

These structures were much denser in Angola than in Ethiopia. In Angola, they came close to an autonomous entity within the Angolan state. The establishment of the *comités de base* of the UJC in Ethiopia presented more difficulties due to the dispersed locations of the Cuban *brigadas* and was undertaken only from 1979.¹⁴¹ But the principle was the same: providing, in collaboration with the embassy and the Cuban civilian mission, a recognizably familiar life-world for the Cubans, creating a frame of orientation for their activities.

¹³⁹ Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, pp. 82–83; Hatzky, *Kubaner in Angola*, p. 204.

¹⁴⁰ Vermerk, 31.5.1979 (über Gespräch mit Raúl Curbello [sic]), SAPMO BArch, DL 226/51, fol. 265–269.

¹⁴¹ Carta de Julio R. Lemus a Alberto Rodríguez Ricardo sobre ideas y orientaciones con respecto al trabajo de atención y control de los militantes y organizaciones de base de la UJC en Etiopía, La Habana, 22.1.1979, Archivo Central de la UJC, Primer Secretario 1979, 4.0.1 Correspondencia enviada y recibida de José Ramón Machado Ventura 3–278/1.

As a corollary to the civil administration, the Cubans built a military administration. Over important periods of time, in both cases the military commander was General Ochoa, a highly praised and decorated commander.¹⁴² Military divergences appeared in both countries. In Ethiopia, the Cubans refused to fight actively against the Eritrean rebellion because of their negative appraisal of the probability of winning against such a counterinsurgency and, second, their long-standing support of the Eritrean Liberation Front. In Angola, massive divergences appeared between the Soviet, the Angolan, and the Cuban lines of military action.¹⁴³ In both cases, the military outcomes subsequently supported the Cuban approach. In both countries, Cuban intervention was successful. In Angola, it led to a negotiated conclusion of Cuban war participation in 1988. Angola became a late military success for the socialist world system when it was already in a phase of disintegration. The Cuban troops achieved a prestigious success in 1988 in Cuito-Canavale in a direct confrontation with the South African intervention troops in Angola, thus signalling the end of the self-evident superiority of colonial rule in Africa and encouraging a momentum that subsequently contributed to the end of white rule in South Africa. The Civil War was to continue for another one and a half decades, but the MPLA government remained in power and the Cubans returned home as victors. The Cuban troops returned from Ethiopia in 1990, one year before the Mengistu government was militarily overthrown by its enemies, foremost the Eritrean Liberation Front. In this case, the military success in the Somali War of 1978 did not result in a successful conclusion of the mission. One result of the Cuban intervention, however, was the preservation of an Ethiopian state.

10 “Internationalism” put into Personal Practice: Interactions and Entanglements

Great efforts at bridging fundamental divergences between societies face the task of tackling such divergences with concrete measures and large-scale efforts on the ground. The Cuban party organizations in the countries of mission had two essential functions: providing a recognizable Cuban world for the “international-

¹⁴² Towards the end of the Angola venture, Ochoa came into conflict with Castro as the latter describes in: *Intervención de Fidel Castro en la Causa 1 de 1989 en Cuba* (Consejo de Estado 9.7.1989), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9Jsr-7MSQ8> (accessed 8 April 2024). The result of a sinister affair, Ochoa was arrested and shot after his return to Cuba in 1989.

¹⁴³ Highlighted by Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, pp. 343–378.

ists” and bridging divergence between the Cubans and the locals. They provided Cuban surroundings by reproducing the same party life as in Cuba, embracing the whole range of activities from giving self-accounts in the party cell sessions to conveying norms of how to behave correctly towards the locals; and they bridged divergence between the Cubans and the locals by creating a frame for these contacts. Such contacts were to conform with officially organized formalities: official “friendship” meetings, information evenings about the respective countries of origin, celebrations of national holidays, folk and sporting events. This official framework was intended to prevent unpleasant manifestations of inequality like prostitution, black market activities, or conflicts resulting from cultural and behavioural divergence. The Cuban authorities tried to restrict external contacts as a potential security risk in the two war-torn countries under scrutiny, and also due to a realistic assessment of the potential perils caused by uncontrolled interactions between unequal groups of people. This did not prevent such undesired phenomena altogether. After all, these were youngsters in a fairly rough setting who could not easily be restrained and confined to a certain officially approved way of life. Despite separation regulations, the Cubans indulged in relations with the local population on many levels of interaction, not least in the carnal sense. Such carnal entanglements were tolerated by the Cuban authorities thanks to a realistic assessment that abstinence was not a viable alternative for young men – there always was a large male majority of Cuban “internationalists” – sent abroad for years. But it was very difficult to officialise such relationships and take a local partner to Cuba when the mission was over.¹⁴⁴ Spontaneous personal entanglements between the populations of the two countries was definitely not the desired outcome of Cuban “internationalism”. The party framework established a channel for encounters and put a limit to transgressions. Transgressions were discussed in the party (or UJC) collective and sanctioned by penalties like admonitions or censures. Party or UJC members had to give regular self-accounts of their accomplishments, including their progress or shortcomings in professional, party, and personal life. This was part of the “internationalists” education in mission. They were to be improved during their mission and by their experiences. Their errors were to be corrected by comradesly control and advice. Serious transgressions could lead to harsher party sanctions up to expulsion, repatriation, and in some cases punishment by law and judicial sanctions. But this did not happen on a large scale, in contrast to the Cuban workers who were trained in European

144 One testimony on this complicated issue, in this case of Ethiopia: interview Claudia Martínez with Alberto Noroña Linares, Havana, 6 August 2015.

socialist states where problems of conduct led to the revocation of up to 10–15 per cent of these Cuban youngsters.¹⁴⁵

11 Which Internationalism did Cuban *Internacionalistas* Represent?

Internacionalismo Cubano was a genuinely Cuban contribution to the history of internationalism.¹⁴⁶ It was, as a shadow of Havana's Tricontinental international, an instrument to further the economic and political alignment of the assisted countries with the socialist world. We can see it as a genuinely Cuban effort. Where should Cuban "internationalism" be placed in terms of global history? What was Cuban and what was internationalist?

Cuban *Internacionalismo* was Cuban insofar as it was a Cuban initiative within the socialist world system and Cubans were the persons set in motion within the framework of this policy. Internationalism was not meant to be cosmopolitanism, understood as the ability to move as a citizen of the world in different everyday cultural contexts, to adopt a permanently mobile life and hybrid lifestyles. *Internacionalista* was not intended to be a permanent form of existence. The *Internacionalistas* were to return to Cuba after one or more missions and to reintegrate into their "regular" Cuban lives. They were to be no different from ordinary Cuban citizens, who had no such "internationalist" experience. They were seen as representatives of the Cuban nation state in the world, not as world citizens in Cuba. From the interviews with *Internacionalistas*, it cannot be concluded that they adopted an "internationalist" way of thinking or living in the sense that they felt themselves to be citizens of the world, cosmopolitans. On the contrary, many emphasize that this experience strengthened their national pride. They were proud to have been chosen to represent Cuba. Nor did they adopt a different way of life to the Cuban one. The strengthening of national identity and *Internacionalismo* were not mutually exclusive here. Cuban "globalism"¹⁴⁷ was a form of "inter-nationalism". After all, the Cubans assisted in state building in countries like Angola where a state as such and a corresponding identity hardly existed. In Ethiopia, on the other hand, Cuban intervention was critical for the survival of the multi-national state. Cuban "internationalism" was a special brand

¹⁴⁵ Unfried, "Intercontinental Labor Migration", pp. 53–154.

¹⁴⁶ Unfried and Martínez, "El Internacionalismo, la Solidaridad y el interés mutuo", pp. 425–447.

¹⁴⁷ Concept coined by M. Erisman, *Cuba's International Relations: The Anatomy of a Nationalistic Foreign Policy*, London: Routledge, 1985.

of inter-nationalism: it was intended to strengthen the national identity of the Cubans as well as of the Angolans and Ethiopians beyond ethnic and racial cleavages; and it claimed to be anti-imperialist in liberating the assisted states from the influence of an oppressing empire – the US-empire which had replaced the old European colonial empires with a new form of domination. Building a nation state out of a colonial empire in the case of Angola, maintaining the multinational state against separatist tendencies in the case of Ethiopia, engaging with both in anti-imperialist struggle against the US-empire, was its guideline.

In the Angolan case, however, Cuban *Internacionalismo* unfolded in the 1970s and 1980s within the framework of the socialist world system under the political (if not economic) domination of the Soviet Union. It aimed to transform the world in the socialist direction in the short window of opportunity between the victory in Vietnam and, only one and a half decades later, the fall of the socialist world system, in a period when the Soviet Union, notwithstanding impressive efforts of “international solidarity”, already had largely abandoned that global project. It was a transformative, militant, and armed internationalism aiming to build a new world of socialism in the “Three Continents”, one that was neither US-centric nor Eurocentric, but a Cuban brand of a “tricontinental” shaping.

Barbora Menclová

9 Similar but Different: Czechoslovakia in Angola and Mozambique

The year 1975 marked a significant milestone in the history of Angola and Mozambique, as both large African countries gained independence from Portuguese rule. This change simultaneously posed a great challenge for the new leadership. The onset of civil wars, a shortage of skilled labour,¹ and efforts to establish a sovereign economic and political administration complicated the path to power consolidation. The newly established governments in both countries – represented by the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola, MPLA) in Angola, and the Liberation Front of Mozambique (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, FRELIMO) in Mozambique – decided to focus on building socialist regimes and forming close alliances with the East, including communist Czechoslovakia.

At the time, Czechoslovakia was a well-established actor in sub-Saharan Africa, where it had engaged since the 1950s as a close ally of the Soviet Union.² In addition to military support, this included trade exchanges, technical assistance, and other forms of development collaboration. Its cooperation with the MPLA and FRELIMO started during the wars of independence in the 1960s. Support from Prague then consisted mainly of army and other material supplies, military training, and scholarships.³ A significant change occurred with the declaration of independence of both Lusophone states in the mid-1970s, when the Soviet Union and its allies launched a new round of their global offensive. The newly

1 The departure of skilled workers from both Lusophone African states due to political and economic instability during decolonization led to a significant labour shortage. Portugal was the primary destination for these emigrants, with between 500,000 and 700,000 people relocating there between 1974 and 1976. F. Rosas, *História a História, África* [History to History, Africa], Lisbon: Tinta da China, 2018, p. 185.

2 See, for example, P. Zidek, *Československo a francouzská Afrika 1948–1968* [Czechoslovakia and French Africa 1948–1968], Prague: Nakladatelství Libri, 2006; P. Zidek and K. Sieber, *Československo a subsaharská Afrika v letech 1948–1989* [Czechoslovakia and Sub-Saharan Africa in the years 1948–1989], Prague: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2007; M. E. Holečková, *Příběh zapomenuté univerzity: Universita 17. listopadu (1961–1974) a její místo v československém vzdělávacím systému a společnosti* [The story of a forgotten university: The University of 17 November (1961–1974) and its place in the Czechoslovak educational system and society], Prague: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2019.

3 Zidek and Sieber, *Československo a francouzská Afrika 1948–1968*, pp. 21–29, 152–153.

decolonized Lusophone states, along with Ethiopia, became their primary targets in sub-Saharan Africa.⁴

Much research in recent years, inspired by the New Cold War History, shows that the smaller states of the Soviet bloc did not just blindly follow Moscow's instructions in the Global South but also pursued their own interests there.⁵ However, little attention has been given to communist Czechoslovakia as a significant actor in the decolonized Global South compared to other smaller states of the East.⁶ There is a similar situation with Czechoslovak contacts to independent Lusophone African states. Apart from the author's previous studies,⁷ this work partially draws on the research of other Czech historians such as Pavel Szobi⁸ and Jan Klíma,⁹ who focus on Czechoslovak engagement within Angola after 1975.

4 M. Trecker, *Red Money for the Global South: East-South Economic Relations in the Cold War*, London: Routledge, 2020, pp. 121–122.

5 See, for example, P. E. Muehlenbeck and N. Telepneva, *Warsaw Pact Intervention in the Third World: Aid and Influence in the Cold War*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018; P. Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria and the Struggle for Southern Africa (1976–1991)*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016; A. Calori et al. (eds.), *Between East and South: Spaces of Interaction in the Globalizing Economy of the Cold War*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019.

6 For other smaller socialist states in the Global South, see, for example, E. Burton et al. (eds.), *Navigating Socialist Encounters: Moorings and (Dis)Entanglements between Africa and East Germany during the Cold War*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021; Ch. Hatzky, *Cubans in Angola: South-South Cooperation and Transfer of Knowledge, 1976–1991*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2015. There are only a few publications about the role of socialist Czechoslovakia, mainly in Czech. See footnote 2 and the following PhD theses: B. Buzáßyová, “Socialist Internationalism in Practice: Shifting Patterns of the Czechoslovak Educational Aid Programmes to Sub-Saharan Africa, 1961–1989”, PhD thesis, Bratislava, Slovenská akadémia vied, Historický ústav, 2021; J. Mazanec, “Cold War Technopolitics: Czechoslovak Hydroexpertise in Africa”, PhD thesis, Prague, Charles University, Faculty of Philosophy, 2024.

7 B. Menclová, “Independent Angola: The role of Czechoslovak experts”, in: Ch. Saunders, H. A. Fonseca, and L. Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023, p. 150; B. Menclová, “Czechoslovak experts in independent Lusophone Africa as a variant of economic nationalism”, in: A. Brisku, L. F. Stöcker, and M. Gumiel (eds.), *Varieties of Economic Nationalism in Cold War Europe: Small State Responses to Economic Changes, 1960s–1980s*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2025; B. Menclová, “Mezi globálními ambicemi a ekonomickým pragmatismem: Českoslovenští experti v Angole a Mosambiku za studené války” [Between global ambitions and economic pragmatism: Czechoslovak experts in Angola and Mozambique in the Cold War], PhD thesis, Prague: Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, 2023.

8 P. Szobi, “Czechoslovak Economic Interests in Angola in the 1970s and 1980s”, in: Calori et al. (eds.), *Between East and South*, pp. 165–196.

9 J. Klíma, *Dějiny Angoly* [History of Angola], Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2019, pp. 321–330.

However, none offer comparative analyses of Czechoslovakia's activities in Mozambique and Angola in the late Cold War.

This study focuses on a comparison of Czechoslovakia's approach towards Angola and Mozambique during their decolonial transition. Both states were similar in many aspects (e.g., shared history of Portuguese colonialism and decolonization, language, geography) but different in others (e.g., economic potential, geopolitical importance). These facts were also reflected in the Czechoslovak policy toward them. In particular, this chapter examines Czechoslovakia's actions in two crucial and interconnected areas of Angola's and Mozambique's decolonial transition – the development of mutual political and economic relations. It tracks the Czechoslovak approach to opening its embassies in both countries, high-level visits, and trade exchange. Further, it focuses on the dispatch of Czechoslovak experts to the area, another primary field that straddled the realms of political, economic, and development cooperation. The research is temporally bounded by the years 1976 to 1983, when primary efforts towards the decolonial transition of both states took place, and relations with Czechoslovakia flourished the most.

The chapter is mainly based on the analysis of declassified archival documents from key Czechoslovak state actors, such as the state president, the minister and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the minister and Ministry of Foreign Trade, and the organs of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. It is supplemented by the perspectives of smaller state actors, for example the foreign trade corporation Polytechna, diplomats, and other individuals. The analysis of these declassified documents shows how Czechoslovakia, as a state actor, approached the transformation of both Lusophone states, and highlights the role of smaller, previously overlooked actors in this process. Finally, it reveals the significant role of Angola and Mozambique in shaping this cooperation, as they were far from being passive recipients of initiatives from the Global North.

1 The Start of Official Contacts

Regarding the establishment of official relations between Czechoslovakia and these two independent Lusophone African states following their declarations of independence, cooperation with Angola advanced more swiftly. Once the initial phase of the Angolan Civil War subsided in the spring of 1976, relatively intensive negotiations on further developing relations commenced. In May 1976, Prague

sent a delegation to the country to explore further cooperation opportunities.¹⁰ In June 1976, the Czechoslovak embassy was opened in Luanda. The first ambassador was Stanislav Svoboda, one of the most experienced career diplomats in the Global South within the Czechoslovak diplomatic corps, with experience in several Latin American countries, including Cuba.¹¹ His appointment demonstrated that Prague was beginning to place increasing importance on Angola. The same was true for his successor, Miloš Veselý, who replaced him three years later. Like Svoboda, Veselý was one of the leading experts on South America with exceptional foreign language skills.¹² His appointment once again confirmed that Angola remained a priority country for Czechoslovakia.

In contrast, negotiations to open a Czechoslovak embassy in Mozambique took three years, despite repeated urgings from Mozambican partners.¹³ Although Prague sent a delegation to the country in July 1977, led by the head of the African countries department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to discuss further developing relations,¹⁴ it took another year before an independent mission was opened in Maputo. Until then, Prague was represented by its ambassador in Tanzania.¹⁵ Even then, Prague was not fully represented in the country. For another two years, the Czechoslovak embassy was headed by chargé d'affaires Zdenek Smrkovský.¹⁶ The first Czechoslovak ambassador, Václav Březák, arrived in Mozambique only in February 1980, five years after it declared independence. Unlike his colleagues

10 Archiv ministerstva zahraničních věcí České republiky (Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, hereafter AMZV ČR), Fond TO-T, Angola 1975–79, Karton 1, Zaměření a hlavní úkoly čs. zahraniční politiky vůči ALR, 13.11.1976.

11 Zidek and Sieber, *Československo a francouzská Afrika 1948–1968*, p. 32; J. Dejmek, *Diplomacie Československa: Díl II. Biografický slovník československých diplomatů (1918–1992)* [Diplomacy of Czechoslovakia, vol. II: Biographical Dictionary of Czechoslovak Diplomats (1918–1992)], Prague: Academia, 2013, pp. 591–592, https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/organizacni_struktura/utvary_mzv/specializovany_archiv_mzv/kdo_byl_kdo/svoboda_stanislav.html (accessed 31 July 2024).

12 Dejmek, *Diplomacie Československa: Díl II*, pp. 649–650, https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/organizacni_struktura/utvary_mzv/specializovany_archiv_mzv/kdo_byl_kdo/vesely_milos.html (accessed 2 May 2024); Klíma, *Dějiny Angoly*, p. 323.

13 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1975–79, Karton 1, Návrh na zřízení zastupitelského úřadu v Mosambiku, 29.10.1975.

14 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1975–79, Karton 1, Materiál pro schůzi P ÚV KSČ – Zřízení čs. ZÚ v Mosambické lidové republice, 17.8.1977.

15 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1975–79, Karton 1, Návrh na zřízení zastupitelského úřadu v Mosambiku, 29.10.1975.

16 AMZV ČR, Fond dokumentace teritoriálních odborů 1945–1989, Návštěva ministra zahraničních věcí MsLR Joaquima Alberta Chissana v ČSSR ve dnech 31.1.–5.2.1981, II. informační část, 6. Základní informace a Historicko-politický přehled.

in Angola, his previous professional experience was fairly modest, consisting of his diplomatic service in Algeria and work in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.¹⁷

Differences are also evident in the adoption of the first concepts of Czechoslovak foreign policy towards these states, which defined the main lines of mutual relations. While the concept for Angola was adopted as early as 1976 in connection with the arrival of the first Czechoslovak ambassador in the country, the concept for Mozambique was adopted three years later, again in connection with the planned arrival of the Czechoslovak ambassador.¹⁸ However, both concepts are similar in their focus. The main emphasis was placed on the development of trade cooperation and the dispatch of Czechoslovak experts to local enterprises and other institutions, as reflected in the following quote from the concept for Mozambique: “It is necessary to anticipate that the area of economic and scientific-technical cooperation will be of extraordinary importance, and it will therefore be necessary to place special emphasis on it.”¹⁹

It is also evident from the speeches of Czechoslovak politicians that Angola was a higher priority for Prague at the time. For example, in the speech of Foreign Minister Bohuslav Chňoupek at the Czechoslovak parliament in October 1977, where he outlined Czechoslovakia’s main foreign policy agenda, Angola was the only sub-Saharan African country to receive significant attention:

We continually pay attention to the national liberation struggle taking place in Africa. [. . .] Our relations with countries of socialist orientation have experienced the greatest growth on this continent. In this context, we therefore welcomed with great joy the victory of the heroic Angolan people in the fight against one of the last bastions of colonialism in Africa. We are ready to develop relations with the People’s Republic of Angola in all areas of mutual interest.²⁰

17 Dejmek, *Diplomacie Československa*, p. 291, https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/organi_zacni_struktura/utvary_mzv/specializovany_archiv_mzv/kdo_byl_kdo/brezak_vaclav.mobi (accessed 5 June 2024).

18 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1975–79, Karton 1, Zaměření a hlavní úkoly čs. zahraniční politiky vůči ALR, 12.10.1976; AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1975–79, Karton 1, Zaměření a hlavní úkoly čs. zahraniční politiky vůči Mosambické lidové republice, 29.8.1979.

19 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1975–79, Karton 1, Zaměření a hlavní úkoly čs. zahraniční politiky vůči Mosambické lidové republice, 29.8.1979.

20 Archiv Poslanecké sněmovny Parlamentu České republiky (Archive of Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of the Czech Republic), Digitální knihovna. FS ČSSR 1976–80. Společné schůze SL a SN. Stenoprotokoly. 5. schůze. 25.10.1977, <https://www.psp.cz/eknih/1976fs/slsn/stenprot/005schuz/s005004.htm> (accessed 31 July 2024).

In contrast, the need to develop friendly relations with Mozambique was mentioned only in the context of other African countries.²¹

This uneven development of relations was also reflected by the Czechoslovak diplomats in Maputo, who described the cooperation with Mozambique in the early years after decolonization as stagnant.²² Their Mozambican partners were also aware of this. According to the Czechoslovak ambassador in Maputo, “they did not understand the Czechoslovak cold attitude toward their revolution, but unlike the Angolans, they did not hold it against them too much”.²³ The justifications for opening embassies in both countries also show that Angola was more attractive to Prague from a political and economic perspective.

Active support for the People’s Republic of Angola by all socialist countries and the development of cooperation with it will also positively impact progressive trends across the entire African continent, particularly the national liberation struggle in its southern part. On the other hand, it can be anticipated that further development of cooperation with the People’s Republic of Angola will be beneficial for the Czechoslovak state itself, especially in the trade and economic area.²⁴

There was particular interest in Angola’s significant mineral wealth, which could be utilized in Czechoslovak industry, as well as some agricultural products. Lastly, Angola’s connections to the West could enable it to pay for Czechoslovak goods and services in capitalist currencies, which were becoming increasingly scarce in Czechoslovakia.²⁵

In Mozambique’s case, Prague’s reasons for opening its embassy were more political initially. Mozambique was considered an important country in the Southern African region, with its political arrangement reinforcing progressive tendencies across the continent. Additionally, the amiable attitude of Mozambicans towards Czechoslovak representatives and their willingness to establish friendly and close contacts was appreciated.²⁶ Finally, the stance of other socialist coun-

21 Ibid.

22 AMZV ČR, Fond dokumentace teritoriálních odborů 1945–1989, Čs.-mosambické vztahy 1981–1983, Vztahy MsLR k ostatním státům a skupinám států 1983, Hospodářská a vědeckotechnická spolupráce (FMZO, září 1981).

23 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1980–89, Karton 1, Záznam o rozhovoru čs. velvyslance V. Březáka s velvyslancem SSSR Petrem N. Evsinkovem, 28.1.1980.

24 AMZV ČR, TO-T 1975–79, Angola, Karton 1, Angolská lidová republika - zřízení čs. ZÚ v Luandě. Důvodová zpráva. 9.8.1976.

25 Menclová, “Independent Angola: The role of Czechoslovak experts”, p. 150.

26 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1975–79, Karton 1, Materiál pro schůzi P ÚV KSČ – Zřízení čs. ZÚ v Mosambické lidové republice, 17.8.1977; AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1975–79, Karton 1, Zřízení ZÚ v Mosambické lidové republice – návrh do vlády ČSSR, 1977.

tries played a role, as most of them, including the USSR, the GDR, Bulgaria, and Cuba, had already established their diplomatic representations in Maputo.²⁷ Economic reasons began to be mentioned only towards the end of the 1970s, when the political situation in the country had somewhat stabilized after the end of its conflict with Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).²⁸

2 Political Cooperation

The preference for Angola is also evident in visits by the highest Czechoslovak state officials to both countries and in receiving their counterparts in Czechoslovakia. One of the first Czechoslovak visitors at the governmental level was Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Bohuslav Chňoupek, who visited the country in August 1978.²⁹ The primary purpose of the trip was to confirm the alliance between Prague and Luanda symbolically. One of his few concrete actions during his stay in the country was signing a Cultural Agreement.³⁰ In addition to Bohuslav Chňoupek, other ministers like those for industry and foreign trade also visited Angola repeatedly.³¹

One of the first Angolan guests at governmental level in Czechoslovakia was the minister of foreign affairs, Paulo Jorge, in the spring of 1979, reciprocating the visit of his Czechoslovak counterpart the previous year.³² Other notable visitors to Prague included the minister of industry and energy, Bento Ribeiro.³³ The cul-

27 Zidek and Sieber, *Československo a francouzská Afrika 1948–1968*, p. 154.

28 AMZV ČR, Fond dokumentace teritoriálních odborů 1945–1989, Návštěva ministra zahraničních věcí MsLR Joaquim Alberta Chissana v ČSSR ve dnech 31.1.–5.2.1981, II. informační část, 6. Základní informace a Historicko-politický přehled.

29 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1975–79, Karton 1, Vývoj situace v Angole a v čs.-angolských vztazích od 1. sjezdu MPLA (Podklady k návštěvě s. ministra Chňoupka v Angole), 6.7.1978.

30 Klíma, *Dějiny Angoly*, p. 323.

31 Národní archiv České republiky (National Archive of the Czech Republic, hereafter NA ČR), Angola. Fond Federální ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu. Angola. Karton 1652. Protokol o jednání delegací ministerstev průmyslu ČSSR a ALR o vzájemné spolupráci v oblasti průmyslu. 12.8.1978; AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1980–89, Karton 4. O pobytu ministra MZO ČSSR s. A. Barčáka v Angolské lidové republice při příležitosti 2. zasedání "Smišené angolsko-československé komise pro hospodářskou a technickou pomoc". 28.1.1981.

32 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1975–79, Karton 1, Informace o průběhu a výsledcích návštěvy ministra zahraničních věcí ALR P. Jorgeho v ČSSR ve dnech 29.5.–3.6.1979, 6.6.1979.

33 NA ČR, Fond Federální ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu, Karton 1652 Angola, Zpráva o výsledcích I. zasedání čs.-angolské smíšené komise v Praze ve dnech 11.–14. června 1979; Klíma, *Dějiny Angoly*, 2019, p. 323.

mination of mutual political relations was supposed to be the visit of President Agostinho Neto of Angola to Czechoslovakia in 1979. However, the visit did not take place due to his sudden death in the autumn of that year.³⁴ Two years later, the new Angolan president, Eduardo dos Santos, visited the country. His visit was part of a tour of European socialist countries, including Poland, East Germany, and Bulgaria.³⁵ One of the highlights of his visit was the signing of the symbolic yet politically important Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the two countries, confirming their mutual alliance.³⁶

Compared to Angola, mutual visits by top Czechoslovak and Mozambican officials were much more modest, partly due to the later opening of the Czechoslovak embassy in the country. One of the first representatives of the Czechoslovak government to visit was the minister of foreign trade, Andrej Barčák, in July 1978. On this occasion, he signed a trade agreement and an agreement on scientific and technical cooperation between the two states.³⁷ A year later, the minister of foreign affairs, Bohuslav Chňoupek, also visited the country. From the Mozambican side, for example, his counterpart Joaquim Chissano, the future president of Mozambique, visited Czechoslovakia in 1981, reciprocating the visit of Chňoupek two years earlier.³⁸

The climax of mutual relations at a high level was the visit of Mozambican President Samora Machel to Czechoslovakia in the autumn of the same year.³⁹ Both sides were interested in ensuring the smooth progress of his stay. Mozambican actors wanted to secure greater involvement from Prague in developing their country. Czechoslovakia wanted to dispel what it saw as the mistaken impression among Mozambicans that it did not trust their government. According to Czechoslovak authorities, these goals were achieved, even though Prague did not provide Maputo with the requested loan, nor were there any mentions of Czechoslovak

34 Zidek and Sieber, *Československo a francouzská Afrika 1948–1968*, p. 39.

35 NA ČR, Fond KSČ ÚV 1945–1989, Praha – Gustáv Husák, Karton 335, Angola, Program návštěvy, složení delegací, zabezpečení návštěvy.

36 NA ČR, Fond KSČ ÚV 1945–1989, Praha – Gustáv Husák, Karton 335, Angola, Zpráva o průběhu a výsledcích návštěvy.

37 AMZV ČR, Fond dokumentace teritoriálních odborů 1945–1989, Nezpracovaná část – Čs.-mosambické vztahy 1981–1983, Vztahy MsLR k ostatním státům a skupinám států 1983, Vývoj čs.-mosambické ekonomické spolupráce, 31.1.1983.

38 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1980–89, Karton 1, Mosambik: Informácia o priebehu a výsledkoch návštevy ministra zahraničných vecí MzLR J. A. Chissana v ČSSR 31.9.–5.2.1981, únor 1981.

39 Zidek and Sieber, *Československo a francouzská Afrika 1948–1968*, p. 155.

support for the entry of Mozambique into Comecon.⁴⁰ The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the two countries also remained unsigned, unlike with Angola around the same time. The signing of the treaty was planned for the visit of Czechoslovak President Gustáv Husák, but this visit never materialized. As a result, Czechoslovakia and Poland remained the only countries in the Soviet bloc that did not have such a treaty with Mozambique.⁴¹

As evident from the previous section, Angola held a certain precedence in the frequency of visits by top Czechoslovak officials. This difference was also noticeable in the attitude of Angolan and Mozambican actors towards these visits and the state of mutual relations. Already in connection with the preparation of the visit of the Czechoslovak minister of foreign affairs, Bohuslav Chňoupek, to Angola in August 1978, initial criticism of the current approach of the CSSR to cooperation emerged from the Angolan side. Although Angolan actors acknowledged that Czechoslovak assistance since 1975 was comparable to other socialist states, they criticized its political disinterest. According to the Angolans, this was evident, for example, in the fact that Prague was the last of the socialist allies to open its embassy in Luanda and that no significant Czechoslovak politician had visited the country. The dispatch of Czechoslovak experts there was also criticized, as it was exclusively commercial, unlike the approach of other socialist countries. The Angolan minister of foreign affairs characterized the current state of cooperation between the two countries: “Angola wrongs Czechoslovakia, but you have only yourselves to blame.”⁴²

In the end, the visit by the Czechoslovak minister was evaluated positively by Prague:

Comrade Chňoupek's visit is a reflection of the efforts of Czechoslovak foreign policy to enhance the dynamism of mutual relations in all areas, which the Angolan side fully reciprocated [. . .]. Angola is initiating a new phase in cooperation with Czechoslovakia.⁴³

40 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1980–89, Karton 1, Mosambik (pro schůzi vlády), Zpráva o průběhu a výsledcích oficiální přátelské návštěvy předsedy Strany FRELIMO a prezidenta MsLR S. M. Machela v ČSSR ve dnech 19.–23. října 1981. To the efforts of Mozambique to enter the Comecon, see <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2023.2206648> © 2023.

41 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1980–89, Karton 4, Hodnocení plnění Zaměření a hlavních úkolů čs. zahraniční politiky vůči Mosambické lidové republice a Království Lesotho, 12.6.1989.

42 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1975–79, Karton 1, Vývoj situace v Angole a v čs.-angolských vztazích od 1. sjezdu MPLA (Podklady k návštěvě s. ministra Chňoupka v Angole), 6.7.1978.

43 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T Angola 1975–79, Karton 1, Informace o průběhu a výsledcích návštěvy ministra zahraničních věcí ČSSR B. Chňoupka v ALR ve dnech 27.–31.8.1978 pro Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ, 25.9.1978.

However, Czechoslovak records preserve a note from Angolan President Agostinho Neto, who assessed the state of Czechoslovak-Angolan cooperation as “completely at the beginning”.⁴⁴ This was at a time when two years had already passed since the establishment of official relations, dozens of Czechoslovak experts worked in the country, and trade exchange was at its highest level.

Much greater criticism from Angola was voiced a year later during the visit of the Angolan minister of foreign affairs to Czechoslovakia. During the meeting, he openly stated that “as far as Czechoslovakia is concerned, in his assessment, the Angolan side has no reason to be satisfied so far, as the current results do not fully meet its expectations and needs”.⁴⁵ He acknowledged that the fault also lay with Angola, which, for example, had not yet utilized Czechoslovakia’s offer of assistance in the wood technology industry. However, he particularly criticized Prague for the delivery of poor-quality goods, including Tatra trucks and military shoes. He also requested more Czechoslovak experts in agriculture, the restoration of which was said to be crucial for Angola.⁴⁶ At the end of July that same year, the Angolan deputy minister of agriculture sharply criticized Prague for the same reasons. According to the Czech officials, this criticism was even more unpleasant because it contrasted with Angola’s exemplary cooperation with other socialist states, such as the USSR, East Germany, and Romania.⁴⁷

In the case of Mozambican actors, criticism of the Soviet bloc’s approach to developing mutual relations emerged later and to a much lesser extent. It occurred in connection with the planned visit of Mozambican President Samora Machel to Czechoslovakia. As Czechoslovak official documents mention, one of the goals of this visit was to dispel the mistaken impression in Maputo that Prague was not sufficiently supporting its efforts in building socialism.⁴⁸ However, it was not until two years later that Czechoslovak diplomats at the embassy in Maputo mentioned repeated complaints from the Mozambican president about insufficient interest from the East. “President Machel has repeatedly expressed his dissatisfaction, in his opinion, with the inadequate economic cooperation and assis-

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1975–79, Karton 1, Informace o průběhu a výsledcích návštěvy ministra zahraničních věcí ALR P. Jorgeho v ČSSR ve dnech 29.5–3.6.1979, 6.6.1979.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1975–79, Karton 2, Nové formy hospodářské a vědeckotechnické spolupráce ZSS s ALR, 28.6.1979.

⁴⁸ AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1980–89, Karton 1, Mosambik (pro schůzi vlády), Zpráva o průběhu a výsledcích oficiální přátelské návštěvy předsedy Strany FRELIMO a prezidenta MsLR S. M. Machela v ČSSR ve dnech 19.–23. října 1981.

tance from individual socialist countries and the COMECON as a whole.”⁴⁹ Compared to Angola, however, this was still very mild criticism with no practical or significant consequences.

3 Trade Cooperation

Another fundamental area of cooperation between Czechoslovakia and both Lusophone states was trade exchange, with all of them interested in its successful development. Prague was looking for new markets for its industrial products and a source of hard currency. Luanda and Maputo sought new trading partners after partially severing ties with their former colonial metropolis and its allies.

Even in this area, it is evident that Angola was much more interesting to Czechoslovakia. As early as the autumn of 1976, the first negotiations took place regarding specific deliveries of Czechoslovak goods to the country.⁵⁰ The following year, contracts were signed for delivering more than 300 Tatra trucks on a five-year loan with a two-year moratorium of payments,⁵¹ as well as other Czechoslovak products such as agricultural machinery, dental equipment, footwear, and malt.⁵² That year, Czechoslovak exports reached USD 13 million, with a clear dominance of engineering products. By 1978, trade had almost doubled to USD 30 million, making Czechoslovakia the third largest exporter to Angola after the USSR and the GDR.⁵³ That year alone, Prague delivered over 655 Tatra trucks to the country. According to the head of the commercial department at the Czechoslovak embassy in Luanda: “Angola is becoming a key market for this foreign trade corporation [Motokov, the corporation responsible for the deliv-

49 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1980–89, Karton 1, Záznam o návštěvě 1. tajemníka J. Suttnera u rady velvyslance SSSR P. Šmelkova, 5.1.1983.

50 NA ČR, Fond Federální ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu, Karton 1952, Angola, Současný stav rozpracovaných případů, 21.10.1976.

51 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1975–79, Karton 1, Angola, zpráva o politické a hospodářské situaci v 1. pololetí 1977, 28.7.1977.

52 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1975–79, Karton 2, Stručný rozbor vývoje hospodářské a obchodní spolupráce ČSSR s ALR za rok 1977, 12.5.1978. According to the findings of Pavel Szobi, Czechoslovakia became the largest exporter of footwear to Angola, see Szobi, “Czechoslovak Economic Interests in Angola in the 1970s and 1980s”, p. 175.

53 NA ČR, Fond Federální ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu, Karton 1651, Angola, Koncepce obchodní výměny mezi ČSSR a ALR do roku 1985.

ery of Tatra trucks, author's note]."⁵⁴ For these reasons, two permanent delegates from the Motokov were sent to the Czechoslovak representative office in the country the same year.⁵⁵

Trade with Angola, primarily consisting of Czechoslovak exports, successfully developed until 1982. On average, it ranged between USD 15 million and 20 million per year, except for a downturn in 1979.⁵⁶ From 1982 onwards, when the economic situation in Angola began to deteriorate sharply due to the escalating civil war, trade cooperation between the two countries also stagnated and did not return to previous levels until the end of the Cold War.⁵⁷

In Mozambique's case, the trade volume during the observed period was much lower. The first Czechoslovak products worth over USD 1 million were delivered to the country in 1978. As with Angola, the main export items were Tatra vehicles, construction, and agricultural machinery, while Mozambican imports remained negligible. In 1979, there was a further increase in Czechoslovak exports, which exceeded USD 4 million. However, this fell below USD 3 million the following year.⁵⁸ Compared to Angola, where trade transactions reached USD 15 to 20 million per year at that time, this was a relatively low figure for Czechoslovak foreign trade. A significant increase occurred only in 1981 when Czechoslovak exports to Mozambique reached nearly USD 10 million, again dominated by Tatra vehicles, construction, and engineering machinery.⁵⁹ However, as in Angola, the economic situation in Mozambique deteriorated sharply from the 1980s. In 1984, the Mozambican National Bank declared payment insolvency and requested a postponement of payments from its foreign creditors, including Czechoslovakia.⁶⁰ In practice, this meant the end of trade between both states. As Czechoslovak au-

54 NA ČR, Fond Federální ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu, Karton 1651, Angola, Závěry z pobytu s. Ing. Milana Polonce, vedoucího OBO Luanda, v ČSSR během dovolené v roce 1978, 25.8.1978.

55 Ibid.

56 NA ČR, Fond Federální ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu, Karton 1651, Angola, Koncepte obchodní výměny mezi ČSSR a ALR do roku 1985; AMFA CR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1980–89, Karton 4, Vývoj hospodářské spolupráce ČSSR-ALR v roce 1980, 24.3.1981; NA CR, Fond ÚV KSČ 1945–1989, Praha – Gustáv Husák, Karton 335, Angola, Informace k ekonomické části jednání (návštěva E. Santose v ČSSR 1981).

57 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1980–89, Karton 4, Hodnocení plnění dvoustranných mezinárodních smluv mezi ČSSR a ALR v průběhu roku 1982, 23.12.1982.

58 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1975–79, Karton 1, Zaměření a hlavní úkoly čs. zahraniční politiky vůči Mosambické lidové republice, 29.8.1979.

59 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1980–89, Karton 3, Vývoj spolupráce MsLR s jednotlivými skupinami států, 23.4.1982.

60 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1980–89, Karton 4, Zaměření a hlavní úkoly čs. zahraniční politiky vůči Mosambické lidové republice a Království Lesotho, 8.9.1987.

thorities noted in 1987, due to the lack of foreign currency and zero exports from Mozambique, “trade exchange on a commercial basis is currently practically impossible”.⁶¹

In trade exchange, it is evident that Angola adopted a much more active and assertive stance towards Czechoslovakia. As mentioned earlier, in 1978, Angolan representatives openly criticized the low quality of Czechoslovak products. This criticism applied to both Tatra vehicles and other products. The disputes over Tatra trucks eventually led to the suspension of their orders in 1979. Instead, Luanda began purchasing vehicles of Western European origin, specifically Swedish Volvos.⁶² This shift resulted in a significant drop in the total annual trade exchange between the two countries to USD 10 million in 1979, compared to nearly USD 30 million in the previous year.⁶³ Complaints also arose regarding the Czechoslovak tractors supplied, which were too heavy for the Angolan terrain and sank into the ground.⁶⁴ A more severe grievance was that no agricultural implements could be attached to them, as such equipment supposedly did not even exist in Czechoslovakia, and they could only be used with a flatbed for transportation. Angola considered this transaction a very unprofessional act on the part of Czechoslovakia.⁶⁵ There were also objections to the Czechoslovak supply of military boots for the Angolan army, which similarly exhibited poor quality.⁶⁶

Although Prague officially denied most of the shortcomings on its part, internal reports from the Czechoslovak embassy reveal that they were aware of the deficiencies and urged Czechoslovak traders to approach mutual trade more seriously. “It is necessary to realize that Angola pays in hard currency and cash and should not be treated as a trader content with second-rate quality.”⁶⁷ The shortcomings in the supply of military boots to the country were even investigated by the Czechoslovak authorities as a criminal offense, with the head of the trade department of the Czechoslovak embassy in Luanda, Milan Polonec, and his subor-

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² NA ČR, Fond Federální ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu. Karton 1651, Angola, Angolská lidová republika 1979; AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1975–79 Karton 1, Angola – informace za II. pololetí 1979, 12.12.1979.

⁶³ NA ČR, Fond Federální ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu, Karton 1651, Angola, Zpráva o poskytování pomoci a o spolupráci ČSSR s ALR v různých odvětvích národního hospodářství.

⁶⁴ AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1975–79, Karton 1, Záznám o rozhovoru vedoucího ZÚ a vedoucího OBO s angolským ministrem zemědělství, 8.11.1978.

⁶⁵ AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1975–79, Karton 2, Stručný rozbor vývoje hospodářské a obchodní spolupráce ČSSR s ALR za rok 1978, 17.4.1979.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1980–89, Karton 4, Vývoj hospodářské spolupráce ČSSR-ALR v roce 1980, 24.3.1981.

dinates among the accused. However, prosecution did not proceed due to a presidential amnesty in Czechoslovakia.⁶⁸ One of Prague's measures to rectify the relationship damage caused by these incidents was to prioritize deliveries of spare parts for Tatra vehicles to Angola.⁶⁹

Interestingly, in the case of Mozambique, similar complaints about the quality of Czechoslovak goods appeared very rarely, even though the products were of the same origin. One of the few surviving complaints is about mould in a supply of Czechoslovak malt. As explained in a final report by a Czechoslovak expert working at the local brewery, these issues were eventually overcome thanks to good personal connections. "Only due to the good position of Comrade Mrázek and myself at SOGERE [Mozambican Society of Breweries and Non-Alcoholic Beverages, author's note] were these deliveries processed without customer complaints."⁷⁰ However, these complaints are not mentioned in the official records of larger Czechoslovak state institutions.

Differences in Czechoslovakia's approach are also evident in the provision of loans to both countries. These loans were intended to contribute to the revitalization of their economies and the development of mutual economic relations. The first loan was provided to Angola in 1977 by the Czechoslovak foreign trade enterprise Motokov for the purchase of Tatra trucks and other machinery.⁷¹ This loan was regularly repaid until 1979.⁷² Another Czechoslovak loan, valued at USD 20 million, was granted to Angola as part of the Economic Cooperation Agreement for the period 1980–1990, signed by both states in 1980. The funds were to be used primarily for purchasing machinery and equipment from Czechoslovakia and establishing a training farm in Huambo.⁷³ The last loan for which records were found was granted to Angola during the visit of Angolan President Eduardo dos Santos to

⁶⁸ Archiv bezpečnostních složek České Republiky (Archive of Security Services of the Czech Republic, hereafter ABS ČR), Fond SK-MV, Signatura: SK_9_36_MV, Rozhodnutí. Akce "Angola", nedatováno.

⁶⁹ NA ČR, Fond Federální ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu, Karton 1651, Angola, Zpráva o poskytování pomoci a o spolupráci ČSSR s ALR v různých odvětvích národního hospodářství, 1980.

⁷⁰ M. Pomahač, Závěrečná zpráva z dlouhodobé expertizy, srpen 1985, personal archive of M. Pomahač.

⁷¹ AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Angola 1975-79, Karton 1, Angola – zpráva o politické a hospodářské situaci v 1. pololetí 1977, 28.7.1977.

⁷² NA ČR, Fond Federální ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu, Karton 1651, Angola, Angolská lidová republika 1979.

⁷³ NA ČR, Fond Federální ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu, Karton 1651, Angola, Dopis ministra zemědělství a výživy ČSSR místopředsdovi vlády ČSSR Rudolfu Rohlíčkovi, 5.6.1980.

Czechoslovakia in October 1981.⁷⁴ The USD 50 million were intended to construct new Czechoslovak enterprises in Angola, such as a textile factory in Malanje. However, due to the deteriorating economic situation in the country, these plans were never realized, and only a portion of the loan, somewhat over USD 1 million, was used to finance the repair of Tatra trucks in the Angolan city of Lobito.⁷⁵

In contrast, during the observed years, Czechoslovakia provided Mozambique with only one loan for purchasing Czechoslovak goods, arranged between the Czechoslovak Commercial Bank and Mozambique Bank in 1979.⁷⁶ However, Czechoslovak records indicate that Prague was far from enthusiastic about this loan, as it preferred a commercial cooperation similar to its approach with Angola. Despite this, as early as 1978, Czechoslovak authorities acknowledged that commercial-based cooperation was not feasible with Mozambique due to its internal situation, making it inevitable that Czechoslovakia should offer some form of credit.⁷⁷ This bank loan was increased twice by 1982. In the end, Prague provided Maputo with USD 40 million. The loans were primarily intended to finance the purchase of Czechoslovak engineering products, with 10 per cent to be paid by Mozambique in cash and 90 per cent on credit. However, even with the 10 per cent cash payment, there were practical difficulties due to the deepening economic crisis in the country.⁷⁸ Mozambique also expressed interest in obtaining a Czechoslovak government loan similar to the one provided to Angola. Negotiations occurred during Mozambique President Samora Machel's visit to Czechoslovakia in 1981. Still, Prague declined, citing the existing interbank loan and the agreement for preferential procurement of Mozambican mineral resources.⁷⁹

74 NA ČR, Fond ÚV KSČ 1945–1989, Praha – Gustáv Husák, Karton 335, Angola, Program návštěvy, složení delegací, zabezpečení návštěvy (návštěva E. Santose v ČSSR 1981). For more information about the loan, see Szobi, “Czechoslovak Economic Interests in Angola in the 1970s and 1980s”, p. 184.

75 Szobi, “Czechoslovak Economic Interests in Angola in the 1970s and 1980s”, pp. 183–184.

76 AMZV ČR, Fond dokumentace teritoriálních odborů 1945–1989, Čs.-mosambické vztahy 1981–1983, Vztahy MsLR k ostatním státům a skupinám států 1983, Vývoj čs.-mosambické ekonomické spolupráce, 31.1.1983.

77 NA ČR, Fond Polytechna, Karton 1198, Mosambik, Zpráva o sjednání dlouhodobé Obchodní dohody a Dohody o VTS mezi ČSSR a MsLR, 1978.

78 AMZV ČR, Fond dokumentace teritoriálních odborů 1945–1989, Čs.-mosambické vztahy 1981–1983, Vztahy MsLR k ostatním státům a skupinám států 1983, Vývoj čs.-mosambické ekonomické spolupráce, 31.1.1983.

79 AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1980–89, Karton 1, Mosambik (pro schůzi vlády), Zpráva o průběhu a výsledcích oficiální přátelské návštěvy předsedy Strany FRELIMO a prezidenta MsLR S. M. Machela v ČSSR ve dnech 19.–23. října 1981.

4 The Dispatch of Czechoslovak Experts

The other key area of cooperation between Czechoslovakia and both Lusophone states during their decolonial transition was the dispatch of Czechoslovak experts to their enterprises and other institutions. All participants were interested in the successful development of this initiative, similar to the case of trade exchange. For Prague, the dispatch of experts ensured the acquisition of hard currency and access to new business opportunities and mineral resources. Angola and Mozambique, on the other hand, needed to replace the qualified workers in their enterprises who had left the country after 1974. Soon, both states were among the destinations with the highest representation of Czechoslovaks in the Global South in the late Cold War.⁸⁰

Similar to other observed areas, the dispatch of Czechoslovak experts to these countries demonstrates that Czechoslovakia prioritized Angola over Mozambique, especially at the beginning. The first Czechoslovak specialists came to Angola in 1976, less than a year after it declared independence. A year later, more than 50 Czechoslovaks were working there. Until 1983, when cooperation declined due to the kidnapping of Czechoslovaks from the Angolan town of Alto Catumbela, their numbers ranged from 50 to 60 people annually.⁸¹

Negotiations for the dispatch of Czechoslovak experts to Mozambique began in 1977. A year later, the Czechoslovak minister of foreign trade, Andrej Barčák, signed an Agreement on Scientific and Technical Cooperation in Maputo (the official title for the dispatch of experts abroad and other forms of cooperation between both states, author's note). However, it was not until 1980, five years after Mozambique gained independence, that the first Czechoslovak specialists arrived.⁸² Similar to Angola, this cooperation developed rapidly. By early 1982, the number of Czechoslovak specialists in Mozambique had risen to 55. The most significant development occurred the following year, with 110 Czechoslovaks working there (see Figure 9.1). However, after 1985, this cooperation declined too, due to the escalating civil war and the related economic crisis.⁸³

⁸⁰ Menclová, *Mezi globálními ambicemi a ekonomickým pragmatismem*, p. 69.

⁸¹ Menclová, "Czechoslovak Experts in Independent Lusophone Africa". More on the abduction of Czechoslovaks from Angola and its consequences in Menclová, "Independent Angola: The role of Czechoslovak experts".

⁸² AMZV ČR, Fond dokumentace teritoriálních odborů 1945–1989, Nezpracovaná část – Čs.-mosambické vztahy 1981–1983, Vztahy MsLR k ostatním státům a skupinám států 1983, Vývoj čs.-mosambické ekonomické spolupráce, 31.1.1983.

⁸³ Menclová, "Czechoslovak Experts in Independent Lusophone Africa".



 Fotoskener od Fotek Google

Figure 9.1: The Wood Technology Company IFLOMA in Mozambique, where Czechoslovaks worked, in the 1980s. Personal Archive of Josef Klička.

Differences also existed in the institutions that sent Czechoslovaks to work in both countries. Although the Czechoslovak foreign trade corporation Polytechna played a primary role in both cases, in Mozambique more experts were employed through the United Nation's organizations like FAO.⁸⁴ Another distinction was the proportion of experts paid by the Czechoslovak government. In the case of Angola, only a few Czechoslovak experts were sent at Czechoslovakia's expense.⁸⁵ Although the Czechoslovak authorities preferred sending experts on a commercial basis, even to Mozambique, the proportion of Czechoslovaks paid by Prague was much higher there. This was particularly true at the beginning of the cooperation in 1980 and in the latter half of the decade.⁸⁶

However, the sectors in which Czechoslovaks worked in both countries did not differ. Key sectors included, for example, the wood technology industry,

⁸⁴ AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1980–89, Karton 3, Hodnocení činnosti a plnění plánu ZÚ Maputo v roce 1984, 8 February 1985.

⁸⁵ AMZV ČR, Angola 1976 – I. díl, Dokumentace 8.t.o. od vyhlášení nezávislosti Angoly 11.11.1975 do 31.12.1976, Zpráva ZÚ Luanda ze dne 16.9.1976. Tisková konference s čs. lékaři v Lobito. č. j. 111.081/76-8.

⁸⁶ AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1980–89, Karton 3, Zpráva o plnění zaměření a hlavních úkolů čs. zahraniční politiky vůči MsLR, 24.4.1986.

geology, brewing, and healthcare.⁸⁷ Prague also often utilized the experience of Czechoslovaks from Angola, subsequently sending them to Mozambique. However, there were differences in the success of individual projects. In Angola, Czechoslovakia found it significantly more challenging to get established due to higher competition from foreign actors. Consequently, their activities in fields like geology and brewing ended quickly.⁸⁸ In contrast, there was considerable demand for their services in these areas in Mozambique, making geological surveys and brewery some of the most significant Czechoslovak projects in the country.⁸⁹ Paradoxically, the initially less favoured country turned out to be a more promising destination for Czechoslovakia's endeavours in this area.

5 Conclusion

Czechoslovakia was a significant communist actor in the decolonial transition of Angola and Mozambique. During this process, it was involved in various areas, including political and economic cooperation. This analysis shows that Angola was more crucial for Prague than Mozambique, even though both Lusophone countries were declared priority destinations for Czechoslovak foreign policy in sub-Saharan Africa. This was revealed, for example, in the opening of the Czechoslovak embassy in Angola six months after its independence or the appointment of top professionals to the positions of Czechoslovak ambassadors. The same situation prevailed in the frequency of high-level Czechoslovak visits to both countries. A symbolic but politically significant step was signing the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Prague and Luanda in 1981. In contrast, Mozambique had to wait until 1980 for the arrival of the first Czechoslovak ambassador, despite repeated urgings. The appointment of Václav Březák, who had modest diplomatic experience compared to his colleagues in Angola, did not suggest much interest from Prague in deepening mutual relations. This is further evidenced by the postponement of the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the two states, which actually then never happened due to

⁸⁷ Menclová, "Czechoslovak Experts in Independent Lusophone Africa".

⁸⁸ Archiv České geologické služby (Archive of the Czech Geological Service), sig. ITG E000126. Cestovní zpráva z akviziční cesty do Angoly ve dnech 16.9.–1.10.1979; Menclová, "Independent Angola: The role of Czechoslovak experts", p. 160.

⁸⁹ AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1980–89, Karton 3, Hodnocení činnosti a plnění plánu ZÚ Maputo v roce 1983, 31.1.1984; AMZV ČR, Fond TO-T, Mosambik 1980–89, Karton 3, Zpráva o plnění zaměření a hlavních úkolů čs. zahraniční politiky vůči MsLR, 24.4.1986.

Prague's lack of interest. A similar situation prevailed in trade exchange and the sending of Czechoslovak experts to both countries.

The reason for Czechoslovakia's greater interest in Angola compared to Mozambique was the former's political and economic significance. Angola was already the most crucial location in the Portuguese colonial empire and continued to be so during its decolonial transition. Prague repeatedly emphasized, through statements by its politicians or in official documents, the positive influence of the ruling MPLA on other liberation movements in Southern Africa. Czechoslovakia's approach was also influenced by the example of its allies, who established extensive relations with Luanda shortly after its independence. Finally, Czechoslovakia's economic interests played a significant role, as its export-oriented economy sought new sources of raw materials and markets in the 1970s. Angola seemed an ideal destination compared to the poorer and politically unstable Mozambique.

In contrast, Prague adopted a far colder attitude toward the socialist revolution in Mozambique, especially in the 1970s, as was also noted by Mozambican actors. This was apparent from the incidents mentioned above, such as the late opening of the Czechoslovak embassy and the reluctance of top Czechoslovak politicians to visit the country. This approach illustrates Czechoslovakia's pragmatic approach to the decolonization of African states in the late Cold War. With politically and economically more significant Luanda, Prague sought to establish strong relations, particularly in the early stages. At the same time, as in the case of Maputo, it pursued relations with other states hesitantly and with delay. The situation only changed after Mozambique achieved a certain amount of internal political stabilization at the end of the 1970s. Afterwards, Czechoslovakia established broader forms of cooperation. However, with brief exceptions, relations never reached the same level as with Angola.

Despite the importance of Angola in Czechoslovak foreign policy, Prague also took a reserved approach, bordering on laxity, toward its political transition. This is evidenced by the sale of substandard Czechoslovak products, including military boots, to the country. Only when Angola stopped purchasing Tatra trucks, the Czechoslovak authorities took corrective measures, including prioritizing the sale of spare vehicle parts there. The analysis also reveals that this lax attitude was mainly present in larger Czechoslovak state institutions, such as ministries and their subordinate bodies. In contrast, the behaviour of individuals was often influenced by other motivations, such as a desire to personally contribute to the development of new states or professional pride.

Finally, the approach of Angola and Mozambique to this cooperation is equally enthralling and can to some extent be documented from the available sources. Luanda's privileged position as the stronger player is evident in this case. It did not hesitate to point out, relatively soon after establishing official rela-

tions, Prague's minimal political interest in its transition compared to other members of the Soviet bloc. In contrast, Mozambique took a much more moderate stance and continued to strive for a friendly development of mutual relations. These differing attitudes also had consequences in practice. While in Angola, despite promising beginnings, Czechoslovakia failed to establish itself in key strategic sectors – geology and brewing –, Mozambicans remained interested, and both areas became, alongside the wood technology industry, the main Czechoslovak projects in the country. Paradoxically, Prague succeeded in a country that was considered less significant in its sub-Saharan Africa policy. This fact also highlights the role of previously overlooked actors who contributed to shaping these relations. In addition to Czechoslovak actors, such as particular diplomats or experts, their Lusophone counterparts formed significant mutual ties. The active participation of African actors in shaping relations between the East and the Global South in the Cold War is worth scrutinizing in more detail in future research.

Part III: **Endings and Comparisons**

Introduction

The last phase of the decolonization of sub-Saharan Africa took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As late as 1987 the apartheid regime still seemed to many in South Africa to be firmly in power and unwilling to consider permitting a democratic transition in Namibia. The major resistance in the townships had largely been crushed and in October 1987 the South African Defence Force (SADF) won a major victory on the banks of the Lomba River in southern Angola against the Angolan army, advised by Soviet military specialists. That military defeat for Angola led Fidel Castro to send 15,000 more Cuban troops to the country, and they were decisive in preventing a SADF victory in the major battle that ensued around the small settlement of Cuito Cuanavale in early 1988. The implications of what happened on the ground in southern Angola in early 1988 are teased out for both the Namibian and South African liberation struggles in the first chapter in this section. This chapter, which is explicitly comparative, emphasizes the importance of the SACP, the only significant communist party in the sub-continent. Influential in the exile decades as a close ally of the African National Congress (ANC), the SACP suffered a major blow when Soviet bloc communism collapsed, but, as the chapter shows, individual members were influential in the negotiation process that followed in the early 1990s.¹

In the second of the four chapters in this section, Irina Filatova, a leading scholar on the Soviet role in relation to southern Africa² and herself a participant in some of the events she describes, draws on Russian and other sources to discuss in detail the ways in which the Soviet public engaged with the ANC as the situation in southern Africa underwent rapid change from 1988. Though the Soviet Union continued to fund the armed struggle in South Africa until 1990, the Soviet Union then disappeared and the ANC suspended its armed struggle. The new regime in Russia did not influence the way in which the South African transition proceeded in any significant way.

In the third chapter in this section, Arianna Pasqualini analyses the very different roles that three major communist actors played in relation to the Namibian liberation struggle: the East German regime, Cuba, and the Italian Communist Party. Like Saunders, Pasqualini draws attention to the decisive role played by the Cubans in this endings phase. Much more peripheral was the support given

¹ For a general overview, see Ch. Saunders, “The Decolonisation of Southern Africa: Historical Reflections”, in: D. Boucher and A. Omar (eds.), *Decolonisation: Evolution and Revolution*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2023, pp. 57–73.

² I. Filatova and A. Davidson, *The Hidden Thread: The Soviet Union and South Africa*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2013.

the southern African liberation movements by North Korea. Tycho van der Hoog, now the author of a leading book on North Korea in Africa,³ uses South Korean archival material to tell the story of how the communist regime of Kim Il Sung, while supplying weapons to southern African liberation movements, tried to claim an independent role on the global scene by presenting itself as a champion of non-alignment. As with the other three chapters in this section, Van der Hoog's chapter opens new perspectives on the last phase in the decolonization/liberation of southern Africa and helps us understand how and why different communist actors acted in different ways at different times as the decolonization process in sub-Saharan Africa moved to an end.

3 T. van der Hoog, *Comrades Beyond the Cold War: North Korea and the Liberation of Southern Africa*, London: Hurst, 2025.

Chris Saunders

10 Communist Actors in Decolonization Processes: Namibia and South Africa Contrasted

That no-one has attempted a comparison between the roles of different communist actors in Namibia and South Africa in the era of the decolonization of the two countries may, at least in part, be attributed to the complexity of the task. The unevenness of the relevant historiography – in most respects much richer for the African National Congress (ANC) than for the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO)¹ and fuller for Soviet, East German, and Cuban than for Chinese or North Korean solidarity² – together with problems of access to archival sources,³ increases the difficulty of attempting this comparison. Moreover, the very basis for such a comparison may be questioned, in part because the two decolonization processes are so intimately connected, in part because of the striking differences between the two, not least because the one country was the de facto colony of the other during the decades before Namibian independence. But, as comparing and

1 This is partly a reflection of the more developed state of South African historiography as a whole, and of the fact that the ANC archive at the University of Fort Hare has been open to researchers for some decades. But there is as yet no study of the ANC camps in Angola equivalent to that of the SWAPO camps, see Ch. A. Williams, *National Liberation in Postcolonial Southern Africa: A Historical Ethnography of SWAPO's Exile Camps*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

2 While there are many detailed accounts of the role of the Soviet Union in southern African liberation (most notably by Vladimir Shubin, Irina Filatova, and Apollon Davidson, whose work is cited in the notes that follow), there is little on the role of the People's Republic of China (PRC) besides Z. Weiyun and X. Sujiang, "China's support for and solidarity with South Africa's liberation struggle", in: South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, vol. III, Part 2, pp. 1213–1252. There is no equivalent to the SADET volume on international solidarity for Namibia, but there are relevant chapters on East Asia, Cuba, and the GDR in A. J. Temu and J. N. Tembe (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Struggles: Contemporaneous Documents, 1960–1994*, Dar-es-Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2014, vol. VIII, and on the Soviet Union *ibid.*, vol. IX.

3 For relevant work based on recent access to the Russian archives, see, e.g. A. Voevodskiy, "The Sino-Soviet Split and Soviet Policy towards Southern African Liberation Movements in the early 1960s", in: Ch. Saunders, H. A. Fonseca, and L. Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023, pp. 179–198, and his chapter in this volume.

Note: I thank Helder Adegar Fonseca for suggesting I tackle this topic.

contrasting the two may throw new light on two separate, if closely connected, processes of decolonization/liberation, I shall proceed to consider the roles of the most important communist actors in relation to the two liberation struggles in turn, over time. These actors included, in the South African case, communist actors from within the country and, in both cases, various actors from without.⁴

To make the project manageable, I focus on the three main phases in the decolonization process in the region identified in the introduction to this book: the beginning of the two armed struggles in the 1960s; the turning-point phase of the mid-to-late 1970s; and the concluding phase of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Sometimes the actions of communists influenced both liberation struggles together, and I shall therefore necessarily discuss ways in which the two decolonization processes were linked, when the actions of different communist actors had similar impacts on both. My primary aim is to contrast the impact of such different actors on the two liberation movements, using ‘actors’ to include states and organisations as well as people. With information on the role of individuals often lacking, I shall primarily be concerned with communist countries and organisations and the ways in which they were influential politically, as I cannot here discuss the full range of communist activity in relation to the Namibian and South African liberation movements. I shall not be concerned with, say, details of financial assistance or educational links, leaving others to fill such gaps. I shall mainly illustrate ways in which communist actors were concerned with relations with the liberation movements politically and militarily.

Before we turn to the first of the three phases I have identified, let me briefly recall some of the relevant geographical and historical differences between the two countries. Two-thirds the size of South Africa, Namibia has always had a minute population by comparison, in the 1980s of not many more than a million, over half of whom lived within 100 kilometres of the Angolan border. By the time that Namibia was colonised by the Germans in the late nineteenth century, South Africa had evolved into a complex society with a large indigenous and considerable immigrant population. In the twentieth century, South Africa continued to develop as a semi-industrialized country. In the First World War, it conquered the territory to its north from the Germans and then long had the idea

⁴ I cannot of course be comprehensive. Of other significant communist actors who gave support to the ANC and SWAPO, the most important in Western Europe was the Communist Party of Italy, on which see A. Pasqualini, “Solidarity, Anti-Racism and Human rights: Italian Communists and the Struggle Against Apartheid”, in: S. Pons (ed.), *Gorbachev, Italian Communists and Human Rights*, Rome: Viella, 2002, and “Mapping Socialist Solidarities: SWAPO, the Namibian Liberation Struggle, and the Global Cold War”, PhD thesis, University of Bologna 2023, chapter 4. See also her contribution in this volume.

of incorporating it into South Africa. Though Namibia was a mandate under the League of Nations until 1966 and was then accepted by the United Nations (UN) as a 'special responsibility', it remained, de facto, a colony of South Africa, which imposed apartheid policies on it.⁵ The Namibians fought a liberation struggle to end South African rule, which seemed to be the only way to bring about the end of apartheid policies there and to achieve majority rule. So we are concerned here both with the roles of communist actors in the process by which Namibia moved towards independence from South Africa in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and with the roles of such actors in South Africa's lengthy transition from colonialism and apartheid to majority rule, for the South African transition of the early 1990s involved the transfer of power from a minority to the majority within the country.

Despite the differences between the two cases, between 1960 and the end of the 1980s the two decolonization processes proceeded, in many respects, along similar lines. Both experienced decades of armed struggles, in part fought from Angola; both processes were very significantly influenced by communist actors. But there was a fundamental difference between the two: the existence in South Africa of a communist party. The Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) had emerged in 1921, with links to Moscow. Long insignificant, it became more active in the 1940s, was banned in 1950, then went underground. By 1960, the African National Congress (ANC) was closely tied to the South African Communist Party (SACP), with many leading ANC figures also members of the SACP.⁶ In Namibia, by contrast, there was never a communist party of any significance. Though members of the SACP in Cape Town befriended Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, later a leading figure in the Namibian struggle, and other Namibians in the mid and late 1950s, none of these Namibians joined the SACP or formed a separate communist party. This was in large part, I suggest, because SWAPO, which became the dominant liberation movement by the early 1970s, remained ideologically broad minded, with many of its members coming from the churches along with those who were influenced by Marxism from exile experiences in communist countries. These could hope that they might be able to influence SWAPO from within.⁷

5 For general comparisons, see H. Melber and Ch. Saunders, *Transition in Southern Africa: Comparative Aspects. Two Lectures*, Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2001.

6 These included Walter Sisulu, Duma Nokwe, Moses Kotane, J. B. Marks, Joe Matthews and, almost certainly, Nelson Mandela.

7 Unpublished autobiography of Andimba ya Toivo; discussions by the present author with him and with the daughter of Jack and Ray Simons, with whom he associated in the 1950s in Cape Town. Also see Toivo's interview in Richard Pakleppa's film *Paths to Freedom*, Windhoek, Namibia 2014. Only in the early 1980s was a very small and uninfluential communist party formed

The close relationship between the ANC and the SACP was one of the reasons for the breakaway from the ANC that led to the establishment of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1959 as a rival organisation to the ANC. Though the PAC remained anti-communist, that did not prevent it establishing relations with communist China in its search for support for its armed struggle. In Namibia, likewise, two liberation movements emerged: the largely Herero South West Africa National Union (SWANU), founded in 1959, which chose not to adopt an armed struggle in the 1960s, and the Ovamboland People's Organization, which became SWAPO in April 1960, by which time most of its leading figures, including Sam Nujoma, its main founder, were in exile. Though all four liberation organisations were, in very different ways and to very different extents, influenced by communist actors, the ANC and SWAPO were far more important than their rivals, thanks in part to the close relations they forged with the Soviet bloc. Much of what follows will be focused on them and those ties.

1 The First Phase of the Two Armed Struggles

In the South African case, the decision to adopt an armed struggle was heavily influenced by members of the SACP in the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre of March 1960. In December that year, a meeting of the underground SACP in Johannesburg, with Nelson Mandela present, agreed on the use of violence in the struggle against apartheid. Mandela became commander in chief of the new organisation set up for that purpose, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), because the now banned ANC could then not agree on the new strategy.

In promoting the new strategy, leading members of the SACP looked to both Moscow and Beijing for assistance. In both communist capitals they found support for the new strategy, though were also told that popular mobilisation should not be neglected. With the ANC continuing to restrict membership to Africans, white and Indian communists played leading roles in MK. In 1962, the ANC agreed that MK, by then actively pursuing a sabotage campaign, should be its armed wing. That same year the SWAPO leadership at the organisation's headquarters in Dar es Salaam decided they would prepare for guerrilla war. Though that deci-

among members of SWAPO in exile in Angola. This was initially called the party of Jacob Morenga, founded on the 74th anniversary of his death on 3 October 1981 with Rirua Karihangana as its general secretary. Later renamed the Communist Party of Namibia, it never had more than a handful of members, and with the first democratic election on the horizon in 1989 it entered a so-called Socialist Alliance of Namibia and disappeared.

sion was not taken under any direct communist influence, this meant looking to communist countries for help in training guerillas.⁸

While ties between the SACP and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) grew stronger as the 1960s advanced, with the CPSU looking to the SACP to help drive the liberation struggle in South Africa, SWAPO had no such connections with the Soviets, for, unlike the SACP, the newly formed SWAPO and SWANU had no historic ties to the Soviet Union. Whereas the SACP leadership had ready introductions in Moscow, a Soviet official recalled: "There was nobody around to introduce SWAPO to us."⁹ For a time, the Soviets did not understand why there should be a separate struggle in Namibia, they were confused by the rivalry between SWAPO and SWANU and did not give the resources to either that they gave the SACP and ANC. At the same time, the liberation movements of both countries, looking for financial, military, and diplomatic assistance, sought ties with Beijing as well as Moscow. As the Sino-Soviet split developed, this became less possible, but relations between the two main communist countries and the various Southern African liberation movements remained ambivalent into the early 1970s.

Though the ANC and SWAPO in the mid-1960s still hoped to avoid having to make a choice between the rival communist countries, the ANC committed itself to the Soviets more quickly and thoroughly than SWAPO, in large part under the influence of the SACP.¹⁰ Before his arrest in 1962, Mandela encouraged ANC members to learn from the Chinese revolution, and it was the PRC, not the Soviet Union, that first offered to train men for a future ANC guerrilla army. Mandela selected six men – five Black Africans, the other a man of Indian descent, Nandha 'Steve' Naidoo – to go for training in China and advised them to read Mao before they went.¹¹ Moses Kotane, the SACP secretary-general, then felt it necessary to explain to the Soviets that they had taken "advantage of the [Chinese] offer to train men. We did this", he added, 'in good faith.'¹² The six met the Chinese leader Mao in Beijing before undergoing training.¹³ Similarly, seven SWAPO men

8 The SWAPO leadership decided not to launch its armed struggle until the International Court of Justice ruled on a case against South Africa's occupation of Namibia that SWAPO hoped would lead to the end of South African rule and the independence of the territory. When that did not happen, SWAPO announced the launch of its armed struggle in August 1966.

9 Shubin, *The Hot Cold War*, p. 195. Cf. V. Shubin, "The Soviet Union and the Liberation of Southern Africa", in: Temu and Tembe (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Movements*, vol. IX, pp. 41–112.

10 Cf. Filatova and Davidson, *Hidden Thread*; Landau, *Spear*, p. 121, n. 39.

11 Landau, *Spear*, p. 123.

12 Landau, *Spear*, p. 97, citing Ronnie Kasrils Papers: Moses Kotane, November 1961.

13 N. Naidoo, "The 'Indian Chap': Recollections of a South African Underground Trainee in Mao's China", *South African Historical Journal* 64 (2012) 3, pp. 707–736.

went to China for military training in the early 1960s. On their return to Africa, they were known as Chinamen.¹⁴ Few others followed from SWAPO, however, whereas the ANC, with its much stronger ties to the Soviets than SWAPO, had by the mid-1960s recruited hundreds to go to the Soviet bloc for military training.¹⁵

As open clashes between Soviet and Chinese delegations began to take place at communist party congresses, as in Eastern Europe in 1962, the SACP retained its close ties to Moscow, and the ANC leadership soon realised that the Soviets had resources that the PRC could not match, even if the PRC, unlike the Soviet Union, could be seen as a non-white country, both “communist and coloured”.¹⁶ Whereas Stephen Ellis, a leading scholar of the ANC in exile, believed that the exiled ANC came to be virtually controlled by the SACP, other historians have emphasised that the relationship was a mutually beneficial one, from which both parties gained.¹⁷ There is no doubt that the SACP increasingly wielded influence within the ANC in exile.¹⁸

After the Rivonia arrests in 1963, the SACP’s *The African Communist* published a statement issued by the Party’s Central Committee on the Sino-Soviet dispute that expressed support for the Soviet position, though without denouncing that of

14 Ch. Williams, *National Liberation*, part II, chapter 3: “Life and Crisis at SWAPO’s Kongwa Camp, 1964–1968”, pp. 65–93. Reviewing Williams’s book, Gary Baines writes that “Unlike SWAPO, the ANC comprises a much more varied membership whose experience spans that of the Robben Islanders as well as the so-called ‘inziles’” (*Journal of Namibian Studies* 20 [2016], p. 128), but soon after SWAPO launched its armed struggle, a group of Namibians who had been involved in guerrilla activities were arrested and, like most of the MK leaders arrested at Rivonia in 1963, were sentenced in Pretoria and then imprisoned on Robben Island.

15 There were, however, five visits by ANC cadres to China, including one by O. R. Tambo, in late 1963: Weiyan and Sujiang, “China’s Support”, p. 1222. From 1965, ANC and SWAPO trainees at military training centres in Ukraine met others from African, Latin American, and Middle East liberation movements: D. Zelenova, “Practicing internationalism: Military and political training of ZAPU and MK soldiers in the USSR in the 1960” (2023): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxdVpCw0hWA> (accessed 17 March 2025).

16 P. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa 1959–1976*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002. “The Chinese revolution in a non-European country [was] a revolution by people who would have been oppressed in South Africa for not having a white skin”, Albie Sachs, quoted in Voevodskiy, “The Sino-Soviet Split and Soviet Policy”, pp. 184–85.

17 Cf. S. Ellis, *External Mission: The ANC in Exile*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2012 – his third chapter is entitled “The Party Triumphant” – and, say, C. Bundy, “Cooking the Rice Outside the Pot? The ANC and SACP in Exile – 1960–1990”, in: K. Kondlo, Ch. Saunders, and S. Zondo (eds.), *Treading the Waters of History: Perspectives on the ANC*, Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa, 2014, pp. 52–71; E. Maloka, *The South African Communist Party: Exile and After Apartheid*, Auckland Park: Jacana, 2013.

18 T. Lodge, *Red Road to Freedom: A History of the South African Communist Party 1921–2021*, Auckland Park: Jacana, 2021.

the Chinese Communist Party.¹⁹ After the subsequent imprisonment of the ANC leaders in 1964, the organisation's ties with the Soviet Union remained firm, but even then there were some in the ANC who preferred to support China. They included some of the first MK recruits to go to the Military Training Academy in Odessa, Ukraine, in 1963. Hearing they had expressed sympathy for the Chinese position, the ANC took steps to ensure that none of those sent the following year defended the views of the Chinese Communist Party.²⁰ The ANC and SWAPO had separate, adjacent military camps at Kongwa in Tanganyika in the mid-1960s, and Mao Tse-tung's little red book was the constant companion of one SWAPO trainee there, "always at hand in the chest pocket of my military uniform".²¹ At the end of the 1960s, SWAPO did not choose a local name, like Umkhonto we Sizwe, for its armed wing, but named it the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), after the PRC's People's Liberation Army.

The Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) became a key forum for Sino-Soviet rivalry, and when the Soviet Union won control of it in 1967, during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, SWANU was expelled because of the pro-Chinese position of its leader, Fanuel Kozonguizi, and SWAPO was admitted in its place.²² By the end of the 1960s, the ANC was firmly pro-Soviet, even if some of its leading figures continued to make occasional visits to Beijing. SWAPO more actively continued to try to maintain ties with the PRC as well as the Soviets into

19 "Statement by the Central Committee, South African Communist Party", *African Communist* 16 (1964) January-March, p. 32.

20 "On political and educational work among South African cadets at the special department of the Odessa Higher Combined Arms Command School, April 30, 1965", in: A. B. Davidson, S. V. Mazov, and A. S. Balezin (eds.), *Rossiia i Afrika. Dokumenty i materialy 1961– nachalo 1970-ch* [Russia and Africa. Documents and materials 1961 – early 1970s], Moscow: Political Encyclopedia, 2021, p. 189; Voevodskiy, "The Sino-Soviet Split", pp. 187–88. Cf. D. Zelenova, "From Egypt to South Africa: the rise and fall of assistance from Moscow in Africa's decolonisation", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 48 (2022) 5, pp. 940–943.

21 S. Ndeikwila, *Agony of Truth*, Windhoek: Kuiseb Publishers, 2014, p. 30. On occasion, disputes broke out at Kongwa between supporters of the Soviet Union and of the PRC: cf. Ch. Williams, "Living in Exile: Daily Life and International Relations at SWAPO's Kongwa Camp", *Kronos* 37 (2011) 1, pp. 60–86.

22 Kozo, as he was known, had fallen out with the Soviets as early as October 1963 over his pro-Chinese position: see Voevodskiy, "Sino-Soviet Split", p. 89; T. Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, vol. I: *Formation of Popular Opinion 1950–1970*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1999, p. 263. On the Sino-Soviet split, see, e.g. J. Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015; S. Radchenko, "The Sino-Soviet Split", in: M. P. Leffler and O. A. Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. II, *Crisis and Detente*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 349–372.

the early 1970s. When Andreas Shipanga, then a leading member of SWAPO, was invited to visit the Soviet Union, he insisted that he also visit North Korea and the PRC. When the Chinese told him that “Soviet Socialist imperialism was the mortal enemy of the third world”, his response was that SWAPO was “not a communist party, so we have no right to comment on the battle between Chinese communism and Russian communism. We are only fighting for our liberation.”²³

As the Sino-Soviet split intensified and the ANC and SWAPO seemed to be in the Soviet camp, the PRC gave modest support to the PAC and SWANU, though the Chinese did not approve of the random violence perpetrated by the PAC’s armed wing and few PAC members were trained there, while the PRC was not able to persuade SWANU to adopt an armed struggle of its own.²⁴ From the mid-1960s, the PAC and SWANU, like China itself on a much larger scale, were increasingly wracked with internal upheavals.²⁵ While the Sino-Soviet split enabled the southern African liberation movements to play the one side off against the other, it also diverted attention from their struggles and, in encouraging the idea that one was either for the Soviets or for China, it helped to divide the liberation movements into blocs and promoted the idea that some movements, such as SWAPO and the ANC, were legitimate and others were not. After SWAPO won endorsement by the Liberation Committee of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and then the UN General Assembly as the “sole” legitimate Namibian liberation movement – because SWANU would not adopt an armed struggle –, the PRC began to shift its support from SWANU to SWAPO, but, unlike the Soviets, did not provide it with significant material assistance.²⁶ The ANC hoped for similar endorsement to that won by SWAPO, but never achieved it, because the OAU continued to recognise the PAC as one of South Africa’s liberation movements engaged in the armed struggle against

²³ *In Search of Freedom: The Andreas Shipanga Story as Told to Sue Armstrong*, Gibraltar: Ashanti Publishing, 1989, p. 82. Cf. <http://www.liberationafrica.se/intervstories/interviews/shipanga/?by-name=1>.

²⁴ K. Kondlo, *In the Twilight of the Revolution: The Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (South Africa) 1959–1994*, Basel: Basler Africa Bibliographien, 2009. It would seem that a few SWANU members did receive military training in the early 1970s: cf. H. Beukes, *Long Road to Liberation: An Exiled Namibian Activist’s Perspective*, Johannesburg: Porcupine Press, 2014, p. 241.

²⁵ E.g. Kondlo, *In the Twilight*. When the Tri-Continental Conference met in Havana in December 1965, the PRC flew the SWANU delegates there via Cairo and Madrid, while the SWAPO delegates were flown by the Soviets on a much longer journey via Murmansk: *In Search of Freedom: The Andreas Shipanga Story*, p. 84.

²⁶ A. Altorfer-Ong, “East Asian Support to the Southern African Liberation Struggle, 1960s to 1994”, in: Temu and Tembe (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Struggles*, vol. VIII, esp. p. 329. The CPSU gave SWAPO USD 40,000 in 1973.

apartheid. Accepting that the ANC was firmly in the Soviet camp, the PRC “shifted all its assistance in South Africa’s liberation struggle to the PAC”.²⁷

By the end of the 1960s, the ANC and SWAPO were both in deep trouble. Their respective armed struggles amounted to very little – all SWAPO was able to do was fire a few mortars at South African bases in northern Namibia, while MK’s attempts to return to South Africa via Rhodesia in 1967–68 had failed.²⁸ The Soviets continued to provide ideological and material support for the continuation of the armed struggle and came to the rescue of MK in 1969, when the government of Tanzania asked it to leave. Members of the SACP were responsible for the drafting of a radical “Strategy and Tactics” document adopted at the ANC’s consultative conference held at Morogoro, Tanzania, in April/May 1969. Soviet support enabled that conference to take place, as also the similar one SWAPO held nearby at Tanga at the end of the same year.²⁹ In the early 1970s, the Soviets supported an abortive effort to return an MK force by sea to South Africa, while vetoing a similar plan proposed by SWAPO.³⁰ Military supplies from the Soviet bloc to the two liberation movements remained relatively minor before 1975. That year saw a new, much more aggressive phase of activity by communist actors begin.

2 The Turning Point in the Two Struggles, 1975–1978

The arrival of Cuban combat troops in Angola, using Soviet logistics and weaponry, brought the Cold War to the southern African region in full force and fundamentally altered the course of the Namibian and South African liberation struggles.³¹ After the Carnation Revolution in Portugal in 1974, many Namibians fled north into Angola, where most joined SWAPO (a similar exodus from South African rule took place after the Soweto uprising in 1976 and boosted the ranks of

27 Weiyun and Sujiang, “China’s Support”, p. 1216.

28 On the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns, see, e.g., J. Cherry, *Umkhonto We Sizwe*, Auckland Park: Jacana, 2011, chapter 3.

29 Shubin, “The Soviet Union”, p. 93.

30 Cherry, *Umkhonto*, pp. 58–59; Shubin, *Hot Cold War*, p. 197.

31 Ch. Saunders and S. Onslow, “The Cold War and Southern Africa, 1976–1990”, in: Leffler and Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 3 chapter 11, pp. 222–241. On the Cuban role, see especially P. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa 1959–1976*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002; P. Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria and the Struggle for Southern Africa (1976–1991)*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016; and Pasqualini, “Mapping Socialist Solidarities”, chapter 3.

the ANC in exile) and after Nujoma visited Moscow in December 1975, hundreds of Namibians went to the Soviet Union for military training.³² It was to try to prevent the Marxist Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) taking power and allowing SWAPO bases in southern Angola that the South African Defence Force (SADF) invaded Angola in October 1975, which in turn produced the massive Cuban military intervention to secure the MPLA in power.³³ Though Fidel Castro was the initiator of that intervention and Moscow was not party to the initial decision,³⁴ the Cuban mission depended on Soviet assistance, with the Soviets supplying the weaponry the Cubans used in Angola.

After the Cubans had turned back the South African invaders and the MPLA were in power, the ANC President, O. R. Tambo, went to Luanda in early 1976 to gain the consent of the MPLA to establish military camps in southern Angola. By the time MK was in place there, SWAPO was sending guerrillas from its camps in southern Angola into northern Namibia. Though the two liberation armies were fighting a common enemy, the apartheid state, they did not co-operate militarily and their camps in southern and central Angola remained quite separate.³⁵ To these camps now went not only Cuban but also Soviet, East German, and North Korean military instructors.³⁶ Other communist actors were involved in non-military solidarity work of different kinds in Angola and Zambia, including those from Czechoslovakia who served in Angola until 1978, and, say, the Cubans who provided medical assistance in SWAPO's Zambian camps.³⁷ East Germany now became the second-largest supplier of military equipment after the Soviet Union without which the two armed struggles could not have been fought. The Cubans

32 Shubin, "The Soviet Union", pp. 94–95.

33 On all this, see Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions and Visions of Freedom*.

34 Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*.

35 Ch. Saunders, "Forged in the Same Trenches? The ANC and SWAPO: Aspects of a Relationship", in: A. Palotti and U. Engel (eds.), *South Africa After Apartheid: Policies and Challenges of the Democratic Transition*, Leiden: Brill, 2016, pp. 202–219.

36 The first 16 Soviet instructors arrived at Lubango in southern Angola in 1977 to train SWAPO there, see Shubin, "The Soviet Union", p. 97. Numbers increased thereafter. According to North Korean propaganda, over 3,000 North Korean soldiers and a thousand advisors participated in the Angolan Civil War in the late 1970s and 1980s against South African troops: <https://www.nknews.org/2013/12/north-korea-opponents-of-apartheid>. But there is no firm evidence that the number was anything like as large as that (information from Tycho van der Hoog).

37 See, e.g., B. Menclova, "Czechoslovak Experts in Independent Angola", in: Ch. Saunders, H. A. Fonseca, and L. Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023, pp. 141–174; Ch. Hatzky, *Cubans in Angola: South-South Cooperation and Transfer of Knowledge, 1976–1991*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2015; L. Amathila, *Making a Difference*, Windhoek: UNAM Press, 2012.

in Angola – who numbered as many as 30,000 by 1977 – advised the government of that country and were essential in keeping the MPLA under Agostinho Neto in power when Nito Alves attempted a coup in May 1977. Had the Neto government been overthrown, the liberation armies of the ANC and SWAPO might well not have continued to receive the support given them by Neto and then by his successor from 1979, Eduardo dos Santos. When SWAPO's camp at Cassinga was attacked by air and on the ground by the SADF in May 1978, a Cuban military unit stationed nearby went to the assistance of SWAPO and suffered major casualties. When the ANC camp at Nova Catengue in southern Angola was attacked by the South African Airforce the following March, the Cuban advisers there and the MK trainees, having been forewarned of the attack, were able to escape, but the camp was destroyed.³⁸ The presence of the large Cuban military force in central Angola, further north, prevented the SADF from attacking the ANC and SWAPO camps there.

Whereas PLAN continued in the late 1970s and early 1980s to take its fight into northern Namibia, MK had great difficulty getting any of its trained personnel back into South Africa and received more Soviet-bloc weaponry than it could use.³⁹ That SWAPO fought a more effective struggle against the SADF than the ANC helped it to obtain military support from a wider range of communist countries. After a SWAPO delegation led by Nujoma visited East Germany in December 1977, the GDR became a key supplier of both humanitarian and military aid to SWAPO.⁴⁰ Unlike the ANC, SWAPO also received military aid from North Korea.⁴¹

Though some in the ANC continued to deny that it was a socialist movement,⁴² its radical Marxist rhetoric increased from the late 1970s, while SWAPO's publications also began more openly to embrace Soviet and Marxist positions. In 1976, SWAPO adopted an unambiguously socialist Political Programme that spoke

³⁸ S. Davis, *The ANC's War Against Apartheid: Umkhonto we Sizwe and the Liberation of South Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018.

³⁹ Cherry, *Umkhonto*, p. 137.

⁴⁰ Ch. Saunders, "SWAPO's 'Eastern' Connections, 1966–1989", in: L. Dallywater, Ch. Saunders and H. A. Fonseca (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War 'East': Transnational Activism 1960–1990*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019, pp. 57–76. Cf. U. van der Heyden and A. Schade, "GDR Solidarity with the ANC of South Africa", in: *ibid.*, pp. 77–101 and, for SWAPO, Pasqualini, "Mapping Socialist Solidarities", chapter 2. In 1972, the East German Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) and SWAPO concluded an agreement to put cooperation between them on an official level.

⁴¹ T. van der Hoog, *Comrades Beyond the Cold War: North Korea and the Liberation of Southern Africa*, London: Hurst, 2025. In the 1980s, SWAPO officials, routinely invited to Pyongyang, publicly voiced their support for the North Korean leader Kim Il Sung.

⁴² Notably Thabo Mbeki; see M. Gevisser, *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2007.

of it as a vanguard party aiming to build “a classless, non-exploitative society based on the ideals and principles of scientific socialism”.⁴³ SWAPO and the ANC, both working more closely than before with communist actors, wished to signal to the Cubans and Soviets that they were ideologically aligned. In response to the more active intervention of communist actors from 1976, the South African government increasingly claimed it was fighting a “red peril”, that the two liberation movements were communist controlled, and that the Soviet Union wanted to take control of all southern Africa as part of a drive for world domination.

The Cuban intervention in Angola not only made possible an intensification of SWAPO’s attacks into northern Namibia, but also helped inspire internal resistance in both South Africa and Namibia, seen in the more assertive mood among Blacks in South Africa before the Soweto uprising of June 1976 and in the boost for support for SWAPO inside Namibia.⁴⁴ The SACP now looked with even more confidence to an eventual seizure of power in South Africa. Joe Slovo, the SACP’s leading intellectual, was adamant that there was “no middle road” for that country.⁴⁵

The Soviets strongly backed both the ANC and SWAPO leaderships in the face of mounting opposition from within the two movements and as the leaderships took harsh measures to crush any dissent. In the Namibian case, the so-called Shipanga rebellion involved the imprisonment in Zambia and Tanzania of those involved, and the witch-hunt for ‘spies’ in SWAPO continued in the 1980s.⁴⁶ In MK too, torture and executions began in its camps in Angola some years before the mutiny that was harshly suppressed in 1984.⁴⁷ Some Stasi-trained security person-

⁴³ Published in August 1976 by the Angolan government newspaper *Diário de Luanda*. Cf. S. Uys, “Namibia: The Socialist Dilemma”, *African Affairs* 81 (1982) 325, pp. 569–576 and R. Dreyer, *Namibia and Southern Africa: Regional Dynamics of Decolonization, 1945–1990*, London: Routledge, 1994, p. 95. For SWAPO’s socialist rhetoric, see J. Zollmann, “On SWAPO’s Socialism: Socialist Ideology and Practice during the Namibian Struggle for Independence, 1960 to 1989”, in: F. Blum, H. Kiriakou, M. Mourre et al. (dir.), *Socialismes en Afrique. Socialisms in Africa*, Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 2021, pp. 593–612 and L. Dobell, *SWAPO’s Struggle for Namibia, 1960–1991: War by Other Means* (Namibia Studies Series 3), Basel: Schlettwein, 2000. Dobell argues convincingly that SWAPO’s socialism was more rhetoric than a policy commitment.

⁴⁴ J. Brown, *The Road to Soweto*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2023.

⁴⁵ J. Slovo, “South Africa: No Middle Road”, in: B. Davidson, J. Slovo and A. B. Wilkinson (eds.), *Southern Africa: The New Politics of Resistance*, London: Penguin Books, 1976, pp. 106–207.

⁴⁶ Williams, *National Liberation*, chapter 5. Andreas Shipanga and a younger cohort of party members challenged the authority of Nujoma and his inner circle with the call for a general party congress: E. Torreguitar, *National Liberation Movements in Office: Forging Democracy with African Adjectives in Namibia*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009, p. 160; Beukes, *Long Road*, p. 231.

⁴⁷ E. g. Cherry, *Umkhonto*, p. 69. The mutiny was in part a response to MK having to fight the rebel group UNITA, after the Soviets advised the MPLA government of Angola to ask both MK

nel were directly involved in the repression that took place in the two movements in Angola. Faced with rebellion in the two movements, the leadership of both SWAPO and the ANC held onto power thanks to the continued support the Soviets gave them. At the same time, the ANC and SWAPO looked to other communist countries for support. For SWAPO, these included Cuba – children and teachers were sent to schools on that country’s Isle of Youth, for example – and North Korea. For the ANC, they included Vietnam, to which a leadership mission went in October 1978, where it received advice about the strategic direction of the struggle.⁴⁸

3 The Last Phase in the Two Struggles, 1988–1994

For a decade after 1978, the large Cuban military presence in Angola continued to thwart South African aggression there, while the Soviets and the GDR continued to provide military support for the two liberation struggles. Then, from 1988, a new phase began: six years in which the two decolonization processes reached their conclusions. In this phase, the influence of communist actors first spiked, then diminished until it fell away almost entirely.

After the Soviet military advised the Angolan army to move against UNITA in 1987, another major SADF intervention routed the Angolan army on the Lomba River in October. The following month, Castro agreed to send fifteen thousand more Cuban troops to Angola. They were critical in helping the Angolan forces in the battle of Cuito Cuanavale against the SADF. Soviet military advisers who were present have left vivid accounts of the battle,⁴⁹ but were not significant players. Cuban pilots, flying Mig-23s supplied by the Soviet Union, were, and they won air superiority in southern Angola in early 1988. That, and the advance of the Cuban military forces for the first time towards the Namibian border from March 1988,

and SWAPO to join in the fight against UNITA, in which both liberation movements took substantial losses.

48 H. Barrell, “The turn to the masses: the African National Congress’ strategic review of 1978–79”, in: *Collected Seminar Papers. Institute of Commonwealth Studies* 44 (1992), pp. 99–111; A. Jeffery, *People’s War: New Light on the Struggle for South Africa*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2019, chapter 1: “Lessons from Vietnam”.

49 I. Zhdarkin. *We Did Not See It Even in Afghanistan: Memoirs of a Participant of the Angolan War (1986–1988)*, Moscow: Memories, 2008; G. Shubin (ed.), *Bush War: The Road to Cuito Cuanavale*, Auckland Park: Jacana, 2012; G. Shubin et al. (eds.), *Cuito Cuanavale: Frontline Accounts by Soviet Soldiers*, Auckland Park: Jacana, 2015.

were the two major reasons why the South African government agreed to negotiate with Cuba and Angola for a Namibian settlement from May of that year.⁵⁰

Under Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviets sought to promote a peaceful settlement to the conflict in south-western Africa, so the Soviet Union need no longer finance the very expensive war that the Angolan government was fighting. Because of its military presence in Angola, Cuba joined that country and South Africa in the negotiations under the mediation of the United States that led to the Angola-Namibia Accords signed in December 1988. Vladilen Vasev led a Soviet delegation that was an active observer of the talks and helped put pressure on Cuba and Angola to agree to the final terms. After the Accords were signed, Cuba began to withdraw its military forces from Angola as agreed and then played no further role in the Namibian transition process. The Soviets aided the ANC by helping relocate MK from Angola to Uganda by early 1989 and assisted in setting up Operation Vula, a plan to establish an underground network for the ANC in South Africa.

Soviet relations with both the ANC and SWAPO soured, for different reasons, in early 1989. Though the International Department of the Communist Party continued to support the ANC's armed struggle, the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs was increasingly supportive of the idea of a negotiated settlement in South Africa. SWAPO was annoyed when the Soviet Union supported a proposal by the Western powers in February 1989 to reduce the size of the United Nations mission to be sent to Namibia to supervise the first democratic election there.⁵¹

The Soviet Union agreed to serve on the Joint Commission that verified the Namibian independence process and helped persuade SWAPO in April 1989 to withdraw its guerrilla fighters from northern Namibia, so enabling the process to continue. The GDR agreed to participate in the UN mission to oversee the election; the PRC sent observers.⁵² By the time, Nujoma paid a final visit to East Berlin in late August 1989, not much more than two months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Soviets had set up a diplomatic presence in Windhoek, which became the Russian embassy after Namibia's independence on 21 March 1990. As the first

50 For details, see, e.g. my review of I. Saney, *Cuba, Africa and Apartheid's End: Africa's Children Return!*, Lexington Books, 2023, in: *Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa* 77 (2023) 2, pp. 151–153.

51 Shubin has argued that in the late 1980s the Soviets strengthened their relationship with the ANC and that it was only from about 1990 that 'Uncertainty Creeps in' to the relationship: see esp. V. G. Shubin, *ANC: A View from Moscow*, Bellville: Mayibuye Books, 1999, pp. 304–320 and pp. 340–353. This interpretation has been challenged by Irina Filatova in particular, see her chapter in this volume.

52 I. Taylor, "China and SWAPO", *South African Journal of International Relations* 5 (1977) 1, pp. 110–122.

democratic election approached, SWAPO had made clear its support for a multi-party system and market-driven economy, and it accepted a liberal democratic constitution for the new independent country. With German unification, the GDR, having also opened an embassy in Windhoek, disappeared, but some Namibians retained memories of GDR support for their struggle, despite the SWAPO government in power adopting neo-liberal, not socialist policies.⁵³ Because of North Korea's support for SWAPO during the liberation struggle, it was able to win contracts to build monuments and buildings for the new government.⁵⁴ Though the PRC had tried to improve relations with the ANC and the SACP from the late 1980s,⁵⁵ it played no role in either the Namibian or the South Africa's transitions.

Without the relatively peaceful and consensual way in which Namibia moved to independence in 1989–90, the apartheid government would not have agreed to negotiate a transition to democracy in South Africa. International communism's role in that transition was indirect: the collapse, first of the Eastern European regimes in 1989 and then of communism in the Soviet Union itself, allowed the ruling apartheid regime to make the necessary compromises for a negotiated settlement.⁵⁶ The Russian activist-scholar Vladimir Shubin has suggested that the readiness of the successor regime in Russia to open up ties with the apartheid government in 1992 and distance itself from the ANC, made that government more uncompromising in the talks and so delayed the democratic outcome of 1994,⁵⁷ but that exaggerates post-Soviet Russian influence on the negotiations.

What can be argued convincingly, as Simon Adams has done, is that the SACP played a crucial role in the South African transition, though now in a very different context to that of the 1970s and 1980s.⁵⁸ Leading figures in the SACP were now influential in often surprising ways in helping to bring about and shape the nature of South Africa's political transition. Most notably, Slovo, who at the end of 1989 rejected the idea that the East European revolutions meant that socialism had failed,⁵⁹ as a leading figure in the multi-party negotiations of the early 1990s, advo-

53 The unrepentant widow of Eric Honecker of the GDR was invited to Namibia by the new government.

54 van der Hoog, *Comrades Beyond the Cold War*.

55 Weiyun and Sujiang, "China's Support", pp. 1224–1227, and pp. 1235–1236.

56 On this, see Ch. Saunders, "Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and the Ending of Apartheid in Southern Africa Reconsidered", in: Saunders, Fonseca, and Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa*, pp. 221–237.

57 Shubin, "The Soviet Union", p. 112.

58 S. Adams, *Comrade Minister: The South African Communist Party and the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy*, New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2001, p. 4.

59 J. Slovo, "Has Socialism Failed?" (n.p., 1989), <https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/slovo/1989/socialism-failed.htm>. Cf. Adams, *Comrade Minister*, pp. 105–108.

cated pragmatism and was responsible for key compromise proposals, such as the 'sunset clauses', that helped seal the settlement reached in November 1993.⁶⁰ Though the Soviet Union was by then no more, memories of Russian support for the liberation struggle remained alive in the ANC, even with a very different regime in power in Moscow.

4 Concluding Reflections

As the above sketch has shown, different communist actors were important in the three phases we have identified, playing a wide range of different roles. The PRC was significant only in the first phase. The liberation movements it came to support, SWANU and the PAC, like UNITA in Angola, lost out in the respective liberation struggles. When the PRC did eventually switch support from SWANU to SWAPO, it did so half-heartedly.⁶¹ Cuba was crucially important in both the second and third phases. Though, while compared with others' deaths, relatively few Cubans or personnel from the Soviet bloc died in conflict with the South African forces in southern Angola, over 2,000 Cubans did die in Angola and now have their names recorded on a memorial wall at Freedom Park in Pretoria.

As we have noted, communist actors sometimes played the same roles in both the South African and Namibian liberation struggles, sometimes different roles in the two cases. Of the external communist actors, in the first phase the Soviet Union and Chinese were both active, but in different ways. While the Soviets had close ties with the ANC through its link with the SACP, for a time they could not decide whether to support SWANU or SWAPO⁶² and only gradually built close relations with the latter, as SWANU openly declared its pro-Chinese sympathies. It was not until 1976, however, that formal bilateral relations were established between the CPSU and SWAPO.⁶³

In the second of our three phases, it was the Cubans who were most influential in providing active support to the two Southern African liberation movements, using Soviet weaponry and logistical assistance. As SWAPO and the ANC established their presence in Angola, a number of other communist players be-

60 J. Slovo, *The Unfinished Autobiography*, Randburg: Ravan Press, 1995.

61 In the 1970s, however, the PRC did support SWAPO in Namibia at the UN Security Council, voting for UN Security Council Resolution 435 in 1978, for example.

62 Shubin gives two reasons for this: that SWANU and SWAPO were both members of the short-lived United Front and that SWANU projected itself as more national than SWAPO, Shubin, *Hot Cold War*, p. 195.

63 Shubin, *Hot Cold War*, p. 217.

sides the Soviet Union and Cuba then became active in providing support: other countries in the Soviet bloc, such as the GDR and Czechoslovakia as well as North Korea and, most prominently in Europe, the Italian Communist Party.⁶⁴ In the third phase, there was no longer the need for communist military support, while the collapse of communist regimes in Europe helped make possible the South African transition to constitutional democracy.

Perhaps the most striking difference between the South African and Namibian cases was the role of the communists who, in the South African case, operated as members of a Communist Party. Members of the SACP, having played a crucial role in establishing MK, were responsible for such successes as it had in the 1980s, from the Special Operations launched from 1980 to the infiltration of MK personnel back into South Africa, before and after Operation Vula was launched in the late 1980s. From 1985, the communist journal *Umsebenzi* was influential in South African trade union circles. Then, in the transition from 1990, communists such as Slovo, Chris Hani, and Ronnie Kasrils helped steer the country towards a democratic settlement. Throughout these years, the SACP remained in a formal alliance with the ANC (along with the trade union federation COSATU), and when the first democratic election took place in 1994, it did not stand as a separate party of the left but sought instead to influence the ANC from within the tripartite alliance to advance socialist policies. Despite having had little success in this in the first three decades of democracy, the SACP remains in the alliance.⁶⁵ All this helps set South Africa apart from Namibia.

Without assistance from the Soviet bloc, the ANC and SWAPO could not have continued their armed struggles. The interventions of the Cubans in 1975–76 and again in 1987–88 were vital to the ultimate success of those struggles. The PRC played a minor role, as did North Korea. So different communist actors helped shape the two decolonization processes in both similar and different ways. While some of the relevant archives in Russia have been opened, those of the PRC and of SWAPO remain closed and it is not known whether an MK archive exists. If the closed archives are ever opened, a clearer picture should emerge of the roles of the various communist actors in the two liberation struggles. It will then be time for this brief outline to be revised and extended.

⁶⁴ On the PCI as well as Cuba and the GDR, see the chapter by Arianna Pasqualini in this volume.

⁶⁵ V. Padayachee and R. van Niekerk, *Shadow of Liberation: Contestation and Compromise in the Economic and Social Policy of the African National Congress, 1943–1996*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019.

Irina Filatova

11 Soviet Public Engagements with the ANC: Disillusionments and Pressures

1 Context

The main goals of Mikhail Gorbachev's "new thinking" in foreign policy were a rapprochement with the West and a reduction of the arms race, which had become a serious burden for the Soviet economy. To achieve these objectives, among other things, the USSR needed to withdraw from several "local conflicts" which were, in effect, proxy wars with the West. Thus Gorbachev's idea of resolving such conflicts through negotiations by peaceful means. The 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) held in February-March 1986 turned this idea into the party's official policy, and in November, the Politburo of its Central Committee (CC) resolved "to strengthen political factors at the expense of military ones" in Southern Africa.¹ These innovations ushered in a new era in the relations of the USSR not only with the West, but also with liberation movements throughout the world. The African National Congress (the ANC), a long-time Soviet ally, was one of these.

The changing situation in Eastern Europe and the USSR became a defining factor behind the decision of F. W. De Klerk, South Africa's president at the time, to unban the ANC and other political parties and repeal the apartheid laws. However, historians mostly fail to recognize the significance of the Gorbachev factor in South Africa's peaceful transition to democracy.² This can probably be explained by a perhaps unconscious unwillingness to spoil the glamorous narrative of South Africa's peaceful transition to democracy achieved through the efforts of the masses and the courage and tenacity of liberation fighters alone, without any significant external influences. And for those in Russia and in South Africa, who never reconciled themselves to the collapse of the USSR and the Eastern bloc and to the demise of the communist movement, there is an additional reason to omit Gorbachev from the liberation narrative. They see him as a traitor of the communist cause

1 A. Adamishin, *Beloie solntse Angoly* [The White Sun of Angola], Moscow: Vagrius, 2001, p. 63.

2 Chris Saunders details exactly this in "Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and the Ending of Apartheid in Southern Africa Reconsidered", in: Ch. Saunders, H. A. Fonseca, and L. Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023, p. 222.

and blame him for destroying the USSR. No one in these quarters is prepared to admit that anything at all good could have emerged from Gorbachev's policies. My view of the importance of Gorbachev's innovations in opening the minds of both the De Klerk government and the ANC leaders to the process of a negotiated settlement in South Africa and thus enhancing the possibility of a peaceful transition³ provoked sharp criticism, first and foremost from Vladimir Shubin, who "strongly disagreed" that the collapse of the Soviet system speeded up the end of apartheid.⁴ He particularly objected to my statement that "paradoxically, the Soviet Union's greatest contribution to the fall of apartheid was not its military assistance to the ANC but its change of heart about this organisation and then its own collapse".⁵

Shubin quotes Oliver Tambo, the ANC president, who, in August 1986, "when there was no real threat to that [Soviet] system", mentioned to him "the possibility of ending the ANC's armed struggle and the eradication of the racist regime by political means in the future".⁶ He presents this as proof of the intention of the ANC to follow the route of a negotiated settlement before the collapse of the USSR and thus independently of Gorbachev's "perestroika". This episode is also present in Shubin's book, although there Tambo suggests only "the possibility of suspending the armed struggle, depending on how events would develop".⁷

Indeed, South Africa's peaceful transition to democracy was made possible by a plethora of factors, but Gorbachev's new approach to foreign policy certainly created a powerful impulse for some of these factors to emerge and grow in a direction which had been unthinkable just a year earlier.

By the time of Shubin's conversation with Tambo, events were developing fast. One South African delegation after another came to Lusaka to meet ANC officials. The ANC was already meeting representatives of South Africa's big business, and Tambo had spoken with Pieter de Lange, chairman of the Afrikaner Broeder-

3 For example, I. Filatova and A. Davidson, *The Hidden Thread: The Soviet Union and South Africa*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2013, chapters 16, 18, and Postscript; I. Filatova, "Gorbachev's 'Perestroika' and the South African Negotiated Settlement", in: A. S. Balezin, S. V. Mazov, and I. Filatova (eds.), *Miroliubiie i mirotvorchestvo v Afrike. K 90-letiiu akademika Apollona Borisoviča Davidsona* [Peace Making and Peace Loving in Africa: For the 90th Anniversary of Apollon Borisovich Davidson], Moscow: "Ves Mir" Publishers, 2019, pp. 248–277.

4 For example, V. Shubin. "South Africa and the End of the Cold War", *Cold War History*, 24 (2024) 2, p. 337.

5 I. Filatova. "Comrade Mandela's Legacy to the ANC", *Daily Dispatch*, 19 November 2013, <https://www.dispatchlive.co.za/news/opinion/2013-11-19-comrade-mandelas-legacy-to-the-anc/>.

6 Shubin, "South Africa and the End of the Cold War", p. 337.

7 V. G. Shubin, *Afrikanskii natsionalny kongress v gody podpolia i vooruzhennoi borby* [The African National Congress in the years of underground and the armed struggle], Moscow: Africa Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 1999, p. 327.

bond – a secret powerful organisation which was considered a backbone of the apartheid regime. Tambo had also established a connection with the State Department and in September would meet Chester Crocker, the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. In March 1986, after the CPSU's 27th Congress, he suggested to Anatoly Dobrynin, the new head of the International Department of the CPSU's CC, that the Soviets consider a possibility of acting against apartheid together with Washington. So, Tambo had every reason to believe that the ANC's armed struggle could be suspended if events continued to develop in the same direction. Few of these events, however, could have taken place without Gorbachev's new policies.

Gorbachev's "perestroika" changed not only the global and regional political scenes. Its major thrust was to change the USSR itself, to renew Soviet society. It certainly succeeded in this, though in ways which Gorbachev could not possibly predict. But even these internal changes affected South Africa, or rather, affected those South Africans who watched them, both from inside South Africa and in exile. Their personal, non-institutionalized engagements and impressions did not lead directly to any major political decisions, but created the context in which such decisions were taken.

This chapter discusses Gorbachev-era interactions and engagements between the Soviet public and South Africans, both in person and indirect, through the media. Such engagements exposed South Africans to evolving Soviet views of the world, of South Africa, and of the ANC. There were no opinion polls in the USSR and nobody polled the ANC and its followers, so one can only gauge the shifts in their respective views from the media, memoirs, accounts of personal meetings, and interviews. On the basis of these sources, the author presents the evolution of the attitudes of the Soviet public to South Africa and to the ANC and the reactions of the ANC cadres and their allies to this evolution. This highlights an important aspect of the influence of Gorbachev's reforms on the process of South Africa's peaceful transition to democracy: the newly emerged agency of Soviet public opinion.

The changes in Soviet policies, introduced by Gorbachev in 1985–1991, although gradual and wrapped in traditional Soviet ideological terminology, were so drastic that it was difficult for the ANC leadership, which hitherto had few differences with the Soviet line, to adjust to them. The major elements of Gorbachev's reforms were "glasnost", the opening of Soviet public space, "perestroika", a set of reforms aimed at liberalising the Soviet economy, and the "new thinking" in the international arena. The main problem for the ANC seemed to be this third element, with its stress on resolving "local conflicts" by peaceful means. Among such conflicts was the war in Angola which had cost the USSR billions of dollars and from which it clearly wanted to disengage. The camps of the ANC's military

wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), in Angola would be in danger if Soviet military assistance to this country ceased. Soviet rapprochement with the West and peaceful resolutions of local conflicts contradicted the ANC's "strategic objective" of the "revolutionary seizure of power" by military means, proclaimed over several decades in multiple official documents. The ANC's national conference held in June 1985 in Kabwe (Zambia) stressed the need to intensify the armed struggle.⁸ The ANC's official goals of "the overthrow of the racist regime and the seizure of power by the people" were still intact in its confidential document of 1987.⁹ Though Tambo may have spoken privately of the possibility of suspending the armed struggle, a negotiated settlement was not part of the political vocabulary or imagination of the ANC's cadres. Many among the ANC and SACP leadership did not agree with Gorbachev's innovations.¹⁰

But initially Gorbachev excluded liberation movements from his peace initiatives and expressed support for the ANC's armed struggle at both official events and closed meetings.¹¹ So, as long as the ANC leadership continued to use its usual channels of communication with the Soviets, most importantly the International Department of the CC, with the same familiar and trusted people in charge, and as long as the CC remained the main decision-making body in the USSR, the ANC got what it asked for and even had some leverage in defining Soviet policy in Southern Africa. According to Shubin, then an official at the International Department, the ANC did not object to the negotiated settlement of the Angolan conflict and even wanted the USSR to play a more active role in the Angolan peace process. Tambo raised this issue during meetings with Gorbachev and Dobrynin on 4 November 1986.¹² In May 1987, the Soviets asked Tambo if the ANC would object to the USSR establishing a direct line of communication with South Africa which it needed if it were to participate in the negotiations on Angola. Tambo agreed only in September, during a closed meeting of Cuban, ANC, and Soviet officials in Moscow. Even then he wanted to delay this move until the ANC had "a clearer picture" of Pretoria's intentions.¹³

This confidential September 1987 meeting was a highly consequential event, as the participants discussed a whole range of burning issues which concerned the ANC and its policy in the rapidly changing political situation. One of the most

8 *Sechaba*, August 1985, p. 2.

9 "Broad Guidelines on the Organs of People's Power. ANC, confidential discussion document, c. 1987", Bodleian Library, Howard Barrell Papers, MSS, Afr s 2151, box 4, A24, L. 1.

10 Author's interview with E. Pahad, Cape Town, 3 April 2000.

11 Shubin, *Afrikanskii natsionalny congress*, pp. 342–343.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 331.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 346–347.

important issues raised was the need for the ANC to define and publicly announce its position on the possibility of a negotiated settlement in South Africa. Another was the ANC's request to significantly increase the number of MK cadres in Soviet tertiary military institutions. The ANC also had several requests in connection with the unfolding operation "Vula", a part of its underground activities in South Africa. All these requests met a positive response.¹⁴

In early October 1987, the ANC leadership adopted "The Consensus" on negotiations. This text reflected the duality of the organization's approach to this issue. On the one hand, it stated that, as "the world was turning to negotiated resolutions of conflicts", ultimately negotiations were possible in South Africa too. On the other hand, it declared that Pretoria was not ready for "meaningful negotiations", which would turn South African into a "united non-racial democracy". So, the armed struggle had to continue, in order to weaken the regime and create advantageous conditions for such negotiations.¹⁵ This dual approach became the ANC's official line, propagated by the ANC leadership in different documents and at different fora. It was incorporated, for example, in the new SACP programme adopted in 1989 at its seventh Congress¹⁶ and in the important "Harare Declaration", prepared by the ANC and adopted by the OAU sub-committee on Southern Africa on 21 August 1989.¹⁷

In March 1989, a high-level ANC delegation headed by Tambo visited Moscow. Neither Gorbachev nor Edward Shevardnadze, the foreign minister, received the delegation, but it was assured that the Soviet attitude to the ANC remained unchanged. In just a few months, with the opening of the First Congress of People's Deputies, the decision-making power in the USSR started to move from the CPSU to the government, and for the first time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed doubts about some military equipment designated for delivery to the ANC. But the ANC still received most of what it asked for, and the supplies continued until the last days of the USSR.¹⁸

The outcome of the negotiations that brought independence to Namibia left the ANC in an extremely vulnerable position. It had to relocate the MK to Tanzania and Uganda. According to Shubin, the Soviets did not exercise any pressure on the ANC and merely assisted the relocation. Tambo did not conceal that the

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 347, 355–356.

¹⁵ "ANC Statement on Negotiations. October 9th, 1987", *Sechaba*, December 1987, pp. 3–5.

¹⁶ "The Path to Power. Programme of the South African Communist Party adopted at the 7th Congress, 1989", *The African Communist* 118 (3rd Quarter 1989), pp. 124–125.

¹⁷ "Declaration of the OAU Ad-hoc Committee on Southern Africa on the Question of South Africa", *Sechaba*, October 1989, pp. 2–5.

¹⁸ Shubin, *Afrikaniskii natsionalny kongress*, pp. 372–373.

move was a big blow which was bound to cripple the ANC's military wing, but by then there was nothing he could do. The negotiations also revealed a bigger problem for the ANC. As Shubin pointed out, they "served as a kind of warning to the ANC. Its leadership realized that it could face the inevitability of negotiations with Pretoria, even if they still considered them premature."¹⁹

In fact, the ANC was already involved in talks about negotiations along several lines. The imprisoned Nelson Mandela met government ministers from late 1985. At the same time, several ANC leaders started to meet representatives of South Africa's big business, some of whom were members of the Broederbond. In June 1989, several ANC leaders met top officials of the South African National Intelligence Service.²⁰ The ANC duly informed its friends in Moscow of these meetings. Shubin wrote: "In Moscow, we followed these developments step by step from late 1985 until July 1989, by which time the picture was clear."²¹ In these circumstances it was difficult for the ANC to object to Moscow's own initiatives at direct contacts and even negotiations with South Africa.

Whatever doubts the ANC leaders had about Gorbachev's policy, they managed to navigate his political innovations successfully and even to turn them to their advantage. Relying on the all-important though gradually diminishing power of its traditional allies in the CPSU's CC for getting military and logistical support, the ANC leadership simultaneously used the new global situation to move much further on the road to achieving its goal of defeating apartheid through negotiations and propaganda than it had in the several preceding decades by its armed struggle. There was, however, one element in Gorbachev's USSR that the ANC proved unable to understand, let alone accept. This element was "glasnost", or rather the way the Soviet public used it where the ANC and South Africa were concerned. Before the Gorbachev era, the views and opinions of Soviet citizens were invisible to the ANC. Its leaders seemed to be unaware of the growing disconnect between official Soviet policy and what the Soviet public thought of it.

The ANC cadres and leaders did not mix with Soviet "people in the street". They only met with "a small team of comrades you could count on one hand".²² This "small team" included key Soviet officials from the International Department of the CPSU's CC, in whose power it was to mobilize and release the resources of

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 366–368.

²⁰ A. Sparks, *Tomorrow is Another Country: The Inside Story of South Africa's Negotiated Revolution*, Johannesburg: Struik Book Distributors, 1994, pp. 109–110.

²¹ V. Shubin, *ANC: A View from Moscow*, Bellville: Mayibuye Books, 1999, p. 358.

²² R. Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous: From Undercover Struggle to Freedom*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2004, p. 205.

the Soviet state for the ANC. The ANC leaders may have thought that these people represented the views and opinions of the whole Soviet population, but this was not always the case. Views expressed by the Russians in the public sphere in the late 1980s and early 1990s caught the ANC unprepared.

2 South Africa and the Soviet Public before Perestroika

There was a world of difference between the way South Africa was presented in the Soviet media before perestroika and by the end of the Gorbachev era. But the shift in Soviets' attitudes to South Africa at that time may have been less dramatic than it seemed.

The Soviet official narrative about South Africa remained the same for several decades after the National Party's rise to power. As a South African Sovietologist rightly noted, "South Africa had long been a 'dead' subject in Soviet official circles. The official policy spelled out by the International Department of the Central Committee was unassailable dogma."²³

"Apartheid", the *Pravda* wrote in 1957, was "a mixture of Nazism and colonial regimes."²⁴ It was a "typical regime of Nazi totalitarianism, the regime of a Fascist dictatorship", it repeated in 1959.²⁵ South Africa "was modelled after the Nazi pattern" and its laws were "very much like those in the Nazi Reich", *Izvestia* reiterated in 1982.²⁶ Unlike depictions of other countries, even of Soviet Cold-War enemies, which contained some information that was neutral or positive (for example, about their culture and literature), South Africa's image in the Soviet media was reliably negative and gloomy: arrests, horrendous prison terms and torture, the bombing of the ANC camps in Angola, raids against the ANC in the neighbouring countries, and more arrests. All this was presented against the backdrop of the recurrent picture of the wealth of South African whites, who "got for themselves the large, most fertile and developed part of the country's territory",²⁷ and now "gained untold riches by enslaving and exploiting the non-white population".²⁸

²³ P. Nel, "Perception, Images and Stereotypes in Soviet-South African Relations – a Cognitive-Interpretive Perspective", *Universiteit van Stellenbosch Annale* 4 (1992), p. 48.

²⁴ *Pravda*, 11 March 1957.

²⁵ *Pravda*, 14 April 1959.

²⁶ *Izvestia*, 18 March 1982.

²⁷ *Pravda*, 29 July 1972.

²⁸ *Pravda*, 14 April 1959.

But while the Soviet public could see that the South African regime was horrible and that the struggle against it was just and brave, people also knew that in their own country they could not attempt anything remotely as brazen as a public anti-government protest, even if peaceful. The fact that all defendants in the Treason Trial were acquitted showed that South Africa had independent courts which their own country did not. While the demand to release Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners was sincerely supported, in the USSR, people were sentenced to long prison terms or kept in mental hospitals for such “crimes” as publishing abroad a text critical of the USSR, or reading a banned book, or for their religious beliefs, which deviated from the officially allowed religions. South African aggression against Angola did not look much different from Soviet interventions in Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Afghanistan in 1979. Neither the existence of passes, nor the arrests of dissidents, nor censorship in South Africa could impress the Soviets, for whom these were daily realities. Repeated over and over against the context of the evolving Soviet political scene and the worsening economic situation, the Soviet media’s hyped outrage at atrocities in a far-away country could seem hypocritical, over-stretched, and hollow, even to those who sincerely supported the ANC’s cause.

Moreover, the majority of the population was too alienated to care about South Africa’s problems or to discuss them: ordinary folk had more than enough problems of their own. However just, noble, and heroic it might have been, the ANC struggle was on the deep periphery of the majority of Soviet people’s lives and minds.²⁹

And there was yet another reason to dampen the Russians’ enthusiasm about the ANC. In the 1960s and 1970s, the USSR assisted many liberation movements but when they came to power, they often turned for support to the West and did not join the Soviet “anti-imperialist” cause in the international arena. Disillusionment with the revolutionary potential of liberation movements and their reliability as Soviet allies reached the top echelons of Soviet power. Memos written by Karen Brutents, deputy head of the International Department of the CC, to the

²⁹ Soviet academics working on subjects dealing with international relations were sometimes sent to give lectures at plants and factories in different parts of the country to keep the working class “politically educated”. In the mid-1970s, I was sent to the city of Oryol to speak about Africa at two factories and a sewing workshop. My audiences were gloomy and uninterested. How could they be interested in Africa’s problems when they knew that in the evening, they would be driven to a collective farm to pluck potatoes out of the freezing wet soil with their bare hands in icy rain or snow: there was an emergency due to a sudden cold front. Life was too difficult for the Soviet “man in the street” to feel passionate about struggles in a far-off African country.

CPSU's Politburo in the late 1970s and early 1980s are testimony to this.³⁰ Later, several top Soviet officials of the Central Committee and the Foreign Ministry reflected on such disillusionment in their memoirs.³¹

None of these undercurrent tendencies were visible to the ANC, and before "glasnost" they did not really matter. Irrespective of their views, the Soviet people would, when asked, attend meetings of solidarity and other events connected with South Africa. And there were many of these. In Moscow, the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee alone organized yearly public meetings on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and a Week of Solidarity with the Fighting Peoples of Southern Africa with public meetings, lectures, exhibitions, and presentations by public figures. Public meetings to commemorate Soweto Day were organized on 16 June with invitations extended to South African students who studied in the USSR.³² Apart from the Solidarity Committee, similar events were organized by the Soviet Peace Committee, the Soviet Women's Committee, and the Union of Friendship Societies. They also took place in many other cities and in all Soviet republics. To the ANC, all these activities with resolutions demanding the liberation of political prisoners and the end of repression and apartheid, served as convincing evidence of unanimous support for their struggle by the Soviet population, not just by the Soviet authorities.

3 Media Exchanges

There were no immediate shifts in Soviet media representations of South Africa after Gorbachev announced his new vision of Soviet foreign policy. 1985 did not bring any change at all, although the increasingly violent repressions against the widening and radicalising mass protest in South Africa gave rich material to enliven the tired Soviet clichés. In 1986, more dramatic events, such as the national state of emergency, the arrests of leaders and activists of the United Democratic

30 O. A. Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Makings of Our Times*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 284–285; O. A. Westad, "Moscow and the Angolan Crisis, 1974–1976: A New Pattern of Intervention, New Evidence on the Cold War in the Third World and the Collapse of Detente in the 1970s", *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 8–9 (1996/1997), p. 21.

31 See, for example, A. Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents*, Washington: Washington University Press, 2001; Adamishin, *Beloie solntse Angoly*; G. I. Mirskij, *Zhizn v trekh epokhakh* [Life in Three Eras], Moscow, 2001.

32 V. G. Solodovnikov, Speech at the International Seminar on South Africa (Paris, 28 April–2 May 1975), V. G. Solodovnikov's archive.

Front (UDF), and South Africa's bombing of "ANC bases" in several neighbouring countries, led to a sharp increase in the number of items about South Africa in the Soviet media.³³

The same year, in a paper presented at a Soviet-African conference, Gleb Starushenko, deputy director of the Africa Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, suggested that "the ANC might work out comprehensive guarantees for the white population which could be implemented after the elimination of the apartheid regime". The parliament in the new South Africa, he continued,

might consist of two chambers: one formed on the basis of proportional representation and the other, possessing the right of veto, on the basis of equal representation of four [racial] communities [. . .]. Concrete questions of the functioning of such a system might be the object of a national conference, its main participants being the government of the Republic of South Africa and true representatives of the non-white population.³⁴

Starushenko probably did not know that in this passage he was breaking a whole range of ANC taboos regarding a post-apartheid South Africa, but for the South African media, which the ANC thought of as conservative and hostile, this was a propaganda coup. Unintentionally, Starushenko may have reflected a view, widely held by the Soviets at the time, i.e. that minority rights, particularly the rights of the white population, should be protected after the end of apartheid for the good of the country, if not just out of racial solidarity. Essop Pahad remembered: "I had to say to him [Starushenko]: 'You don't understand South Africa. You are placing too much emphasis on white South Africans [. . .].'"³⁵

A year later, Victor Goncharov, another deputy director of the Africa Institute, gave an "unfortunate" interview to a South African correspondent. He said that although the USSR had not changed its attitude to apartheid, it was "prepared to act more realistically, more flexibly, with every side participating". But, he

33 *Pravda* articles on South Africa for June and July 1986 are testimony to this. 13 June: "Claps of the Anti-Racist Thunder". 14 June: "Crisis of the Apartheid Regime". 15 June: "Cruel Repression". 16 June: "South Africa: The Year 1976 . . . the Year 1986". 17 June: "Bastions of Apartheid under Siege. The General Strike of the South African Workers"; "The Day of Actions against Apartheid". 18 June: "No Place for Racism on Earth". 8 July: "Situation in South Africa". "Independence to Namibia!". 11 July: "Redoubts of Racism under Siege". 18 July: "The Chronicle of Reprisals and Repression". 19 July: "Determination Cannot Be Broken".

34 G. B. Starushenko, *Problemy borby protiv rasizma, aparteida i kolonializma na Yuge Afriki* [Problems of Struggle Against Racism, Apartheid and Colonialism in Southern Africa]. *Doklad na II sovetsko-afrikanskoi nauchno-politicheskoi konferentsii "Za mir, sotrudnichestvo i sotsialnyi progress, Moskva, 24–26 iyunia 1986 g."* [Paper presented at the Soviet-African Academic-political Conference "For Peace, Cooperation and Social Progress. Moscow, 24–26 June 1986"], Moscow: Africa Institute, Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1986, p. 9.

35 Author's interview with Pahad.

said, it also expected more “flexibility” and “objectivity” and less use of “dogmatic formulations” from the ANC. He also expressed his anxiety about the fact that “some ANC members wanted a socialist revolution, not the national liberation” which should come first.³⁶ This open criticism of the ANC by a high-ranking Soviet academic was again widely and triumphantly quoted in the unfriendly South African media³⁷ and brought unhappy ANC complaints to Soviet officials.

In the Soviet media, 1987 brought a significant shift. Though *Pravda* stuck to its traditional line, covering the same topics and presenting them in the same style,³⁸ other newspapers started to diversify their writing on South Africa, with non-political stories on culture, science, and literature, and friendlier descriptions of whites. Until then, the Soviet narrative usually presented the whites who were not ANC or SACP members as devils incarnate. But in April 1987, *Ogoniok*, a weekly and a luminary of perestroika, published an admiring article about Christian Barnard,³⁹ and in October, *Izvestia* followed with a warm description of André Brink’s visit to the International Book Fair in Moscow.⁴⁰

The most significant development in the approach of the Soviet media to South Africa came with a series of articles by Boris Asoyan, at that time an academic at the Africa Institute and soon to be a high-ranking Soviet diplomat. In July 1987, *Literaturnaia Gazeta* published his essay on South Africa. “For those who see the South African drama only in the ‘black and white’ context, much of what is happening today cannot be put into a familiar framework”, Asoyan wrote. “There are many more actors than appears at first glance, and their roles and interests often deceive expectations.” White workers, he continued, were the backbone of apartheid, progressive political innovations were coming from the very top, and P. W. Botha’s reforms were working, resulting in deep changes in South African society.⁴¹ This was a direct challenge to the ANC’s view of the socio-political situation in South Africa.⁴² Another one of Asoyan’s articles, published in the same paper in October,⁴³ evoked a response from Pallo Jordan, a member of the ANC’s National Executive and an administrative secretary of its secretariat.

³⁶ *Work in Progress*, 48, pp. 6, 7.

³⁷ See, for example, *Pretoria News*, 11 June 1987.

³⁸ For example: “South Africa: Repressions against the Strikers”, “Despite Repressions”, “Miners’ Courage is Unbreakable”, “The Strike Is Over, but the Struggle Continues”, “Determination to Prevail”.

³⁹ *Ogoniok*, 1987, 14, p. 1.

⁴⁰ *Izvestia*, 24 October 1987.

⁴¹ *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 29, 15 July 1987.

⁴² UCT, Manuscripts and Archives, BC1081, P18.13.1

⁴³ *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 41, 7 October 1987.

He criticized Asoyan's depiction of Soviet policy in Africa as "ideological",⁴⁴ by which, judging by his text, he meant "hostile".

In 1988, the tone of the Soviet media narrative on South Africa shifted further. One could still come across titles like "police at universities",⁴⁵ or a reference to the South African government as "aggressors".⁴⁶ But the term "nazis" was no longer associated with the "regime", but rather with the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging, the Afrikaner ultra-right nationalist "Resistance Movement", whose goals were to keep apartheid intact and rid the country not only of the "satanic contagion of Marxism and communism", but also of the "Euro-Westminster parliamentary system".⁴⁷ There were now many more diverse, detailed, and balanced materials about South Africa, devoid of the habitual stale language. Much attention was paid to the negotiations on Namibia and Angola, with news items getting ever more positive.⁴⁸ Even P. W. Botha's visit to Mozambique was presented in a positive light.⁴⁹

The major 1988 novelty, however, was the first visit of a Soviet journalist to South Africa. Boris Piliatskin, who usually reported on South Africa from Mozambique, spent two months in the country. For the first time, the Russian reader was given a taste of the "real" South Africa. Interviews with top politicians from De Klerk and Andries Treurnicht, leader of the Conservative Party, to Winnie Mandela; real conversations, real scenes – all this brought South Africa to life and made it look more colourful, diverse, and, indeed, more attractive.⁵⁰ But the majority of Piliatskin's interviewees were white; Winnie Mandela was the only freedom fighter whom he interviewed. He wrote of her admiringly and devoted much space to her – but only at the end of his reportage, at the very end of his last article. Of course, his visit had to be approved by the ANC leaders – and it was. But they were annoyed by the fact that much of Piliatskin's programme was arranged and paid for by the South African Department of Foreign Affairs and

44 P. Jordan, *The Southern African Policy of the Soviet Union – with Specific Reference to South Africa. Some Notes*, Lusaka, February 1990, Typescript, p. 10, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/sacp/1990/soviet-union.htm>.

45 *Izvestia*, 18 October 1988.

46 *Pravda*, 9 October 1987.

47 *Izvestia*, 13 August 1988; 29 August 1988.

48 For example, "The Land Will Cool Down from Battles" (*Pravda*, 223, 10 August 1988); "Negotiations Give Hope" (*Izvestia*, 26 August 1988); "The Success of Negotiations" (*Pravda*, 15 December 1988).

49 *Izvestia*, 261, 16 September 1988.

50 *Izvestia*, e.g. 23 October 1988; 25 November 1988.

that this did show in his coverage.⁵¹ They were also upset that the visit was used by South African propaganda: the pro-government *Sunday Times* translated and published Piliatskin's first article, where there was not a word of the ANC and its struggle.⁵²

In December, *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, the official paper of the Young Communists League, published an article which, unlike Piliatskin's reports, went almost unnoticed, but which, in fact, opened a new chapter in Soviet coverage of South Africa. Having quoted Gorbachev's call for the "deideologization of international relations", it advocated establishing full-scale diplomatic, cultural, and economic relations with both South Africa and Israel, another hitherto pariah state for Soviet media.⁵³

1989 saw a major political event in the history of perestroika. The First Congress of People's Deputies, the new supreme body of state power, started its work in May. The election campaign, accompanied by free and open debates between competing platforms and candidates, and the televised sessions of the Congress, which the whole country watched, created a political atmosphere in which the media and the public felt free to say what they liked. Some results of this newly felt freedom were highly offensive to the ANC.

There were no denunciations of the Pretoria regime in the Soviet media coverage of Southern Africa at all that year. News was good and increasingly enthusiastically covered.⁵⁴ More Soviet journalists visited South Africa and published their impressions, mostly favourable. In May 1989, two Soviet journalists published their interview with Kobus Meiring, deputy minister of foreign affairs, who said: "We have to say goodbye to apartheid. We must reform the country. And we are ready to share power and the material assets of the country."⁵⁵ Such declarations created the impression among the Soviet public that the ANC's struggle was no longer needed.

"I am an internationalist, and I consider it right that we assist underdeveloped countries not only politically, but also economically", a reader's letter to *Izvestia* read. "But [. . .] aren't we too carried away by assisting other countries at the expense of our own interests, the interests of Soviet people?" The paper quoted the letter with the comment: "This topic was raised by several speakers at

51 Shubin, *Afrikanskii natsionalny konkress*, p. 349.

52 *The Sunday Times*, 1 January 1989.

53 *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, 22 December 1988, pp. 3, 4.

54 For, example, "South African Diplomats in Angola" (*Izvestia*, 24 February 1989); "Peace to Southern Africa" (*Pravda*, 9 February 1989); "To Peace through Dialogue" (*Krasnaia zvezda*, 5 September 1989); "ANC Flags Over the Columns" (*Izvestia*, 30 October 1989).

55 *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 17 May 1989.

the Congress of People's Deputies." The article went on to list multiple failed Soviet projects and losses in Africa and ended with the statement: "It may well be time to look at the whole picture of our economic relations with Africa critically, to work out a realistically balanced and, of course, mutually beneficial programme of action for the future."⁵⁶ Never before did the ANC leaders hear the Soviets speak of the interests of their own country as separate from those of "progressive humanity", but in the late USSR, such views were becoming normal.

The first, and, as far as I know, only Soviet publication to which the ANC replied publicly in the Soviet media,⁵⁷ was Boris Asoyan's analytical article "South African Lessons" in *Pravda*. "In the situation where the confrontational fog is lifting in the international arena", Asoyan wrote, "much in South Africa looks different, and events taking place there do not fit into the habitual propaganda framework." In his description, P. W. Botha's reforms created a society in which social divisions were gradually substituting for racial barriers, where levels of salaries of blacks and whites were getting closer, and where the new black middle class was striving for stability and a peaceful resolution of the "existing conflict". F. W. De Klerk, the new leader of the National Party, offered a five-year plan for deconstructing apartheid, and many among the white community discussed the need to negotiate with anti-apartheid forces. The ANC was mentioned only once, as "doubtlessly one of the leading forces of the revolutionary process" together with many others. "It became clear", Asoyan wrote, "that not only white extremism, but also extreme radicalism in the black community may become a serious destabilising factor."⁵⁸

Asoyan repeated much of what he wrote earlier in *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, but went further, and the ANC must have been particularly stung by the fact that such an article could appear in the official organ of the CPSU – a clear sign that the Soviet party was betraying its allies. Its reply followed on 1 October. It was carefully crafted, detailed, and calm, but an occasional sarcasm betrayed the author's fury. The article was appropriately penned by Joe Slovo, at that time SACP's general secretary. "The author makes the correct conclusion that De Klerk's five-year plan is the means of modernising apartheid", Slovo wrote. "By coincidence this is also the opinion of most of the conservative press in the West." He went on to list the South African "realities" which were, in his view, in stark contrast to

⁵⁶ *Izvestia*, 19 June 1989.

⁵⁷ *The African Communist*, however, published a critical review of Asoyan's book *South Africa: What Lies Ahead?*, Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1989 and of his article "Time to Gather Stones Together", *International Affairs* 9 (1988), pp. 67–77: T. Z., "An Oversimplified Approach", *African Communist* 118 (3rd Quarter, 1989), pp. 63–68.

⁵⁸ *Pravda*, 20 August 1989.

Asoyan's rosy picture. Slovo was seriously annoyed by Asoyan's downgrading the ANC to the role of "one of the leading forces of the revolutionary process" – "just as the Pretoria regime and Margaret Thatcher do". In reality, he wrote, "the overwhelming majority of mass democratic organisations [. . .] openly recognise the ANC's leading role". Finally, Slovo stressed that, "probably more out of ignorance, than intention", Asoyan presented Botha's reforms "as served on a platter by the government", while they were the result of the struggle of the anti-apartheid movement. Slovo attributed Asoyan's "mistakes" to his wish "to fit reality into an abstract and universalised strategic concept". "We, in the South African revolutionary movement", he concluded, using Asoyan's words, "'greet the lifting of the confrontational fog'. But the fog of unjustified conciliatoriness may be more harmful for a correct analysis."⁵⁹

Slovo, who followed Gorbachev's policy closely, was not an opponent of perestroika. He accepted the need to democratize communist parties, including his own, and spoke of the possibility, under certain circumstances, for South Africa to move to socialism through national democratic reforms.⁶⁰ In a discussion paper presented in December 1989, Slovo denounced Stalinism, defended Gorbachev, discussed the wrongs of the Marxist-Leninist principle of the "dictatorship of the proletariat", spoke about the need for a multi-party democracy, criticized the Soviet economy, and even declared that "the way forward" was "through thorough-going democratic socialism",⁶¹ until then a swear word in the communist vocabulary. Slovo's new vision found its way to the new 1989 SACP programme, "Path to Power", though on a very modest scale.⁶² But he obviously understood and drew a clear distinction between Gorbachev's ideas and what he saw as undermining the inter-

⁵⁹ *Pravda*, 1 October 1989.

⁶⁰ Until then, the SACP held the view that South Africa was the only country on the African continent in which socialism could be achieved through a straightforward socialist revolution or through the development of the national-democratic revolution into a socialist one, without a period of reform. Slovo publicized this view in an article, which at the time did not endear him to Moscow: J. Slovo, "A Critique of the Non-capitalist Path and the National-Democratic State in Africa", *Marxism Today* 18 (1974) 6, pp. 178–186. Slovo's new approach to this issue was outlined in his pamphlet, *The South African Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution: An Umsebenzi Discussion Pamphlet Published by the South African Communist Party*. N.p, n.d. [1988], particularly pp. 15–20.

⁶¹ J. Slovo, *Has Socialism Failed?*, London: Inkululeko Publications, January 1990, quotation on p. 23.

⁶² "The Path to Power. Programme of the South African Communist Party adopted at the 7th Congress, 1989", *The African Communist* 118 (3rd Quarter, 1989), pp. 73–127. It spoke, for example, of "the emergence of a party and government system of administrative command, leading to extensive bureaucratic control and criminal violations of socialist justice" in the USSR, and spoke of the effect of these "negative tendencies" on other communist parties, "including our own" (p. 79).

ests of the ANC and its struggle. The very fact that an ANC and SACP leader had a reason to criticize the Soviet Communist Party in the pages of its official organ was deeply disturbing for the ANC and its allies in the CPSU.

1990 and 1991 saw a complete reversal of the attitudes of many Soviets to the ANC and to the South African government. This came as a result of deep political shifts in both countries and in their regions. The economic situation in the USSR was getting more desperate by the day and, although privatization had not yet occurred, various business initiatives were already the flavour of the day. The Russians now saw South Africa not as a country in need of equality and justice for the majority, but rather as a land of opportunity for themselves: a highly developed economy with a privileged white population, shunned, they thought, by the capitalist world and looking for partners elsewhere, including the USSR. A country good to do business with and to emigrate to. “They prohibited it, now they are trying to frighten us off it”, screamed the title of one of many articles on emigration to South Africa. “They” referred to the CPSU, “it”, to Soviet emigration to South Africa. The author tried to persuade his readers that any Russian could easily find a job in South Africa, buy a house and a car, and live there happily ever after with a family of four on a salary of 2000 dollars a month.⁶³ Such visions were, of course, highly sensitive for the ANC.

But the main topic which concerned Soviet media in connection with South Africa at the time was establishing diplomatic relations with it: when to establish them and why it was in the interests of the USSR to do so. These were valid questions. The answers depended on the ideological standing of the authors and their appreciation of the ANC's prospects of coming to power. In an article titled “Premature Euphoria”, Vasily Solodovnikov, former Soviet ambassador to Zambia and former director of the Africa Institute, warned that establishing diplomatic relations with the apartheid government would go against Soviet long-term economic interests and would alienate the ANC.⁶⁴ But the majority of those involved in this debate did not believe that the ANC had any chance of coming into power and did not think that it should. The tense political situation in the USSR, particularly in 1991, turned this debate into an exchange of insults between opponents and abuse of the ANC.

In some cases, the turnarounds were dramatic. Vladimir Korochantsev, a journalist whose 1989 book depicted Afrikaners as “frozen at the stage of primitive man”,⁶⁵ in 1991 published an ecstatically admiring essay about them as “a

⁶³ *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 1 October 1991.

⁶⁴ *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 27 June 1991.

⁶⁵ V. Korochantsev and A. Osipov, *Fragmentsy Yuzhnoafrikanskoj simphonii* [Fragments of the South African Symphony], Moscow: Molodaia Gvardia, 1989, p. 31.

young nation with distinctive character, thrilling history and most interesting culture".⁶⁶ In 1989, apart from his *Pravda* article, Asoyan published a book (though, of course, written earlier as, unlike press articles, publishing a book is a long process) in which he declared that "so far, only one group [of the South African society] has displayed a high degree of responsibility – the one, comprising all the fighters against apartheid", the ANC, SWAPO, and leaders of front-line states among them.⁶⁷ But that same year, speaking at a closed situational analysis at the CC's International Department, he said that the liquidation of apartheid was "inexpedient. What good would it do if the ANC comes to power there?", he asked. "It does not have a programme; it just envies the rich. Having come to power, the ANC will forget about its non-racial slogans, and there is no guarantee that they would not want to throw the whites into the sea."⁶⁸ His newspaper articles were, without a doubt, inspired by this view.

Piliatskin, who had denounced "the Pretoria regime" in *Izvestia* for decades, now demanded that the USSR cancelled its sanctions and established diplomatic relations with South Africa immediately. "The benefits of cooperation with a country of such economic potential as South Africa, are obvious to us . . . Grain, meat, vegetables and fruit, mining equipment, medicines, clothes and shoes – all this we could buy there perhaps cheaper than from our other foreign partners", he daydreamed, having suddenly discovered that "ideological dogmas meant more for us than the interests of the 'ordinary Soviet man', who was never asked whether he agreed to such 'principles' in his name".⁶⁹

Vladimir Tikhomirov, a senior staff member of the Africa Institute, who, until then, had not said one bad word about the ANC, now wrote of the "wave of terror, committed by the ANC militants under the guise of the 'armed struggle'". He quoted several incidents which, in his view, proved that the ANC and the SACP were cosy-ing up to the West, while at the same time hampering Soviet relations with South Africa.⁷⁰ Some now saw the ANC's association with the SACP as the main reason for the USSR to dissociate itself from it. "Through the SACP, together with money and arms, the communist ideology of intolerance, hatred, and dictatorship, gradually seeped to the ANC", Tatiana Krasnopevtseva of the Africa Institute, wrote.⁷¹

The ANC did not reply to any of these outbursts. By then, its leadership was much better informed about the fast-moving ideological front in the USSR and its

⁶⁶ *Ekho planety* 41, 5–11 October 1991, pp. 27, 31.

⁶⁷ Asoyan, *South Africa: What Lies Ahead?*, p. 12.

⁶⁸ Filatova, *Zametki s situatsionnogo analiza*, p. 2. Filatova's archive [FA].

⁶⁹ *Izvestia*, 16 September 1991.

⁷⁰ *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 16 May 1991.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 27 June 1991.

changing attitude to South Africa, but it was too preoccupied with its own massive problems and tasks, and “conflicted” on Soviet policies. It was also clear to its leaders that with the diminished ability of the CPSU to deliver desired outcomes, any ANC efforts to influence Soviet public opinion would be wasted.

But the August 1991 coup and the following events put an end to any uncertainty. They could not be left unexplained to the ANC members and allies. As in many other cases with theory, the explanation came from the SACP, though even there working it out did not go smoothly. In a discussion paper prepared for the SACP’s 8th Congress held in December that year and for the first time in South Africa, Slovo said that obviously Gorbachev did not democratize his party quickly enough to avoid the coup.⁷² The Congress adopted a Manifesto which repeated many points of Slovo’s 1990 pamphlet, stressing “the important truth” that “it is not possible to sustain and develop socialism in an authoritarian environment”, and the need for a protracted “national-democratic phase” which would lead to “democratic socialism”.⁷³ Yet the Congress rejected Slovo’s overall “socialist-democratic” vision for his party, repudiated his attempt to scrap the party’s “vanguard role” in the liberation struggle and admonished him for accepting perestroika uncritically. In his speech, Slovo reacted by denouncing Gorbachev for “completely losing his way”, treating the CPSU “as his personal property”, “sacrificing true socialism on the altar of a new world order” and “rushing to make friends with racist Pretoria”.⁷⁴ This reply was crafted for Slovo’s comrades, not for the Soviet media, which completely ignored it. It was meant to formulate the party’s consensual “correct” attitude to events in the USSR. Slovo probably understood that in this situation the best way to influence the views of the Soviet public was for the ANC to come to power in South Africa. From then on, he concentrated his efforts on the negotiations front.

4 Personal Encounters

When André Brink, an Afrikaner, a non-communist and not an ANC member, came to Moscow in 1987, it seemed surreal: there had been no visitor like him before, at least officially. But in the next three years, South Africans of all persuasions, from leaders of the UDF to businessmen, academics, and officials of some

⁷² *Star*, 26 August 1991.

⁷³ *Manifesto of the South African Communist Party. As adopted at the 8th Party Congress – December 1991*, pp. 1, 7–10.

⁷⁴ *Observer* (UK), 1 December 1991; *Star*, 5 December 1991.

less notorious government-connected institutions, the majority of them white, flocked to the USSR for sightseeing, meetings, and conferences. The excitement these visits produced among the Russians even beyond Moscow and Leningrad, where these guests were usually received, was palpable. It was also mutual: the guests were no less eager to find out more about the country, which was hitherto a prohibited and hostile territory, and to find friends.

As there were no diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and South Africa and the USSR still observed the international academic and cultural boycott of South Africa, at least officially, there was no way such visits could materialize without the direct sanction of the International Department of the CPSU's CC. In fact, they were a part of the Soviet "charm offensive", aimed at changing the minds and hearts of white liberal opponents of the regime about the USSR and its relationship with the ANC. Of course, each potential visitor had to be vetted by the ANC too, and at the beginning they really were – the guests had to be known to the ANC as friends.

The International Department took the decision to pursue this policy back in 1981. In 1985, it passed the resolution to "strengthen the anti-racist propaganda" in South Africa. Among the suggested measures were the practical implementation of the 1981 decisions, teaching Afrikaans at the Lomonosov Moscow State University and introducing Radio Moscow programmes in Afrikaans instead of Zulu.⁷⁵ However, when the visits started to materialize, the result was not always what the International Department was counting on.

In his interviews for the Soviet media, Brink expressed admiration for the ANC, and in his private conversations spoke of the need for the ANC to continue the armed struggle. He was pleasantly surprised by the fact that the Lomonosov Moscow State University taught Afrikaans and by the depth of students' and lecturers' knowledge of his country.⁷⁶ He saved his less favourable impressions of the USSR for the South African media. In an article for *Leadership* magazine, he wrote of poverty, a lack of political clarity on the part of the government, and prostitutes in Red Square. What impressed Brink most, however, was the readiness, "almost eagerness", and openness with which many of his Soviet interlocutors "voiced the criticism about what must be some of the most sensitive areas of their contemporary experiences: intellectual or technological 'backwardness', the

⁷⁵ Shubin, *Afrikanskii natsionalny kongress*, pp. 318–319.

⁷⁶ See, for example, *Izvestia*, 24 October 1987; I. Filatova, *Otchet o rabote s gostem Generalnoj direksii MMKVYA writer A. Brink (YuAR)* [Interpreter's report on the work with writer A. Brink, guest of General Directorate of the International Moscow Book Exhibition-Fair (South Africa)], 6–15 September 1987. FA.

stifling of individual endeavour, the hard line towards dissidents, the stranglehold of a gerontocracy, etc., etc.”⁷⁷

Most of the South African visitors who came to Moscow in the late 1980s on the “white liberals” ticket also expressed admiration for the ANC or at least approval of it. This was not surprising, as the double selection process of these guests, by the ANC and the Central Committee, guaranteed such a result. But their hosts could not conceal the sorry state of the economy of the mighty USSR and the authorities could no longer define what visitors heard from their Soviet interlocutors.

This pattern was repeated, for example, during the visits of Alex Boraine, deputy chairman of the Institute for Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA) who came in August 1988 (see Figure 11.1), and of Van Zyl Slabbert, IDASA’s chairman, who came in March/April 1989 with Johan Degenaar, a philosophy professor at Stellenbosch University, and Enos Mabuza, prime minister of the KaNgwane “homeland” (bantustan) (see Figure 11.2). Both delegations spoke highly of the ANC. According to Boraine, the “de-demonization of the ANC” among the white community was the main goal of his organization. The whites had to understand, he said, that the ANC was a key player in the South African political arena.⁷⁸ Slabbert later wrote that during his visit to the USSR “the signs of collapse were already visible”. Some of his interlocutors, “unreformed Stalinists”, denounced “perestroika” and expressed full support for the ANC, while others were “losing enthusiasm” about it and particularly about its armed struggle.⁷⁹ At every meeting, Slabbert spoke of the importance of the ANC, which was, in his view, the only bulwark against a slide into chaos, and Enos Mabuza expressed gratitude to the USSR for its support for the ANC. Both delegations insisted that IDASA was committed to peaceful means, but one was left with the impression that they tried hard to persuade the Soviets to continue their assistance to the ANC, including its armed struggle.⁸⁰

Slabbert, Boraine, and other South African “liberal” visitors enjoyed speaking and socialising with the Soviets of different persuasions, even if they disagreed

77 A. Brink, “From Red Square”, *Leadership* (October 1987), p. 93. He repeated these impressions, expanding the “unpleasant” part, in: *A Fork in the Road: A Memoir*, London: Harville Secker, 2009, pp. 373–376.

78 I was Boraine’s interpreter during this visit, but no longer have my report of this visit to the AASC, so these are my recollections of his words.

79 F. V. Z. Slabbert. *The Other Side of History: An Anecdotal Reflection of Political Transition in South Africa*, Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2006, p. 34.

80 Author’s notes from the meeting of the delegation at the SKSSAA and my recollections from several meetings with the delegation, the most memorable of which was a long dinner at my home which lasted deep into the night. FA.



Figure 11.1: Alex and Jenny Boraine with Irina Filatova in a Russian Orthodox Church during the Boraines' visit to Moscow (August 1988). FA.

with the views of some of them. But such open encounters left their ANC compatriots confused, disillusioned, or both.

In the late 1980s, the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee (SKSSAA) held two “ANC–Soviet Social Scientists Seminars” to exchange views on the future of South Africa and on the ANC policy after the end of apartheid. A whole range of issues came under discussion at the first seminar in March 1987: the ANC’s potential influence in the country, the “nationalisation of the monopolies and banks”, the “resolution of the land and agrarian questions”, education, the “social upliftment of the people”, the “transformation of the apartheid state”, and the “resolution of the national question”.⁸¹ To protect the sensibilities of the ANC delegation from the possible harsh criticism of their programme, the organizers invited only those Soviet academics who were not radically anti-ANC (and who, by then, were in a small minority), so the debate, although tense, particularly about nationalisation and the definition of the South African nation, was not irredeemably hostile (see Figure 11.3).

But a bombshell came from an unexpected quarter. Rostislav Ulianovsky, the deputy head of the CC’s International Department, joined one of the sessions. He

⁸¹ Social Scientists Seminar. Moscow, 17–22 March 1987. Verbatim transcript. FA.



Figure 11.2: Van Zyl Slabbert, Enos Mabuza, and Johan Degenaar with an official of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee and Irina Filatova in the Kremlin, braving a spat of cold weather (March 1989). FA.

called on the participants not to go into too much detail about “hypothetical stages” of their future policy. “Your own future representatives in your own government should properly deal with these issues”, he said. His main point, however, was a call for a sober approach to nationalisation. “Circumspection in these issues should be maximal”, Ulianovsky said. He reminded ANC participants that they would live in a country with a mixed economy “in the context of a world capitalist economic system, with which the economy of South Africa is organically inter-related”. “Comrades, be careful!”, were his final words.⁸² There was stunned silence. The chairman announced a break and after it no debate of Ulianovsky’s words followed. ANC delegates, steeped in the ideology of their organization, could not have expected such an affront from one of the authors of the Soviet theories of national democratic revolution and socialist orientation. The ANC report on this seminar, probably written by Pallo Jordan, head of the South African delegation, omitted this episode completely.⁸³

The atmosphere at the second Seminar which took place in February 1989, was more contentious and tense. It was devoted almost entirely to the “national-

⁸² Social Scientists Seminar, p. 47.

⁸³ Report of the Social Scientists Seminar. Moscow, 17–23 March 1987. FA.



Figure 11.3: ANC-Soviet Social Scientists meeting, Moscow 1987. Pallo Jordan is to the left of the chairman, Ulianovsky on the far right. FA.

ity question". Jordan, who again led the ANC delegation, presented his version of what transpired in a detailed report:

We benefited from the plurality of opinions among our Soviet counterparts, though we were unable to engage directly with those who voiced opinions some of us found uncomfortable [. . .]. There was a fundamental divergence in the approaches of our respective delegations. The Soviet comrades, almost without exception, made ethnicity and nationality the starting points of their analysis [. . .]. There seemed to be no appreciation of the social character of our movement and the relative weight of the different classes that are united under its banner. Their understanding of our movement's programme, strategy and united front tactics consequently is rather mechanical and wooden.⁸⁴

The report further suggested that there was "an evident need for us to assist our Soviet comrades to obtain a more regular access to progressive South African journals".⁸⁵

The idea of the need for South African communists to instruct the Soviets about "correct" thinking on South Africa, the ANC, and its cause, was raised in sev-

⁸⁴ Report of the ANC-Soviet Social Scientists Seminar. Moscow, 21–24 February 1989, pp. 3–4, FA.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

eral other publications, particularly in 1989. *The African Communist* said, for example, that Asoyan's book, mentioned earlier, gave

some insight into the 'new thinking' that is going on among certain Soviet 'experts' on South Africa and on liberation struggle. This calls for a more vigorous approach by our revolutionary alliance to explain to these people our position, perspective, analysis and strategy and tactics. We should engage these comrades in comradely discussion and debate.⁸⁶

In May 1990, a big international conference to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the "Year of Africa" was held in Moscow. Academics from several African countries, Europe, and the USA, diplomats, and Soviet officials attended. Eighteen South African academics came straight from South Africa, the majority of them white and ANC supporters. South Africa was also represented by a group of ANC and SACP members, a new intake of the Lenin School for party cadres. Just as the conference was about to begin, a South African academic rose to protest against the presence in the audience of a representative of the South African Foundation which worked against Western sanctions designed to weaken the South African regime. He was speaking on behalf of the ANC comrades, he said, "who felt extremely uncomfortable in the presence of this person". The representative of the Foundation rose to leave, and the Soviet organizers were put in the awkward position of having to implore him to stay and to assure the audience that this was an academic conference, at which all points of view were welcome. The Lenin School group left after the opening without uttering a word.⁸⁷

Nic Borain, a journalist and an official of IDASA, who visited the USSR in June 1990 as part of the IDASA youth delegation, was "quite unprepared" for the editor of the Soviet Young Communist League to daily "harangue" the delegation "about the evils and absolute unworkability of socialism". "Almost without exception", Borain wrote, "the people we spoke to blamed socialism for their ills". When South Africans "protested that it wasn't socialism per se that was the problem, but rather the errors committed in the building of the society and economy of the Soviet Union specifically", they "were laughed out of court". "It would have been impossible and extremely presumptuous for us to lecture them on the evils of rampant capitalism. They want it and they want it now", Borain observed.⁸⁸

More disillusionment on the part of the ANC supporters came when the Soviets started to visit South Africa, even when such visits were sanctioned by the leaders of the ANC in Lusaka and the UDF in South Africa. In December 1989,

⁸⁶ T. Z, "An Oversimplified Approach", p. 68.

⁸⁷ *Mezhdunarodnaia nauchnaia konferentsiia "Afrika vo vsemirno-istoricheskoi protsesse"* [International academic conference "Africa in the Global Historical Process"], 25–27 May 1990. FA.

⁸⁸ N. Borain, "Ten days that shook my world", *Democracy in Action*, July–August 1990, pp. 1, 4.

Apollon Davidson of the Institute of World History of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and the present author visited South Africa on the invitation of IDASA and with the blessing of the ANC. It was only the second publicly known visit by the Soviets after Piliatskin's. Some of our hosts were disappointed. We did not speak the revolutionary language, were not communists, and we supported Gorbachev, whom by then many of them considered a sell-out. Several times we were verbally attacked for breaking the academic boycott, and in one of the townships a protest against our presence was organized outside the venue where we spoke.⁸⁹

The gradual strengthening of Soviet ties with Pretoria led to visits by South African officials and businessmen to the USSR and ultimately to the establishment, long before South Africa's first democratic elections, of consular relations, but left ANC cadres with wounded feelings that took the new Russian government many years to heal.

5 “Friendship Societies”

Some Soviets, in turn, became disillusioned with South Africans and South Africa. Henning Pieterse, chargé d'affaires of the South African Interests Section in the USSR which was opened in July 1991, was shaken to the core on his arrival in Moscow by the fact that “Russian diplomats and security service officials did not believe that the whites would give away power”. Moreover:

Many believed that it should not be given away. Even after the beginning of the negotiations⁹⁰ they would say in private conversations something like ‘well, we understand that you are not serious, are you?’ They thought that the negotiations were some sort of a trick. When the ANC came to power, they almost could not believe that this had happened.⁹¹

This was a true reflection of perceptions of South Africa widely held in Soviet society in the late 1980s–early 1990s. At that time many Russians believed that South Africa would (and should) remain a “white country”. Many did not believe that it could opt to elect a parliamentary majority of the pro-socialist and communist-aligned ANC, when, in their view, the days of this “outdated” ideology were

89 Otchet delegatsii SCSSAA (A. B. Davidson, I. I. Filatova) o prebyvanii v YuAR (6–23 dekabria 1989g.) [Report of the delegation of the SKSSAA (A. B. Davidson, I. I. Filatova) on the visit to South Africa (6–23 December 1989)]. FA.

90 Between the government and the ANC at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa).

91 Author's interview with Henning Pieterse, 30 June 2005.

numbered even in the USSR. A Soviet communist, author of a letter to the South African Foreign Affairs Department, wrote:

Mandela calls for [. . .] the nationalisation of the economy after he comes to power. After 1917, we nationalised industry and land, and came to famine, destruction, and oceans of blood. But now a different situation is developing in the world, and I think the world will not leave South Africa one-on-one with terrorists and maximalists (black Bolsheviks).⁹²

Nor could the Russians believe that the “Boers”, whose strength they admired from the time of the Anglo-Boer War, a small plucky nation which valiantly fought against the strongest power in the world, which survived against the odds and managed to create a fabulously rich country for themselves, would give in to the blacks. With news of the changes in Southern Africa in the late 1980s pouring in, the feverish urgency of establishing diplomatic, trade, and other business relations with South Africa or to emigrate there was palpable in Soviet public space. This urgency immediately disappeared once the ANC came to power.

But in the late 1980s, it played itself out most openly in informal associations, usually organized by academics or other people connected with Africa in their line of duty. Their purpose was to present information about South Africa to a wider public which craved it. A more appropriate name for these associations would be “clubs” or “information agencies”, but following the Soviet pattern, they were usually called “friendship societies”. One was set up in Leningrad, another in Novosibirsk, yet another one in Tallin, and no fewer than three in Moscow. There could have been more, but these were the ones which left some trace in print or memory.

At that time, a lot of associations formed by groups of Soviet citizens on their own initiative and united by mutual interests sprang up everywhere. This was a novelty in the USSR. The majority, but by no means all, were inspired by the idea of creating a “business” around a particular engagement or service which, in the view of the organizers, could bring in money. Getting a partner abroad in this situation was seen as a huge bonus, and sometimes the whole “business” emerged around people who had some connections in or knowledge of a foreign country.

It was in this feverish atmosphere of the last years of the USSR that Soviet-South African societies came into existence. All wanted closer ties with South Africa, but their goals and activities differed, reflecting the different attitudes of Soviet people towards that country and their expectations about its future. A “USSR-South Africa Society”, later renamed the “Russian-South African Information Agency”, was formed by the staff of the Soviet Association of Friendship Societies, an official Soviet government-sponsored NGO. It acted as a business inter-

92 South African Department of Foreign Affairs Archives, 400/003/408, vol. 3. B: 13-10-91 E:24-12-92.

mediary, offering to put Russian organisations and businesses in touch with counterparts or interested parties in South Africa “on a commercial basis”.⁹³

An “Afro-Sib” (“Republic of South Africa-Siberia”) society, formed by one Rurik Povileiko of the State Technical Procurement Committee in Novosibirsk, advertised itself as a business initiative. “Afro-Sib” was formed by people without any previous academic or practical knowledge of South Africa and thus reflected the views and expectations of the Soviet “man in the street” better than any other such association. Its plans were gargantuan. Its “working programme” for 1992–93 (written in 1991, before the collapse of the USSR) promised a business school for those who wanted to establish contacts with South Africa, a course for potential Russian émigrés to South Africa, a branch of the South African Chamber of Commerce in Novosibirsk, a South African Centre in Novosibirsk, and Russian Centres in Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Cape Town.⁹⁴ Apart from payment for the courses, there was no indication of where money for all these activities would come from. In “Afro-Sib’s” view, South Africa was a particularly good business partner for the Soviets because it was “a country in isolation” spurned by the West. “Using apartheid as a pretext”, it declared, “the Americans tried to remove South Africa from the international business world.”⁹⁵ “Under the guise of denouncing apartheid (the oppression of the negro population), the USA, together with other developed countries are trying to bar the RSA from international markets.”⁹⁶

“Afro-Sib’s” best selling point was its advertised ability to help Russians to emigrate to South Africa. There was noticeable demand for this, inflated by unscrupulous manipulators who handed out leaflets advertising South Africa as a wonderful emigration destination and sold fake immigration forms in the subway stations, underpasses, and in the streets of Moscow and St. Petersburg. “Afro-Sib’s” leaflet “Let’s go to South Africa?!” stated: “Today the ‘Afro-Sib’ society is the only serious channel with access to the RSA [. . .] Siberia and the Transvaal will find a common language. Realists and romantics, ‘Afro-Sib’ is waiting for you.”⁹⁷ “Siberians and Afrikaners are Brothers Forever!”, “Blacks Are Better Off in Russia, Whites Are Better Off in Africa”, ran “Afro-Sib’s” adverts.⁹⁸

93 H. Mondry, “The New Russia Discovers the White South”, *The Weekly Mail*, 3–9 January 1992, p. 16.

94 “Afro-Sib” – *Programma Rabochaia na 1992–1993 gg.* [“Afrosib” – a working programme for 1992–1993], 23 September 1991, Typescript. FA. The document is verified by no less than four stamps of Novosibirsk branch of State Technical Procurement Committee.

95 *Delovaia Sibir*, 34, 18–24 September 1991. FA.

96 *Ekonomika i resursy*, 2, April 1991. FA.

97 *Yedem v Yuzhnyu Afriku?! [Let’s Go to South Africa?!]*, Typescript. N.p, n.d. FA.

98 *Novosibirskie Novosti*, 10 October 1991; *Molodost Sibiri*, October 1991. FA.

All “friendship societies” received dozens of letters with requests to help with emigration.⁹⁹ The South African Foreign Affairs Department and even the Presidency received them too. These letters were a vivid reflection of the desperate desire of the Russians to get away from their own dire economic situation as well as of their complete lack of knowledge of the country which they dreamed of making their home. The ANC leadership might not have heard about the “Afro-Sib” and its initiatives, if it had not been for *Pravda*, which published Povileiko’s article, propagating the urgent need to establish diplomatic relations, develop trade between Russia and South Africa, and promote Russian emigration to South Africa.¹⁰⁰ What this *Pravda* article did not mention was the ANC, the struggle, the anti-apartheid movement, or the international sanctions against the South African government.

Two of the Moscow friendship societies were organized by academics who studied South Africa for years, wrote about it, were involved in public discussions about it, and acted as consultants for Soviet organizations dealing with South Africa. The “South African-Soviet Society” emerged from informal discussions, lectures, and meetings with visiting South Africans held at the Institute of Asian and African Countries of Moscow State University. It was officially inaugurated in June 1991 under the chairmanship of Apollon Davidson. Soon it was renamed “The Good Hope Society”. The society had no registered membership and was run by a few enthusiasts, the majority of them academics, who contributed their time and effort free of charge. It had no business connections or activities except multiple business adverts and offers by Soviet and Russian old and new businesses in *Bridge*, an English language bi-monthly newsletter. This was also a volunteer initiative which came from a couple of News Press Agency journalists. Originally it advertised itself as the society’s publication.¹⁰¹

The Good Hope Society’s declared aim was “to fill in the information gap” in Russia about South Africa and in South Africa about Russia. In South Africa it sought “partners among those” who opted “for democracy free of racialism and political extremism”.¹⁰² Its round tables, public lectures, and meetings with visiting

⁹⁹ As a founder member and academic secretary of the Good Hope Society, a friendship society formed by academics of the Lomonosov Moscow State University, I received dozens of such letters, but unfortunately did not keep them. There are many similar letters in the South African archives, usually sent to the Foreign Affairs Department, but sometimes to the Presidency.

¹⁰⁰ *Pravda*, 20 May 1990. The article was reprinted by several other newspapers and a popular weekly *Ekho planety*, 16, 1990.

¹⁰¹ *Bridge* was published by a small private company “Contact L.A.”, formed by several journalists from the Soviet News Press Agency (APN), who were active in the Good Hope Society. At least five issues of the newsletter appeared, the first in the USSR, the rest in the new Russia. From the third issue, *Bridge* stopped publicising itself as the organ of the society. FA.

¹⁰² *Bridge*, 1, November–December 1991. FA.

South Africans of different political persuasions, including the ANC and UDF, were attended by whoever was interested in these events. But in the tense political atmosphere of the late 1980s–early 1990s and particularly after the August 1991 putsch, this lack of ideological rigidity soon provoked attacks from both the left and right.

The core issue was the attitude to the ANC. Founding members of the “Good Hope Society” believed that the ANC, whether you liked it or not, was an important political player in South Africa, even before it was unbanned, both as a symbol of struggle against apartheid and as an underground movement, and that it was bound to be one of the dominant political forces in South Africa and possibly in the future democratically elected government. Alienating the ANC at this point, they thought, was counterproductive for the interests of the USSR, as the only leverage it had in the region was the ability to communicate with old allies and to influence them. Unfashionably, this point of view coincided with the then current position and policy of the CPSU, which after 1989 quickly lost support and after the 1991 coup fell from grace completely. This, in the eyes of some Soviets, turned the Good Hope Society into a conduit of the International Department of the CPSU’s CC and an adherent of the old order.

Among all liberation movements at that time, the ANC was viewed particularly negatively by many public opinion influencers and by a wider public because of its connections with the SACP and the CPSU. So, once the ANC was unbanned, heeding to its demands, such as a continuation of the international boycott, it was thought, was tantamount to a betrayal of the interests of the USSR. This was certainly the point of view of the critics of the Good Hope Society, who organized their own association, the “Russia-South Africa Society” at the Africa Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. It concentrated its efforts on developing ties with representatives of South Africa’s big business and visiting South African diplomats and officials. This position was hailed by the Western and South African media but alienated the ANC.¹⁰³ The confrontation between these two approaches and the heated debate on the topic of Soviet interests in South Africa which would normally have taken place at academic gatherings, divided the public space and spilled over into the national media and abroad.¹⁰⁴

It would be tempting to say that by then the ANC was mostly above these ideological battles, but this was not so. It needed the Soviets to observe the boy-

103 Several examples of this, not mentioning the society by name, were listed in V. Bushin [Vladimir Shubin], “Soviet Policy in South Africa”, *The African Communist* 125, 2nd Quarter, 1991, pp. 26–29.

104 E.g. *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 16 May 1991, 26 June 1991; *Ekho planety*, 42, October 1991; Mondry, “The New Russia Discovers”. See also V. Tikhomirov, *States in Transition: Russia and South Africa*, Pretoria: International Freedom Foundation, 1992.

cott and to refrain from establishing diplomatic relations with South Africa even if only to strengthen its position in the negotiations. It now clearly distinguished between its friends and foes in the USSR, and when it wanted to, it could muster enough influence to reward the former and punish the latter.

In May 1989, Viacheslav (Slava) Tetekin, an official of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, landed in Johannesburg on a transit visa from Namibia to Lusaka. Valli Moosa, a UDF leader, whisked him away to Soweto to meet ANC and UDF activists. This illegal trip ended without incident, though in fact, as Tetekin himself wrote, he broke South Africa's laws.¹⁰⁵ In March 1990, Vladimir Tikhomirov, chairman of the "Russia-South Africa Society", proceeded from an academic conference in Harare to South Africa, where he gave several lectures on Soviet policy in the region from a position highly critical of the ANC. Unlike Tetekin, Tikhomirov had a legitimate visa, and his visit took place after the ANC was already unbanned.¹⁰⁶ But when, in February 1991, Tikhomirov attempted another trip to South Africa, again without the ANC's approval, he was prevented from boarding the plane in Moscow and his visa was withdrawn.¹⁰⁷

6 Conclusions

It was not easy for the ANC to accept Gorbachev's perestroika and his "new thinking" without reservations. To this day, many in its ranks consider Gorbachev a traitor. Yet its leadership managed to negotiate this difficult period without political loss and by the end of it to build a good foundation for strengthening the position of the party and preparing it for the future. Glasnost, however, turned out to be the most difficult part of Gorbachev's reforms for them to stomach. The Soviet public used the opportunities which it granted to challenge the very core of the ANC's existence – its ideology and its ideals. For Garth Strachan, a communist and MK veteran, "the collapse of socialism" under Gorbachev brought with it "the collapse of the vision of the sort of society which exiles held up as the one which they would [. . .] strive to build in South Africa".¹⁰⁸ It was this society, and everything associated with it, that many Soviets now denounced.

¹⁰⁵ V. N. Tetekin, *Afrikanist* [The Africanist], Moscow: n.p., 2011, pp. 250–259.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

¹⁰⁷ *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 16 May 1991.

¹⁰⁸ Wolfie Kodesh, interview of Garth Strachan, 27 November 1992, in: T. Simpson, "The People's War of Umkhonto We Sizwe, 1961–1990". PhD thesis, Birkbeck, University of London, 2007, p. 234.

While publications in the Soviet media and the opinions of journalists, academics, and some Soviet and party officials did not reflect the views of the whole of society, they represented a significant and very important part of it. Soviet comrades of the ANC explained to its leaders that in the “application of the ‘new thinking’ to South Africa one had to be careful to separate out official Soviet views from the views expressed by various scholars, commentators, and journalists”. Yet, as Pallo Jordan rightly noted, “though none of the varying opinions of academics and commentators bear the authority of the official policy, they nonetheless reflect bodies of opinion within the foreign policy formulating community in the Soviet Union”.¹⁰⁹ In other words, the ANC had every reason to be worried about public expressions of the personal views and opinions of pro-perestroika “intellectuals”: they were the people who nowadays are called “influencers”. They did not just reflect a part of public opinion of the time, they had the power to formulate and form it, something that they did not have before, and this could – and did – influence “official Soviet views”.

The upsurge of unfriendly views of the liberation movements in general, and of the ANC in particular, among the Soviet public hitherto hidden from the South Africans was a highly traumatic experience for its cadres and leaders. They were not used to the Soviet media publishing anything that differed from Soviet official policy, or, in fact, from their own – and now it did. They were not used to meeting people whose views they did not approve of at conferences in the USSR – and now they did. They were not used to having to defend their policies and answer uncomfortable questions during public debates and in the media in the USSR – and now they had to.

At least in part, the ANC attributed this unfortunate development to deficiencies in their own work. One of these was the insufficient exposure of “Soviet comrades” to “progressive South African journals” which should have helped them to appreciate “the social character” and “the relative weight of the different classes” in the ANC-led liberation movement.¹¹⁰ Another one was the fact that the ANC “never had to, nor had the capacity to build a strong anti-apartheid movement in the Soviet Union”, as it did elsewhere.¹¹¹ But there was never any need for such activity in the USSR, as the Soviets organized it all themselves and helped the ANC to organize it elsewhere.

In fact, the reasons for mutual misunderstandings, disillusionments, and resentments between the Soviet public, or a large part of it, and the ANC, lay deep

¹⁰⁹ Jordan, *The Southern African Policy*, p. 10.

¹¹⁰ *Report of the ANC-Soviet Social Scientists Seminar*, pp. 3–4.

¹¹¹ N. Borain, “Will Soviets Hold the Sanctions Line?”, *Democracy in Action*, July–August 1990, p. 5.

in the different historical experiences of both parties in these contacts, in the nature of Soviet society, and in the transformation that it was going through, as well as in the character of the ANC itself. No amount of propaganda efforts on the part of the ANC could have changed this. After all, the Soviet government and media had been engaged in propaganda on behalf of the ANC for a long time, and that propaganda was exactly what the Soviet public was now revolting against. Both parties were disillusioned not with one another, but with the images of one another, created either by propaganda or their own imagination.

In direct and open communication, the Soviet public of the Gorbachev era was so different from the image that the ANC had of it, that its cadres felt extremely uncomfortable and often simply did not know how to react. Some Soviet citizens spoke the same language as their apartheid enemies. But even those who were not hostile challenged them with difficult questions and alien ideas and did not accept ideological clichés for an answer. Communicating with the Soviets was no longer a safe space for the ANC.

Among the most offensive and unfortunate consequences for the ANC of the changing behaviour of the Soviet public was the fact that the apartheid regime used its pronouncements for its own propaganda purposes. There was also the danger that, reading or hearing what the Soviets were now saying about their own country, the ANC's own following might get disillusioned about the party's goal of building a socialist society on the southern tip of Africa. This, however, did not happen. If anything disappointed some ANC activists, it was the gradual retreat from the "insurrectionary seizure of power"¹¹² to a negotiated settlement.

The ANC did, indeed, seem to be too sensitive about unfriendly views of Soviet individuals. In 1989, a paper by a Soviet academic on possible conditions of negotiations between the "national liberation movement" and the apartheid government, presented, strangely, at a conference on Europe's relations with Latin America, reached Tambo. He sent it on to Jack Simons, a prominent ANC and SACP intellectual, for comment. Simons sent back a detailed report with a recommendation for the ANC to prepare an official reply to the academic on the basis of the "ANC Statement on Negotiations".¹¹³ It seemed bizarre for a leader of an authoritative liberation movement to bother about an academic paper presented at a remote conference on a non-related topic. Yet, for the ANC it made sense.

¹¹² *The Path to Power. Programme of the South African Communist Party*. Published by the South African Communist Party, Johannesburg, September 1990, p. 3.

¹¹³ I am grateful to Chris Saunders for giving me a copy of Simons' notice to Tambo. "ANC Statement on Negotiations", see footnote 15.

Speaking at a special meeting of the ANC's National Working Committee which discussed the negotiations, Chris Hani, at that time Umkhonto's chief of staff, said:

Even in the USSR some academics and individuals in the Foreign Affairs Ministry have declared in favour of a negotiated settlement in South Africa [. . .]. These views had an effect on the membership, some of whom believe that we are preparing for negotiations.

Another member of the NWC asked: "Can we be certain that the present Soviet position in our favour will hold?"¹¹⁴ "Will Soviets hold the sanctions line?", asked Nic Borain concluding his impressions of the USSR.¹¹⁵ There were no answers to these nagging questions. But the pressures and disillusionments of ANC communications with the Soviet public during perestroika shattered the faith of the ANC cadres in the reliability of Soviet support and pushed them further on the road to accepting negotiations.

Facing the changing views and opinions of the Soviet public during the Gorbachev era was the first serious test of the ANC's understanding of democracy and particularly of freedom of speech. Until then, any critical or unfriendly public pronouncements, oral or written, could be dismissed as pro-apartheid. Ideological and political challenges coming from its former staunchest allies could not be so easily dismissed, but they were so deeply traumatic for the ANC that its spokespeople or activists simply could not engage with the diverse Soviet views and usually withdrew from any dialogue. When they did engage, they mostly produced ideological clichés or regurgitated trivial propaganda, sometimes the ANC's own propaganda, sometimes old Soviet propaganda.

This was, perhaps, understandable, as the ANC was still in its struggle mode in which it had existed for several decades, when dissenting or critical voices were seen as those of an enemy who needed to be vanquished, not debated, and not as a sign that something could be wrong with the ANC itself. But on the eve of its coming to power, its inability to engage meaningfully with the Soviet public prompted the question of how and whether the ANC would cope with the diversity of views in its own country.

The 1992 ANC's "Policy Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa" covered every possible aspect of the activities of the future ANC government but said nothing on how it was going to treat the opposition. An item on media prom-

¹¹⁴ Mayibuye Centre for Humanities Research (MCHR), ANC, ANClusC, Minutes of the NWC Emergency meeting, 2 May 1989, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ Borain, "Will the Soviets Hold the Sanctions Line?", p. 5.

ised that “the forms of mass communication will take account of the diversity of communities in respect of geography, language, gender, interests and prevailing levels of literacy”,¹¹⁶ but neither diversity of political opinions nor freedom of expression was mentioned. The lessons of glasnost had obviously not been learned.

116 Ready to Govern. ANC Policy Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa. Adopted at the National Conference 28–31 May 1992. Published by the Policy Unit of the African National Congress. N.p, n.d, pp. 60–61.

Arianna Pasqualini

12 Communist Support for the Liberation Struggle in Namibia: Diverging Visions and Practices

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Southern African region turned into one of the main hotspots of the Cold War, with the fight against apartheid being one of the primary causes championed by communists around the world. The increasing violence of the South African regime, its illegal occupation of Namibia, and its incursions into the Angolan territory contributed to exacerbating and broadening the regional conflicts, eventually involving both superpowers and their allies. The independence of Namibia became an urgent issue within the panorama of Southern Africa decolonization, as regional and international alliances contributed to prolonging the conflict and delaying the transition to sovereignty. In this context, the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), which had been fighting for Namibia's independence since 1966, was able to build a network of international relationships especially with communist actors, whose declared mission was to engage in a global struggle against racism, imperialism, colonialism, and neocolonialism.

This essay examines the role of communist actors in Namibia's transition from South African occupation to independence, focusing on the late 1970s and the 1980s, when the Namibian liberation struggle was profoundly intertwined with the regional conflicts of Southern Africa and the global Cold War. SWAPO's struggle for Namibian independence was strictly linked to the fight carried out by the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa and to the decolonization of Angola, where the victory of the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) in 1975 meant new military bases and political headquarters for SWAPO, but also increased international hostilities. On the Cold War front, each bloc supported local actors due to a combination of vested interests and ideological beliefs, with the underlying aim of demonstrating their global relevance and shaping postcolonial state-building processes. Claiming to lend development aid in the name of solidarity, communist actors provided varying degrees of support to Namibia's liberation movement.

This chapter analyzes the cooperation politics developed to support SWAPO by three different communist actors: the German Democratic Republic (Deutsche Demokratische Republik, GDR), a Warsaw Pact country born out of the separation from its Western counterpart; Cuba, a revolutionary country of the "Global South"; and the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano, PCI), one of

the largest communist parties in the West. It corroborates the idea of an internal plurality within the international communist movement, showing how each communist actor promoted solidarity with SWAPO by using varying narratives, pursuing their own objectives, and employing diverse instruments, thus carrying out different and sometimes competing visions of socialism and solidarity.

The chapter opens by presenting the development aid system promoted by the communist world, which placed solidarity at the core of its rhetoric. Here, emphasis is placed on the heterogeneity of this system, which was realized through different visions and practices. The chapter then explores SWAPO's efforts to garner as much assistance as possible and outlines the main relationships it established with communist actors. Building on this general framework, it continues with an analysis of the role of East Germany, Cuba, and the Italian Communist Party in supporting SWAPO's liberation struggle, by describing the modalities of the cooperation, the underlying visions, and the eventual implications of these relationships.

The comparative perspective allows us to highlight the differences in the approach to Southern Africa's decolonization within the communist world, SWAPO's use of these differences for its own needs, and the mutual influence between communism and decolonization.¹

1 Mapping Communist Solidarities: Visions and Practices

With the Soviet Union's outreach to the Third World during the Khrushchev era, internationalism became a central aspect of communist politics, which depicted transnational cooperation as rooted in the concept of fraternal solidarity. Unlike the Westerners, in fact, the communists presented their approach toward the Third World not as unilateral aid but as a form of cooperation based on solidarity, equality, and mutual benefit. Solidarity became the banner under which communists furnished assistance and cooperation to liberation movements and post-colonial countries worldwide, in sharp contrast to the criticisms directed at the Western system of aid, which was seen as neocolonial and paternalistic. Solidarity programmes led to transnational exchanges of goods and ideas as well as the

¹ This essay briefly summarizes the main results of my PhD thesis. See A. Pasqualini, "Mapping Socialist Solidarities: SWAPO, the Namibian Liberation Struggle, and the Global Cold War", PhD thesis, University of Bologna, 2023, https://amsdottorato.unibo.it/10839/1/Mapping%20Socialist%20Solidarities_%20Tesi%20Arianna%20Pasqualini.pdf.

migration of people, with cooperation relationships being developed through trade, technical and material aid, military training and arms supplies, medical assistance, and educational or professional training.

While international solidarity with progressive forces was the principle behind these cooperation relationships, in practice, solidarity took on very different forms and often masked underlying tensions and inequalities between donor and recipient. A plurality of visions of solidarities and their competing practices co-existed within the international communist movement. Depending on their peculiar contexts, different communist actors constructed the concept of solidarity in their own fashion while pursuing their own agendas.

Archival research has recently recovered information and evidence on the agency exerted by the Warsaw Pact countries in relation to foreign policy, showing to what extent they took advantage of the opening to the Third World to pursue their own agendas.² The establishment of the Warsaw Pact in 1955 envisioned in fact more independent roles to be played by Eastern European countries in foreign policy, with the consequence that Moscow was not always willing – or able – to control the policies of its satellites.³ Moreover, after the Soviet Union itself encouraged its junior allies to search for suppliers of raw materials beyond Moscow, the Warsaw Pact countries exploited their relations with developing countries, by relying on them to stock up on raw materials at a time of economic crisis within the Eastern bloc.⁴ In some cases, Eastern European countries developed non-Western and anti-imperialist relationships in order to escape economic dependence on Moscow, overcome their marginality, and defend their own sovereignty.⁵

Furthermore, other actors developed new models of solidarity by building their intervention upon their own narratives. The communist world encompassed a variety of actors, both from the Global North and South, with different ideas of socialism and solidarity and different foreign agendas. Many – if not most – of them acted simultaneously as aid recipients and donors. Actors such as Yugoslavia and China promoted autonomous foreign strategies that openly challenged Soviet leadership. Expelled from the Cominform in 1948 for alleged accusations of

² See P. E Muehlenbeck and N. Telepneva, *Warsaw Pact Intervention in the Third World: Aid and Influence in the Cold War*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴ A. Calori, A. K. Hartmetz, B. Kocsev, and J. Zofka, “Alternative Globalization? Spaces of Economic Interaction between the ‘Socialist Camp’ and the ‘Global South’”, in: A. Calori et al. (eds.), *Between East and South: Spaces of Interaction in the Globalizing Economy of the Cold War*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019, pp. 1–31, at 23–24.

⁵ J. Mark and P. Betts (eds.), *Socialism Goes Global: The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonization*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2022.

deviation from Marxism-Leninism and among the founders of the Non Aligned Movement, Josip Broz Tito's Yugoslavia portrayed its approach toward the Third World as outside the bipolar and hegemonic logic of aid, presenting itself as part of the Global South, stressing its past as an underdeveloped and semi-colonized country and promoting a vision of solidarity politics that claimed to be based on self-managed socialism, non-alignment, and non-hierarchical relations.⁶ Strongly criticizing Khrushchev's "peaceful coexistence" and distancing itself from the Soviet Union – branded as revisionist – up to the rift in the late 1960s, China claimed the role of revolutionary and exclusive leader of the non-Western world and started to embody an alternative model of communist solidarity. It promoted "a policy of aid on concessional terms, lending at a zero interest rate",⁷ at least until the 1970s, when economic rationales started to gain the upper hand.⁸

Moreover, communists and revolutionaries in less developed countries such as Cuba, Vietnam, Mongolia, and North Korea also had an active role in supporting the Third World's revolutions, embodying symbolical models of anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles themselves. Proclaiming themselves affiliated with the socialist camp, they at various extents entered the Comecon bringing in their autonomous Third-Worldist visions of solidarity. For example, Cuba often pursued autonomous and sometimes adventuristic foreign strategies, presenting itself as the vanguard of the global revolution and causing the annoyance of the Soviet allies, who were often not even consulted before taking action.⁹

African socialist countries also contributed to the creation of a network of mutual aid by providing base and support to movements struggling for freedom. Newly independent African countries that embraced some version of socialism actively strove to end colonialism across the continent and throughout the Third World. Cities like Dar es Salaam and Accra as well as the "Mecca of revolution" Algiers, became real "hubs of decolonization", meeting places for revolutionaries

6 L. Spaskovska, J. Mark, and F. Bieber, "Introduction: Internationalism in Times of Nationalism: Yugoslavia, Nonalignment, and the Cold War", in: *Nationalities Papers* 49 (2021) 3, pp. 409–412.

7 S. Lorenzini, *Global Development: A Cold War History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019, p. 114.

8 C. Jian, "China, the Third World, and the Cold War", in: R. J. McMahon (ed.), *The Cold War in the Third World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 85–100; J. Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

9 P. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa 1959–1976*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002; P. Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria and the Struggle for Southern Africa (1976–1991)*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

that were vital to mobilize international support.¹⁰ Since the 1960s, for example, Dar es Salaam hosted numerous foreign embassies and representative offices of Southern African liberation movements and served as a base for the Liberation Committee of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Under the charismatic leadership of Julius K. Nyerere, in fact, Tanganyika/Tanzania became a model of transnational solidarity based on Pan-Africanism, non-alignment, and African socialism (Ujamaa), defying the idea of a pure and monolithic socialism and Cold War order shaped by the East-West division, arguing rather that the main divide was between the Global North and South and placing the total liberation of the African continent at the top of the government's agenda.¹¹

Besides the socialist East and South, also Western communist parties contributed in varying degrees to providing cooperation and aid to Third World movements and countries. Their collocation, as parties ideologically linked with the socialist bloc and culturally rooted in the capitalist one, allowed them to play the important role of mediators between African leaders and socialist countries, and sometimes to conciliate the anti-fascist paradigm with the anti-colonial one.¹² Their assistance to Third World movements and states was political and diplomatic rather than military, but they occasionally also contributed by providing educational and training support¹³ as well as medical assistance.

Therefore, diverse visions and practices characterized the communist international movement in its interactions with liberation movements and postcolonial countries.

On their side, the receiving counterparts showed an active role in these relations. "Through persistence, manipulation, and pleading",¹⁴ they forced the donor to respond to their demands, even if they were divergent from its interests. Often, even if they professed to be socialists, Third World countries refused any formal

10 J. J. Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2016; E. Burton, "Hubs of Decolonization. African Liberation Movements and 'Eastern' Connections in Cairo, Accra, and Dar es Salaam", in: L. Dallywater, Ch. Saunders, and H. A. Fonseca (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War 'East': Transnational Activism 1960–1990*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019, pp. 25–56.

11 G. Roberts, *Revolutionary State-Making in Dar es Salaam: African Liberation and the Global Cold War, 1961–1974*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

12 F. Blum et al. (eds.), *Les Partis communistes occidentaux et l'Afrique: une histoire mineure?*, Paris: Hémisphères, 2022.

13 G. Siracusano, "Trade Union Education in Former French Africa (1959–1965): Ideological Transmission and the Role of French and Italian Communists", *Third World Quarterly* 42 (2021) 2, pp. 483–502.

14 D. C. Engerman, "The Second World's Third World", *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12 (2011) 1, pp. 183–211, at 184.

affiliation with the socialist bloc, thus maintaining room for maneuver within the framework of the Cold War. Moreover, not only did they put the superpowers against each other in order to secure assistance in more favorable terms, but they also stirred competition within the communist world by simultaneously conducting relations with multiple competing socialist partners.¹⁵ Therefore, pragmatism, rather than ideology, often drove Third World actors when navigating the so-called “global humanitarian regime”.¹⁶

As Southern Africa turned into one of the main hotspots of the Cold War during its last decades, the main liberation movement of Namibia, SWAPO, became a significant recipient of aid delivered by communist actors. In different ways, these actors provided support to the Namibian cause, contributing to the radicalization and internationalization of the struggle.

2 SWAPO and Communists

During the liberation struggle, SWAPO was able to mobilize international support from many governments and organizations around the world, which sustained the Namibian cause for different reasons and through different means. SWAPO's diplomatic activity, directed at increasing political awareness and at appealing for solidarity and support, was therefore strong since its inception and enabled the movement to gain international recognition. The leader of the movement, Sam Nujoma, was deeply committed to widening SWAPO's support base through participation in international conferences and meetings and building relationships with anyone willing to support the Namibian struggle, whether in the capitalist or communist camp. SWAPO's external support was therefore coming from a broad spectrum of international actors, ranging from anti-apartheid groups and civil society movements in the West, international organizations including UN's organs, non-governmental organizations such as the Namibia Support Committee, the Front Line States, the OAU, the Non-Aligned Movement, governments and solidarity movements in neutral countries such as Sweden, and, last but not least, socialist countries such as the Soviet Union, the GDR, and Cuba.¹⁷ In the Cold

¹⁵ Calori et al. (eds.), *Between East and South*.

¹⁶ Y. S. Hong, *Cold War Germany, The Third World, and the Global Humanitarian Regime*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

¹⁷ Ch. Saunders, “Anti-apartheid, Decolonization and Transnational Solidarity: The Namibian Case”, in: A. Konieczna, R. Skinner (eds.), *A Global History of Anti-apartheid: “Forward to Freedom” in South Africa*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 317–338.

War's scramble for humanitarian and development aid, communist actors were at the forefront in supporting the Namibian liberation struggle against the South African regime. By contrast, Western countries were reluctant to take a firm stance against the South African regime because of their economic and strategic interests in the area.

The Soviet Union was engaged in supporting the liberation struggle in Namibia as a result of both Cold War competition with the United States, which was linked with Pretoria by economic and political interests, and a deep-rooted creed in the global anti-imperialist struggle, which led communist actors to truly believe in the righteousness of SWAPO's cause.¹⁸ Initially more closely linked with the other main liberation movement in Namibia, the South West African National Union (SWANU), the Soviet Union progressively strengthened its relationship with SWAPO during the 1970s, which had by then increased its international prestige, and started to provide assistance through diplomatic support, material shipments, medical treatment, education and training for cadres, and, above all, military hardware and expertise.¹⁹ Besides the Soviet Union, most of the external assistance provided to the Namibian struggle came from the GDR and Cuba, as will be outlined in the next section. Among the other socialist countries that supported SWAPO, although to a lesser extent, China and North Korea should be mentioned, too. The first contacts with China occurred in the 1960s, when SWAPO cadres were sent there for military training, and continued during the 1970s and 1980s, despite Chinese support for the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA). In the context of the Sino-Soviet competition, having to choose between the two Namibian rival movements, China initially backed SWANU instead of the pro-Soviet SWAPO; however, after SWANU's decline in the early 1970s, it started to move closer to SWAPO, which it mostly supported with rhetorical pronouncements, being held back in solidarity by SWAPO's closeness to the Soviet Union.²⁰ In this sense, as Ian Taylor pointed out, the struggle for independence in Namibia was not shaped by the Sino-Soviet dispute to the same extent it was elsewhere in Southern Africa's liberation struggles.²¹ For its part, SWAPO tried not to get involved in the Sino-Soviet competition and to maintain friendly relations with both the Soviet Union and China, seeking to obtain as much assistance as possible from both sides.²²

18 Ch. Saunders, "SWAPO's 'Eastern' Connections, 1966–1989", in: Dallywater, Saunders, Fonseca (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War 'East'*, pp. 57–76, at 75.

19 Shubin, *The Hot "Cold War"*, pp. 195–235.

20 I. Taylor, "China and Swapo: The role of the People's Republic in Namibia's liberation and post-independence relations", *South African Journal of International Affairs* 5 (1997) 1, pp. 110–122.

21 Ibid.

22 Shubin, *The Hot "Cold War"*, p. 209.

African socialist countries such as Angola and Tanzania – which were part of the coalition of the Front Line States – also actively backed the Namibian liberation struggle, especially by providing SWAPO with operational headquarters, military camps for training freedom fighters, and settlements for refugees as well as material and diplomatic support.²³

Other minor socialist countries, such as Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, also contributed to assisting SWAPO. Some early contacts between Tito and Nujoma in the 1960s and the subsequent Yugoslav support in terms of scholarships and military aid for Namibians have been highlighted in Nujoma's autobiography,²⁴ while Milorad Lazic also mentioned Yugoslav monetary and material support to SWAPO during the 1980s.²⁵ Between 1985 and 1991, a group of Namibian children from refugee camps was received and educated in Czechoslovakia.²⁶ After the Cassinga massacre in 1978, in fact, Czechoslovakia, like Cuba and the GDR, offered shelter and provide education to the young Namibians from the refugee camps.

Western anti-apartheid groups also played a central role in raising awareness on the violent system of the South African regime and its illegal occupation of Namibia. On the frontline of these Western solidarity movements, the communist parties, deeply rooted in the political culture of internationalism, were committed to the anti-apartheid struggle of the Southern African liberation movements. As we shall see in the case of the communist party in Italy, they mostly provided diplomatic, political, and material assistance and tried to put pressure on their governments for a concrete stance against the South African regime. Therefore, direct support to the armed struggle remained one of the priorities of the socialist states.

In search of the support needed to continue the struggle and to obtain the opportunities unavailable in the home country, SWAPO appealed to the solidarity rhetoric of the socialist countries. At the 1976 Nampundwe Conference near Lusaka, it adopted a radical political programme which, using a Soviet-style lexicon,

23 For Tanzania's role in the Southern African liberation struggle, see A. J. Temu, N. Z. Reuben, and S. N. Seme, "Tanzania and the Liberation Struggle of Southern Africa, 1964 to 1994", in: A. J. Temu and J. N. Tembe (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Struggles: Contemporaneous Documents, 1960–1994*, Dar-es-Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2014, vol. VI. For a detailed study of life in SWAPO camps in Angola (Cassinga, Lubango) and Tanzania (Kongwa), see Ch. A. Williams, *National Liberation in Postcolonial Southern Africa: A Historical Ethnography of SWAPO's Exile Camps*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

24 S. Nujoma, *Where Others Wavered: The Autobiography of Sam Nujoma*, London: Panaf Books, 2001, p. 115.

25 M. Lazic, "Arsenal of the Global South: Yugoslavia's Military aid to Nonaligned Countries and Liberation Movements", *Nationalities Papers* 49 (2021) 3, pp. 428–455, at 439.

26 K. Mildnerová, *Namibian Czechs: History and Identity of the Namibian Children Raised in Czechoslovakia*, Zürich: Lit, 2020.

was committed to fight against racial discrimination and tribalism for the political and social liberation of Namibia, with the aim to build “a classless, non-exploitative society based on the ideals and principle of scientific socialism”.²⁷ Debates among scholars have concerned whether SWAPO’s embrace of socialism reflected a real ideological commitment or rather the intention to reinforce alliances with the communist bloc.²⁸ What is surprising, in fact, is the total and sudden abandonment of socialism by SWAPO during the negotiations to draft the constitution of independent Namibia, which instead adopted most of the elements characterizing the Western liberal democratic states.

While the earlier influences exerted by the South African Communist Party and the employment of socialist and anti-imperialist rhetoric seem to suggest that socialism was SWAPO’s natural path, it is also noteworthy that the movement always tried to maintain a non-aligned status and continued to seek support from the West.²⁹ Many scholars have portrayed SWAPO as a nationalist and pragmatically oriented movement whose cornerstone’s strategy was independence from South Africa. As Elena Torreguitar points out, “in SWAPO, the approach to politics was always sensible, pragmatic. There was never a long debate over ideology because it was not central to their objectives. The rationale that drove them into this struggle was independence, nothing more and nothing less. Everything else could be negotiated.”³⁰ The Namibian Constitution was indeed negotiated by SWAPO with the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) and other political forces and, while it made no reference to socialist ideology, it adopted an economic order based on mixed economy, which combined the free-market principles of private contracting with socialist principles of state ownership and planning (Article 98).³¹

Pragmatism is highlighted also by Lauren Dobell, who considers SWAPO’s transformation as a predictable consequence of its externally-oriented diplomatic strategy during the liberation struggle. She defines the 1976 political programme

27 SWAPO, “Political program”, p. 6, quoted in: L. Dobell, *SWAPO’s Struggle for Namibia: 1960–1991. War by Others Means*, Basel: P. Schlettwein Publishers, 2000, p. 57.

28 J. Zollmann, “On SWAPO’s Socialism: Socialist Ideology and Practice during the Namibian Struggle for Independence, 1960–1989”, in: F. Blum, H. Kiriakou, M. Mourre et al. (dir.), *Socialismes en Afrique. Socialisms in Africa*, Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 2021, pp. 593–612; L. Dobell, “SWAPO in Office”, in: C. Leys and J. S. Saul (eds.), *Namibia’s Liberation Struggle: The Two-Edged Sword*, London: James Currey, 1995, pp. 171–195.

29 Zollmann, “On SWAPO’s Socialism”, pp. 597–601.

30 E. Torreguitar, *National Liberation Movements in Office: Forging Democracy with African Adjunctives in Namibia*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009, p. 146.

31 See 1991 Namibian Constitution, as amended in 1998, 2010, and 2014, in: Namibian Constitution (lac.org.na) (accessed 20 May 2024).

as the final touch of a strategic maneuver to obtain a reconciliation with MPLA and a renewed diplomatic recognition during a time in which socialism was gaining momentum in Africa, rather than as a statement of political belief.³²

It can be assumed that SWAPO used socialism to build a narrative that would fit in the Cold War structure while continuing to search aid from the West in order to maintain a non-aligned position and pursue its scope with as much support as possible. Socialism seems to have been embraced by SWAPO's leadership as a vague concept accommodating the principles behind the liberation struggle, rather than as a clear alignment within the Cold War. Yet socialist rhetoric and imagery were dominant during the liberation struggle and shaped what SWAPO is today.

Although pragmatism prevailed even after independence, when the demise of socialism – coupled with the need to show moderation to facilitate the end of apartheid in South Africa – led SWAPO to refrain from pursuing socialist principles and to negotiate a constitution without any reference to socialism, discussions over SWAPO's ideology continue to this day and animate the party's leadership. Recently, the SWAPO party has embarked on a debate on socialism and turned its attention to socialist ideology as a possible path for Namibia: at its Extraordinary Congress held in November 2018, it redefined its political ideology as socialism “with a Namibian character”.³³

3 Visions of Socialist Solidarities with SWAPO: Cuba, East Germany, and Italian Communists

The analysis of the solidarity politics implemented by three socialist settings, which differed primarily in their geopolitical positioning, allows us to understand how their engagement depended mainly on their national and ideological contexts. It also shows how their foreign policy was affected by their relationship with the Soviet Union, which represented a source of inspiration as well as a great power from which they sought to various extent to gain autonomy.

East Germany – which is described by Gareth Winrow as an affiliate rather than a surrogate of the Soviet Union³⁴ – established a close relationship with

³² Dobell, “SWAPO in Office”, p. 174.

³³ C. Sasman, “SWAPO is a Lion-Shaningwa,” *Namibian Sun*, 4 December 2018, <https://www.namibiansun.com/news/swapo-is-a-lion-shaningwa2018-12-04> (accessed 20 May 2024). This move has been criticized by many for its vague formulation, its lack of a grass-root nature, and its difficult implementation.

³⁴ Winrow, *The Foreign Policy of the GDR in Africa*.

SWAPO especially starting from the second half of the 1970s, when SWAPO begun to gain more credibility, sided more effectively with MPLA, and declared to have embraced socialism. 1977 was a key year for this relationship, as Nujoma's visit to East Berlin in December led to the signing of a cooperation agreement between the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED, Socialist Unity Party of Germany) and SWAPO,³⁵ which was followed by solidarity measures taken in the political, material, educational, medical, and military spheres. In addition to the political and diplomatic support as well as support in propaganda activities, the GDR provided SWAPO with significant material aid through the provision of goods to SWAPO refugee camps, especially the camp in Kwanza Sul, in southern Angola.³⁶

Supplies were furnished by the GDR to SWAPO also in the "non-civilian" field, to an extent that is not possible to accurately discern because of the scarcity of archival records on this matter. East Germany lent aid to SWAPO in the military field by dispatching military equipment as well as military and security advisers and experts and by training SWAPO cadres – which was done in absolute secrecy. The hypothesis of a possible involvement of the Stasi in military, security, and intelligence training of SWAPO cadres – who could have used the methods they learned to interrogate and punish alleged internal spies – has been advanced by some testimonies³⁷ and supported by some (West German) sources.³⁸ Increasingly during the 1980s, in fact, SWAPO was obsessed by the threat of the infiltration and arrested and imprisoned hundreds of its own members on the often unfounded charge of being South African spies.³⁹ The alleged dissidents suffered tortures and harassments in the detention camp in Lubango, in southern Angola, where they were imprisoned in dungeons under terrible conditions, leading in

35 SAPMO BArch, DY 30/46234, "Vorlage für das Politbüro des ZK – Anlage 1: Bericht über den Besuch einer Delegation der Südwestafrikanischen Volksorganisation (SWAPO) von Namibia unter Leitung ihres Präsidenten, Sam Nujoma, in der DDR vom 16. bis 20.12.1977", Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Berlin, 3 January 1978.

36 SAPMO BArch, DZ 8/296, Angola – Aufbau eines Kulturzentrums im Namibia Health and Education Center im Flüchtlingscamp der SWAPO in Kwanza Sul; National Archives of Namibia (NAN), Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and the Liberation Struggle (AACRLS) 241, Namibia Health and Education Center Kwanza Sul, Worker Brigades, 1983–1984.

37 For example, by Phil ya Nangoloh, President of the Namibian Society for Human Rights, see Basler Afrika Bibliographien (BAB), Allgemeine Archive Varia, FAA.20 3:2, Thomas Simmon, *Report Bayern über SWAPO Kinder*, Erstes Deutsches Fernsehen, 1995.

38 SAPMO BArch, DZ 8/825, Letter Reinhardt Gnauck to Hans Modrow, Frankfurt am Main, 1 March 1990; SAPMO BArch, DR 2/13853, "Namibische Kinder in der DDR", by Henning von Löwis, Staatliches Komitee für Rundfunk, Redaktion Monitor, DLF, 13 March 1986.

39 Williams, *National Liberation*, pp. 123–146.

some cases to their death. In supporting SWAPO in all respects, East Germany remained silent in the face of this human rights violation and was possibly even complicit through the training of SWAPO cadres in intelligence and counter-intelligence.

Educational and medical solidarity in support to SWAPO was also delivered by the GDR to a great extent. East German teachers, educational advisers, doctors, and nurses were sent on internationalist missions to SWAPO refugee camps in Angola and Zambia, where they worked to help SWAPO to create health and education infrastructures and to train, advise, and treat SWAPO members.⁴⁰ This support was especially provided in the GDR itself, where hundreds of Namibians went to study under scholarships and to be treated in East German hospitals. The Cassinga massacre on 4 May 1978 – when the South African forces attacked SWAPO refugee camps in southern Angola, particularly in Cassinga, killing and wounding hundreds of civilians – was a major event that prompted the GDR to increase its assistance in the educational and medical sectors. After that, in 1978, the Jacob Morenga ward was opened in the Berlin-Buch Hospital to provide medical assistance to wounded people from Namibia and, at a later stage, other countries.⁴¹ Furthermore, after the Cassinga massacre, an increasing number of Namibians arrived in the GDR to receive education at various levels and be trained as a skilled workforce capable of contributing to the reconstruction of their homeland.⁴² Hundreds of children and adolescents spent years in East Germany attending pre-school, primary, and secondary education. Between 1979 and 1990, around 430 Namibian children, today known as the “DDR-Kinder von Namibia”, arrived in Bellin and Staßfurt to receive a socialist education that was supposed to prepare them to play the role of the future elite of free Namibia.⁴³ In addition to Namibian children, the GDR also housed a number of youth and adults who were sent by SWAPO to attend studies and internships designed to qualify them for skilled jobs in various occupations thought to be useful for a future independent Namibia.

During the 1980s, because of the internal economic crisis and the disillusionment caused by the demise of socialism in Angola and Mozambique, the SED had actually undertaken a more pragmatic and economy-oriented Third World policy,

⁴⁰ See archival documents on the employment of DDR citizens in the service of SWAPO in SAPMO BArch: DY 30/58891, DY 30/64158, DY 30/64707, DY 30/63954, DY 30/64176, DY 30/59354, DY 30/59393, DY 30/64362, DY 30/64379, DY 30/64426, DY 30/64478, DY 30/64504, DY 30/64618, DY 30/59832, DY 30/64735, DY 30/64758, DY 30/64782, DY 30/64820, DY 30/64859.

⁴¹ NAN, AACRLS.177, Buch Collection.

⁴² Pasqualini, “Mapping Socialist Solidarities”, section 2.2.7.

⁴³ C. Kenna (ed.), *Homecoming: The GDR Kids of Namibia*, Windhoek: New Namibia Books, 1999.

more focused on Europe and on international security, peace, and disarmament. Despite this change in foreign policy, the political-ideological component remained a preponderant element of the GDR's cooperation policy with SWAPO. This is evidenced by the central role played by political and ideological education in the educational programmes, through which East Germany also aimed to politically influence Namibians toward socialism.⁴⁴

Solidarity was the tool employed to support the Namibian liberation struggle, seen as part of the revolutionary world process, while also enhancing the image of the GDR both at home and abroad. In its relationship with SWAPO, the political elite of the GDR combined the policy of peace it had embraced during the 1980s – by supporting the negotiations leading to a political solution for the independence of Namibia – with the insistence on anti-imperialist class struggle and socialist development, which it never abandoned. It continued to try to influence SWAPO in a socialist way through a political education based on its own experiences and its own Marxist-Leninist reading of the world, ending up embodying a paternalist supporter, unable to consider the different initial conditions of the receiving countries and the possible paths for their future development. On its part, as SWAPO representative in the GDR, Obed Emvula, stressed in an interview with Toni Weis, SWAPO remained autonomous from its hosts: “[W]e cannot blame the foreign countries in which we lived that they had brainwashed us. [. . .] We are not just things, like bottles and glasses to be poured in – we are people who can choose what we want.”⁴⁵

Thus, the support provided by the GDR to SWAPO during the Namibian liberation struggle was significant in its scope, as it supplied a great quantity of aid in various fields, ambiguous in its dealing with SWAPO's “spy drama”, as it supported SWAPO's leadership even when it violated the human rights within its own ranks, and paternalistic in its purpose, as it aimed to strengthen socialism *à la* GDR abroad.

A different model of socialist solidarity was carried out by Cuba, a country that had suffered centuries of Spanish colonialism and that was, and still is, subjected to the US hegemonic claims. Because of its revolutionary history, Cuba was regarded as a model by the Third World countries that were struggling against colonialism and neocolonialism. It promoted an independent and often adventur-

⁴⁴ See, for example, the importance of the ideological component in the training addressed to Namibian women in Bellin, SAPMO BArch, DR 2/11382, “Konzeption für die Qualifizierung der namibischen Frauen in Bellin, Kreis Güstrow”, Hauptabteilung Lehrerbildung, Abt. Päd./Psych. und Fachschulen, 13 November 1979.

⁴⁵ T. Weis, “The Politics Machine: On the Concept of ‘Solidarity’ in East German Support for SWAPO”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37 (2011) 2, pp. 351–367, at 362.

istic foreign policy, spending a great deal of resources to support anti-colonial struggles and defend friendly countries from external aggression, especially Angola. As a small and poor country, Cuba mostly relied on Soviet aid, however always trying to pursue autonomous strategies in the Third World, often even forcing the Soviet Union to follow its lead. The need to have a strong ally as the Soviet Union – necessary to survive in a time of political and economic isolation – on one side allowed Cuba to provide such cooperation, while on the other jeopardized its reputation as a non-aligned country devoted to the cause of the Third World.

Cuba supported the Namibian liberation struggle and SWAPO from Angola, where large contingents of Cuban civilian and military personnel were based for more than a decade in order to provide aid to MPLA and defend the Angolan territory from South African attacks.⁴⁶ The relationship with SWAPO was established especially after the independence of Angola, when SWAPO sided with the MPLA and moved its headquarters from Lusaka to Luanda.

One aspect that distinguished Cuban solidarity with SWAPO from other socialist models of cooperation was its involvement in the military combats on some occasions. The permanence of Cuban troops in the Angolan territory, in fact, allowed Cuba to promptly intervene in case of need. When the South African regime launched the attack on Cassinga, on 4 May 1978, a Cuban contingent intervened to defend the camp and rescue the survivors. Cuban soldiers shed their blood on the battlefield along with SWAPO soldiers, earning the great respect of Namibians, with whom Cuba still shares a strong bond today.⁴⁷ At the final battles in Cuito Cuanavale and surroundings, the Cubans operated together with SWAPO soldiers, in addition to the Angolan army and, to a lesser extent, ANC.⁴⁸ Despite the outcome of the battle is still discussed and interpreted differently by scholars today, its symbolic value is undeniable, as it contributed to the result of the negotiations that led Namibia to independence. Cuba played a key role also at the ne-

⁴⁶ Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*.

⁴⁷ Written interview with Pascual Corbea Jiménez, a Cuban soldier who participated in the military operation aimed to intervene in Cassinga to halt the South African attack of 4 May 1978, 5 December 2022. See also Wilson Center Digital Archive, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive (HAPP), Archives of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party (ACC), “Memorandum of Conversation between Jorge Risquet and Sam Nujoma”, 12 May 1978, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117936> (accessed 31 May 2024); H. López Blanch, *Cuba: Pequeño Gigante Contra el Apartheid* [Cuba: little giant against apartheid], Barcelona: Ediciones Wanáfrica, 2017, pp. 68–70; P. Gleijeses, “Cuba and the Independence of Namibia”, *Cold War History* 7 (2007) 2, pp. 285–303.

⁴⁸ Gleijeses, “Cuba and the Independence of Namibia”; H. López Blanch, *SWAPO: A Lion Against Apartheid*, Havana: Casa Editora Abril, 2015, pp. 229–264.

gotiating table, acting as a spokesperson for SWAPO and pressing the South Africans to accept Resolution 435.⁴⁹ Thus, it provided a significant support to SWAPO militarily, politically, and diplomatically.

Other than that, it also offered civilian assistance in Angola, such as medical care to SWAPO soldiers and civilians, and elaborated a broad programme of educational solidarity, opening primary and secondary schools for SWAPO students at the Isla de la Juventud, where thousands of Namibians accomplished their education.⁵⁰ At the Isla de la Juventud, they were housed and schooled at the Hendrik Witbooi school – a school designed specifically for Namibians and named after the Namibian hero who led the Nama rebellion against German colonialism in 1904–1905 (see Figure 12.1). As the number of Namibian students grew over time, a second school was inaugurated in 1981, named after Hosea Kutako, chief of the Ovaherero and leader petitioning for Namibian independence.⁵¹ University and college studies as well as political training were imparted to Namibians through scholarships in the main island.

Cuba was one of SWAPO's closest allies, and it stayed in Angola as much as needed for Namibia to be liberated from South African domination. It was prompted to support SWAPO by a desire to end external domination, white supremacy, and racism in Southern Africa. As also Piero Gleijeses points out, in fact, revolutionary idealism was the main driving force behind Cuban solidarity, as it was aimed to export the revolution, rather than socialism – revolution understood as the fight against the North's supremacy.⁵² Cuba was a socialist country, but it was also a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and an underdeveloped country that had suffered colonialism and exploitation, and thus willing to support the liberation struggle of the Third World by virtue of South-South solidarity. Although its socialist membership sometimes diminished its claims of genuine solidarity, in the case of the anti-apartheid struggle in Southern Africa, Cuba employed large resources, especially human, repeatedly acting without consulting its Soviet partner.

Italian communist solidarity provides yet another idea of socialist solidarity, which had an autonomous character within the context of the global Cold War. In fact, during this period, under the leadership of Enrico Berlinguer, the PCI assumed a line that differentiated Italian communists from communists both in the

⁴⁹ Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, pp. 450–502.

⁵⁰ Pasqualini, "Mapping Socialist Solidarities", section 3.3.2.

⁵¹ H. K. Angula, *A Journey of Journeys: An Autobiographical Essay*, Windhoek: John Meinert Printing, 2017, p. 48; "Focus on Island of Youth: Paradise Schools for Future Namibian Leaders", *The Combatant* 4 (1983) 10, May 1983, pp. 11–14, at 12 (in BAB, SWAPO collection, AA.3 83fSLuPa4).

⁵² Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, pp. 375–376.



Figure 12.1: Namibian students at the Hendrik Witbooi School, Isla de la Juventud, Cuba (no date). Source: Independence Museum, Windhoek.

East and in the West and influenced the development of its model of solidarity. This internationalist line moved away from the project of strengthening Soviet-style international communism and instead launched an autonomous vision of communism, based on the values of democratic pluralism and opposed to the logic of blocs. Within this line, Europe, which was to play a key role in the détente process, took on increasing importance. In Berlinguer's thinking, special attention was devoted to the North-South relations and to the formulation of a new world order based on interdependence and cooperation and on a renewed conception of development that was supposed to redress inequalities and stem the problems of hunger and poverty.⁵³

⁵³ S. Pons, *Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo* [Berlinguer and the end of communism], Turin: Einaudi, 2006.

The PCI started to put the anti-apartheid struggle at the core of its foreign policy agenda after the independence of Angola in 1975 and the Soweto massacre in 1976, which raised the world's awareness of the unjust system of apartheid. It supported the liberation struggle of SWAPO and ANC mostly at a political and diplomatic level, through the organization of protests against the South African regime, the participation in global conferences against apartheid, and the development of contacts with the Southern African movements, with the main purpose of triggering a more concrete position of the Italian government. More importantly, it acted along with other Italian progressive parties within a decentred structure of solidarity that was led by the communist municipality of Reggio Emilia.⁵⁴ Thanks to the internationalist fervor of the council member Giuseppe Soncini, Reggio Emilia was able to unite national forces and create a committee in charge of the solidarity initiatives with Southern Africa, turning to the PCI for support in campaigning. The National Committee of Solidarity with the Peoples of Southern Africa, founded in 1979 in Reggio Emilia after the first National Conference of Solidarity, was the main Italian actor that coordinated and channeled the political and material aid to SWAPO and ANC until 1984. Between 1978 and 1984, two conferences were organized to push the Italian government to condemn South African apartheid and the occupation of Namibia, and material aid was delivered to the refugee camps of SWAPO and ANC through two solidarity ships.⁵⁵ The success of these initiatives was made possible by the unity of the Italian political forces, facilitated by the figures of Berlinguer and Soncini. In fact, rather than on a government or a single political party, solidarity with SWAPO depended mainly on two communist figures, Giuseppe Soncini and Enrico Berlinguer, who shaped the language and the programme of the Italian cooperation with Southern African struggles. Italian communists promoted a solidarity discourse through an anti-Western, anti-American, but also anti-bipolar and anti-hegemonic language, condemning the interference of the hegemonic powers (Soviet Union included) in the Third World and launching an international vision based on interdependence.⁵⁶

54 A. Pasqualini, "Per la fine dell'apartheid e l'indipendenza della Namibia: i comunisti italiani e i movimenti di liberazione dell'Africa australe" [For the end of apartheid and the independence of Namibia: The Italian communists and the southern African liberation movements], in: G. Siracusano (ed.), *Il PCI e l'Africa. Internazionalismo, decolonizzazioni e relazioni Nord-Sud* (= *Studi Storici*, forthcoming).

55 Pasqualini, "Mapping Socialist Solidarities", section 4.4. See the material collected in the Soncini-Ganapini Archive (ASG), Fondo Africa, Solidarietà con l'Africa australe – Comitato nazionale di solidarietà con i popoli dell'Africa australe – Attività contro l'Apartheid, "Appunti per una storia della solidarietà" e "Appunti per la cronaca".

56 Pasqualini, "Per la fine dell'apartheid e l'indipendenza della Namibia"; A. Pasqualini, "Solidarity, Anti-Racism and Human Rights: Italian Communists and the Struggle against Apartheid",

Communists in the West thus contributed to aid SWAPO in the struggle against South African apartheid mostly through material and political support. In Italy, they sought to raise awareness on the issue of apartheid among the population, slightly mobilize the government, and contribute to the life improvement of SWAPO and ANC refugees, in strict cooperation with other national actors. However, relationship with SWAPO suffered from the lack of a SWAPO representative based in Italy and thus from the absence of close and constant contacts between Italian communists and the liberation movement. This was further endangered by the declining unity among the various political forces after 1984, which led to a decline in the Italian activities against apartheid.⁵⁷

This brief overview shows how East Germany, Cuba, and the PCI supported SWAPO through different instruments and for different purposes, which depended on their geopolitical context and their ideological outlook. They also promoted solidarity with SWAPO through different narratives, which were set up to furnish a moral justification to their commitment to the liberation struggle of Namibia.

The GDR delivered assistance to SWAPO on multiple levels, including sending material goods, dispatching East German experts, offering medical care, and providing professional and educational training. It used the prism of solidarity to create a positive image of East Germany, distant from its Western counterpart, and to encourage a type of political activism prescribed by state directives.⁵⁸ It portrayed itself as a different country in respect to West Germany: a country that had not to be blamed for the German colonial and Nazi past, attributed solely to its Western counterpart, and that had been able to rebuild itself after the defeat of fascism and had taken anti-fascism as its central guiding principle.⁵⁹ According to this narrative, the GDR regarded itself as a suitable ally of the Third World. Reality on the ground, however, was different as East Germany had limitations in approaching and representing the “Other” outside the lens of racial and civilizational difference.⁶⁰

in: S. Pons (ed.), *Gorbachev, Italian Communism and Human Rights*, Rome: Viella, 2022, pp. 139–165.

⁵⁷ Pasqualini, “Per la fine dell’apartheid e l’indipendenza della Namibia”.

⁵⁸ Weis, “The Politics Machine”.

⁵⁹ T. Kern, *West Germany and Namibia’s Path to Independence, 1969–1990: Foreign Policy and Rivalry with East Germany*, Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2020, p. 18; C. Bürger, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte(n). Der Genozid in Namibia und die Geschichtsschreibung der DDR und BRD* [German colonial history(ies): the genocide in Namibia and the historiography of the GDR and FRG], Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2017.

⁶⁰ Pasqualini, “Mapping Socialist Solidarities”, section 2.1.4.

Compared to East German, Cuba was mostly committed in providing direct military assistance also by sending its own troops to fight alongside SWAPO in Angola. The GDR leadership, in fact, preferred to not get involved in external conflicts with the deployment of its military personnel and rather committed itself promptly delivering arms and military equipment, offering military training both at home and abroad, and sending advisory groups.⁶¹ Beside military cooperation, Cuba also developed a broad educational programme addressed to Namibians and defended SWAPO's rights during the quadripartite negotiations. The motivations behind Cuban activism with the Third World were various and are listed by Michael Erisman as follows: "its quest for military and economic security; ideological considerations; its aspirations for Third World leadership; its sense of mission; and nationalism".⁶² These elements occasionally overlap and "their importance will vary as strategic shifts of emphasis occur".⁶³ However, ideological considerations played a major role during the Cold War period, as Cuba devoted itself to the cause of supporting Third World countries, spending many resources, especially human.

Cuban support to the Southern African struggles was framed around a narrative that emphasized the blood relationship between Cubans and Africans – which dates back to the transatlantic slave trade – and of the history of common struggle that united them.⁶⁴ Like enslaved Africans fought the revolutionary and anti-colonial struggle in Cuba, Cubans had the duty to contribute to liberate Africa. The common experience of oppression and revolution as well as the declared anti-racism of Cuba, which proudly affirmed to be a nation built on *mestizaje*, further served to portray the island as having the historical mission to help to eliminate apartheid in Southern Africa.⁶⁵

The analysis of Italian communist support to SWAPO allows us to see how socialist solidarity was conceived and implemented by Western communists who were not in government, and to compare it with models of state-led solidarity.

⁶¹ K. Storkmann, *Geheime Solidarität: Militärbeziehungen und Militärhilfen der DDR in die "Dritte Welt"* [Secret solidarity: GDR military relations and military aid in the Third World], Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2012.

⁶² H. M. Erisman, *Cuba's International Relations: The Anatomy of a Nationalistic Foreign Policy*, New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2018, p. 7.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ M. A. Houser, "Avenging Carlota in Africa: Angola and the memory of Cuban slavery", *Atlantic Studies* 12 (2015) 1, pp. 50–66.

⁶⁵ Despite the rhetoric, the path toward racial equality in Cuba was far from complete. For an analysis of race and racism in postcolonial Cuba, see A. de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth Century Cuba*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Since the solidarity actions did not come from the government but from a National Committee, in which the role of the communists was central, they were limited mainly to the political and material levels, with the main purpose of pressuring the Italian government to take a firm stand against the South African regime. Italian communists launched their solidarity by resuming the national history of anti-fascism, as they also worked to liberate their country from a fascist and racist rule. As the struggle against fascism in Italy united democratic forces against one enemy, even in the case of the anti-apartheid struggle, it was essential for Italian communists, socialists, and Christian democrats to overcome their differences and come together in order to put an end to South African racism.⁶⁶

The three actors proposed different visions of solidarity, aimed at corroborating their own theorizations of socialism. SWAPO was able to take advantage from such visions, as each of them could serve its different needs in diverse ways. Cuban promptness to intervene and the sacrifice of Cuban lives for the Namibian cause were honorably acknowledged, strengthening a relationship that is still strong today. Regarding the support coming from the Italian communists, what most attracted African countries and movements to establish a relationship with them was the PCI's rejection, under the leadership of Enrico Berlinguer, of the bipolar logics and its distancing from the Soviet Union. In the context of the struggle against apartheid, SWAPO's link with the PCI and, in general, with the Italian anti-apartheid movement, represented an important instrument to reach the West, where the Namibian question encountered some resistance due to the interests dictated by the political conditions of the Cold War climate as well as by economic rationales. Instead, East German solidarity benefited SWAPO's leadership for another reason: by supporting the movement in all respects, even overlooking reports of human rights violations within its ranks, the GDR served SWAPO's need to gain international recognition and consolidate its power.⁶⁷

4 Conclusions

During the struggle, SWAPO navigated the Cold War dynamics, trying to leverage them to its advantage. The struggle was exacerbated by the bipolar tensions of the period and the independence of Namibia was delayed by South African and Western fears that a socialist SWAPO might come to power and establish a social-

⁶⁶ ASG, Fondo Africa, Appunti, b. 2, f. 4/03, *La nave della solidarietà italiana. Una iniziativa unitaria popolare e nazionale*, G. Soncini, n.d., p. 2.

⁶⁷ Weis, "The Politics Machine".

ist government. Though SWAPO sought aid from both socialist and capitalist countries to achieve its primary goal – the liberation of Namibia – it predominantly turned to communist countries because they were more well-disposed toward the Namibian cause. In 1976, it likely embraced scientific socialism in order to strengthen the alliance with the communist bloc and receive increasing support.

The analysis of the support furnished to SWAPO by East Germany, Cuba, and the Italian Communist Party reveals distinct and sometimes diverging visions of socialist solidarity during the Cold War, challenging the notion of a fixed and homogeneous socialist aid system. Each actor approached SWAPO with different motivations, instruments, and ideological frameworks, shaped by their geopolitical positioning and internal political contexts.

East Germany sought to support the Namibian liberation movement as part of its broader anti-imperialist and anti-fascist agenda. The relationship was formalized through political, material, medical, and educational support, with the GDR providing goods, health assistance, military training, and educational opportunities for Namibians. However, the East German approach was largely paternalistic, basically aiming to export its own model of socialism. Providing substantial aid and supporting SWAPO by all means, it also contributed to enhancing the movement's power even when it committed human rights violations within its ranks. The GDR's solidarity was thus more about reinforcing its image as a leading socialist state than fostering an equitable partnership with SWAPO. Cuba, on the other hand, pursued a more revolutionary and hands-on model of solidarity. As a country with its own experience of colonialism, its support was grounded in shared anti-colonial struggles and South-South solidarity. Unlike the GDR, Cuba engaged directly in military combat alongside SWAPO, shedding Cuban blood on the battlefield during the Cassinga massacre and the final battles at Cuito Cuana-vale. Cuban solidarity was driven by a revolutionary idealism, with the scope of promoting not only socialism but also the overthrow of apartheid and external domination. The permanence of Cuban troops in Angola and their commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle created a strong bond between the two, emphasizing Cuba's unique position as both a socialist and a non-aligned actor. The narrative of shared genealogy and common struggle was designed to portray Cuba as the ideal partner and to bolster its leadership within the Non-Aligned Movement. However, Cuban relationships with the Soviet Union and its alignment with it on occasions such as the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 ultimately undermined its claim to non-alignment.

The Italian Communist Party offered another distinct form of socialist solidarity, rooted in its rejection of the bipolar Cold War logic. Under Enrico Berlinguer's leadership, the PCI sought to chart an independent path, distancing itself

from Soviet communism while emphasizing democratic pluralism and cooperation. The PCI's support for SWAPO was largely political and diplomatic, mobilizing domestic and international support against apartheid rather than supporting the armed struggle. Italian communists leveraged their anti-fascist legacy to build solidarity with Southern African liberation movements, but their efforts were constrained by their position outside the government. Nevertheless, the PCI's ideological autonomy in such a bipolar context made it an attractive ally for SWAPO, as it helped raise awareness of the Namibian cause in the West while preserving its distinctiveness within the socialist world.

In summary, while all three actors engaged with SWAPO under the banner of socialist solidarity, their approaches differed sharply. The GDR emphasized ideological alignment and political education, Cuba focused on revolutionary struggle and military intervention, and the PCI provided diplomatic support through a more independent and pluralist vision of socialism. These diverse forms of solidarity highlight the heterogeneity of the communist world, as each actor interpreted and acted on solidarity according to its unique historical and political context. While this chapter emphasizes the different approaches taken by communist actors, it also shows that solidarity with liberation movements was often framed as a core principle of the international communist movement's foreign policy. This framing served to differentiate the communist bloc from the Western bloc, though this distinction was largely rhetorical.

Tycho van der Hoog

13 Warmongering and Worldmaking: North Korean Diplomacy, African Decolonization, and the Pyongyang Conference of 1987

North Korea is renowned for its military diplomacy. The launching of ballistic missiles at home and the selling of weapons abroad, such as ammunition to Russia or technology to Iran, enhances its status as a regime gone rogue.¹ Since 2006, North Korea has been sanctioned by the United Nations for its expanding weapons programme, in particular because of the development of nuclear capabilities.² North Korea's role as a warmongering nation has a historical precedent, as Pyongyang had been a prolific exporter of arms and training since the 1960s. Military export was "an important part of its foreign policy strategy" during the Cold War, and numerous state and non-state actors around the world benefited from North Korean support.³ Especially in Africa, North Korea was an "exceptional player" in terms of military assistance.⁴ Today, its catalogue of violence remains impressive and serves as an important means of generating revenue.⁵

Yet, this is not the entire story of North Korea's role in the world, at least during the Cold War. In addition to warmongering, North Korea also engaged in worldmaking. Coined by Adom Getachew, the concept of worldmaking describes how anticolonial politicians, activists, and intellectuals from around the world challenged the global system by calling for self-determination, emancipation, and a New International Economic Order.⁶ This chapter argues that under Kim Il Sung's leadership, North Korea cooperated with African states to alter the global order in an effort of worldmaking. This side of Kim's diplomatic strategy is under-

1 S.-H. Choi, "North Korea Sent Russia Millions of Artillery Shells: South Korea", *Time*, 14 June 2024; J. S. Park, "The Iran Secret: Explaining North Korea's Rocket Success", *The Diplomat* (blog), n.d (accessed 21 June 2024).

2 United Nations Panel of Experts, "S/2010/571, Final Report of the Panel of Experts Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 1874 (2009)", 5 November 2010.

3 A. Berger, *Target Markets: North Korea's Military Customers in the Sanctions Era*, London: Routledge, 2016.

4 J. S. Bermudez, *Terrorism, the North Korean Connection*, New York: Crane Russak, 1990.

5 A. Berger, "Disrupting North Korea's Military Markets", *Survival* 58 (2016) 3, pp. 101–30.

6 A. Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.

appreciated, as most scholarship emphasizes the proliferation of arms from Pyongyang. A fitting example of North Korea's engagement with worldmaking is the "Extraordinary Ministerial Conference of Non-Aligned Countries on South-South Co-operation", which was organized in Pyongyang in 1987 under the auspices of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).⁷

The Pyongyang Conference is a useful counterargument against the security-infused understanding of North Korean-African cooperation. Held between 9–13 June 1987, this event attracted delegations from the Global South to discuss the transformation of the global order.⁸ This is a revealing case study of the internationalist agenda of Kim Il Sung, as it shows that his foreign policy was not entirely centred around guns and bullets. In the available literature on North Korea's role in the world, however, the Pyongyang Conference is absent – this event has been virtually forgotten or ignored. Nate Kerkhoff's study of North Korea's participation in the Non-Aligned Movement, for instance, does not mention the Pyongyang Conference at all.⁹ I nevertheless believe that this event is a revealing window to analyse North Korean-African encounters. Furthermore, the contents of the Pyongyang Conference allow us to question the validity of the Cold War lens to understand North Korea's cooperation within the Global South.

This chapter is based on novel primary sources from archives in the Global South. The main part of the analysis is based on declassified cables from the Diplomatic Archives of South Korea. During the Cold War, South Korean diplomats carefully monitored North Korean activities around the world, including in Africa, and compiled extensive reports that were communicated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Seoul. This archive is a treasure trove for the study of Korean competition during the Cold War and include seventeen files (a total of 3619 pages) on the Pyongyang Conference.¹⁰ All aspects of the event are covered:

7 I encountered the Pyongyang Conference during the archival research for my PhD thesis. As such, I have mentioned this event in my dissertation and two stand-alone publications. See T. A. van der Hoog, "North Korea and the Liberation of Southern Africa, 1960–2020", PhD thesis, Leiden University, 2024; T. A. van der Hoog, "Microphone Revolution: North Korean Cultural Diplomacy During the Liberation of Southern Africa", in: C. Stolte and S. L. Lewis (eds.), *The Lives of Cold War Afro-Asianism*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2022, pp. 265–290; T. A. van der Hoog, "On the Success and Failure of North Korean Development Aid in Africa", *NKEF Policy and Research Paper Series*, February 2022, pp. 31–42.

8 력 맹 특별 . , 1987.6.9–6.13. 17 [Special Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Parties on South-South Cooperation. Pyongyang, 9–13 June, 1987. 17 volumes], vol. 1, 25166, Diplomatic Archives of the Republic of Korea (hereafter DAROK), Seoul.

9 N. Kerkhoff, "North Korea and the Non-Aligned Movement: From Adulation to Marginalization", *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 28 (2020) 1, pp. 41–71.

10 See the DAROK reference numbers 25166–25182.

speeches and draft resolutions, dinner menus and conference floor maps, and the hotel rates of Pyongyang. A significant part of the collection is devoted to African participation (both via governments and national liberation movements), which was extensive. African leaders gave keynote speeches and the conference declaration included references to the African continent. Although the contents of this archive are incredibly valuable for the study of the Cold War, its usage is relatively limited because of language barriers (most material is only available in Hanja and Hangul) and access policies (the archives are located in Seoul). The pro-South Korean bias in the material must be considered, given the fervent inter-Korean rivalry that marked the analysis of its authors. This material is complemented by a variety of African primary sources, among them a report of Namibia's participation in the University of Namibia Archives.¹¹

The first section of this chapter considers North Korea's diplomatic strategy amidst African decolonial transitions. The foreign policy of Pyongyang was characterized by a paradox. On the one hand, North Korea was firmly part of the communist bloc and depended on the Soviet Union and China for its survival. On the other hand, North Korea successfully operated as an independent player in Africa through the adoption of non-aligned principles. The second section argues that North Korea's role in the Non-Aligned Movement was not a failure, as is commonly believed. This is illustrated by the Pyongyang Conference, despite this event being subject of intense diplomatic competition between both Koreas. The third section offers a description of the Pyongyang Conference, with specific attention to the role of African participants. The third section analyses North Korean-African interactions through the lens of worldmaking. With the "Pyongyang Declaration and Plan of Action on South-South Cooperation" the conference delivered a blueprint for a new world order, but the question remains how genuine – let alone effective – these efforts were.

1 North Korean Diplomacy and African Decolonization

North Korea was one of several foreign powers that became intimately involved in the decolonization of the African continent. For a long time its activities in Africa were overshadowed by larger Communist powers, most notably the Soviet

¹¹ T. A. van der Hoog, "A New Chapter in Namibian History: Reflections on Archival Research", *History in Africa*, January 2022, pp. 1–26.

Union, China, and Cuba.¹² In recent years new scholarship has emerged that singled out North Korea's influence in Africa, which originated from the division of the Korean peninsula at the end of World War II.¹³ Both Koreas vehemently opposed one another and claimed the position as the legitimate representative of the peninsula.¹⁴ Motivated by a competition with South Korea for votes in the United Nations, North Korea launched a large-scale diplomatic charm offensive across Africa.¹⁵ Many African anticolonial groups and governments were receptive to Pyongyang's anti-imperialist message and subsequently benefited from Kim Il Sung's diplomatic, military, and cultural support.¹⁶

In the public perception, the proliferation of weapons from Pyongyang became a defining feature of Kim Il Sung's diplomacy. For North Korea, the export of weapons and related services was an important "contribution to the country's foreign policy aims" that started in the 1960s.¹⁷ Joseph Bermudez argued that, in terms of providing military assistance, North Korea experienced its "greatest overall success and involvement" in Africa. North Korea despatched military advisors to African armies and invited African revolutionaries to receive military training at North Korean facilities, specifically in the fields of counterinsurgency warfare and presidential protection.¹⁸ In a study of North Korea's contemporary clients, Andrea Berger showed that many relations in Africa date back to the twentieth century.¹⁹ A large-scale network "grew out of the Cold War and continues into our own times", ac-

12 Z. Brzezinski and A. Dallin, *Africa and the Communist World*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963; I. Greig, *The Communist Challenge to Africa: An Analysis of Contemporary Soviet, Chinese and Cuban Policies*, London: Foreign Affairs Publishing, 1977; T. H. Henriksen, *Communist Powers and Sub-Saharan Africa*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1981.

13 S. H. Ryu, "North Korean Engagement in Africa during the Cold War: A Survey of Recent Historiographical Analyses", *Korea Europe Review: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Politics, Society, and Economics* 2 (June 2022), <https://doi.org/10.48770/ker.2022.no2.13>.

14 S.-S. Park, "Africa and Two Koreas: A Study of African Non-Alignment", *African Studies Review* 21 (1978) 1, pp. 73–88.

15 J. Owuoye, "The Metamorphosis of North Korea's African Policy", *Asian Survey* 31 (1971), pp. 630–645.

16 B. R. Young, "The Struggle for Legitimacy: North Korea's Relations with Africa, 1965–1992", *British Association of Korean Studies (BAKS) Papers* 16 (2015), pp. 97–116; L. Choi and I.-y. Jeong, "North Korea and Zimbabwe, 1978–1982: From the Strategic Alliance to the Symbolic Comradeship Between Kim Il Sung and Robert Mugabe", *Cold War History* 17 (2017) 4, pp. 329–349; B. T. Manatsha, "Geopolitical Implications of President Seretse Khama's 1976 State Visit to North Korea", *Botswana Notes and Records* 50 (2018), pp. 138–152.

17 Berger, *Target Markets: North Korea's Military Customers*.

18 Bermudez, *Terrorism, the North Korean Connection*.

19 Berger, *Target Markets: North Korea's Military Customers*.

cording to Bruce Bechtol. North Korea has consequently turned the proliferation of arms and the busting of sanctions “into an art form”.²⁰

African decolonization was a messy process. Several campaigns for self-determination resulted in prolonged conflicts where nationalist movements fought for independence. Once successful, postcolonial governments were faced with the challenge how their rule could be solidified and their nations transformed.²¹ As a result, African actors were receptive to external aid, which often came from Asian donor countries.²² Such cooperation was framed as Afro-Asian solidarity, but also became entangled with the ideological struggle of the Cold War, as many donor countries were part of the communist bloc.²³ For outside observers, Pyongyang was firmly entrenched within the communist bloc, as the regime of Kim Il Sung relied on China and the Soviet Union for its survival. In Africa, however, North Korea branded itself as a country that was independent from both Sino-Soviet tensions and Cold War rivalries.

In short, North Korea’s foreign policy paradox was the tension between its communist origins and non-aligned tactics. A particular important decision was the adoption of Juche thought as the guiding concept for North Korean society. Often translated as “self-reliance”, Juche made North Korea distinct from more mainstream Leninist or Stalinist doctrines, which was appealing to African states that were wary of communist influence. Brian Myers has argued that Juche primarily served to boost North Korea’s global image.²⁴ Another significant achievement was North Korea’s membership of the Non-Aligned Movement (discussed in further detail below). Several African states accepted North Korean development aid or cultural programmes and justified these decisions by pointing at North Ko-

20 B. E. Bechtol, *North Korean Military Proliferation in the Middle East and Africa: Enabling Violence and Instability*, Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2018.

21 S. R. Dorman, “Post-Liberation Politics in Africa: Examining the Political Legacy of Struggle”, *Third World Quarterly* 27 (2006), pp. 1085–1101, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590600842365>.

22 D. Bobiash, *South-South Aid: How Developing Countries Help Each Other*, London: MacMillan, St. Martin’s Press, 1992.

23 G. McCann, “Where Was the Afro in Afro-Asian Solidarity? Africa’s ‘Bandung Moment’ in 1950s Asia”, *Journal of World History* 30 (2019) 1, pp. 89–123, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2019.0014>; L. Dallywater, Ch. Saunders, and H. A. Fonseca (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War ‘East’: Transnational Activism 1960–1990*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019.

24 B. R. Myers, *North Korea’s Juche Myth*, Busan: Sthele Press, 2015.

rea's status as a non-aligned country.²⁵ This is indicative of how African states navigated Cold War rivalries to their own advantage.²⁶

Non-alignment allowed North Korea to gain "relatively effortless access to numerous regimes and organizations".²⁷ This is noteworthy considering the fact that North Korea was not a part of the Bandung Conference of 1955, which is generally considered as the starting point of Afro-Asian solidarity.²⁸ Nevertheless, North Korea eagerly adopted the "Bandung spirit" and participated in multilateral diplomacy. As the inter-Korean dispute had reached a stalemate at the United Nations, competition moved to other international organizations.²⁹ North Korea participated for instance in the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) and persuaded the secretariat to back its proposals for reunification of the Korean peninsula, all the while criticizing South Korea for its political and military dependency on the United States.³⁰

Pyongyang's proudest moment, however, was its membership of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1975. South Korea was barred from entering the organization, which was a diplomatic victory for Kim that he relentlessly exploited in Africa. Established in 1961, the NAM was "arguably the most important institution for the Global South", writes Nate Kerkhoff, and was generally considered to be an outcome of the Bandung Conference. The NAM attracted members with its attempt to steer clear of great power politics and decentral organization. North Korea lobbied the organization to obtain summit hosting duties and to gain support for its proposals to reunify the peninsula. Several summit charters in the 1970s and 1980s contained pro-North Korea resolutions. Through these meetings and documents, Kim Il Sung was able to project himself as one of the leaders of the Global South.³¹

25 van der Hoog, "On the Success and Failure of North Korean Development Aid in Africa"; van der Hoog, "Microphone Revolution".

26 J. Kirby, "Between Two Chinas and Two Koreas: African Agency and Non-Alignment in 1970s Botswana", *Cold War History* 20 (2020) 1, pp. 21–38.

27 Bermudez, *Terrorism, the North Korean Connection*.

28 Ch. Lee, *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010.

29 Ch. Y. Pak, *Korea and the United Nations*, Leiden: Brill, 2000.

30 Regional cooperation: AAPSO, Pamphlet Collection, Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) Library, Uppsala.

31 Kerkhoff, "North Korea and the Non-Aligned Movement".

2 The Non-Aligned Movement and Diplomatic Competition

It is commonly believed that North Korea's participation in the NAM was a failure. Kim Il Sung's primary goal was to isolate South Korea, but allegedly North Korea's relevance to non-aligned politics quickly disappeared. Nate Kerkhoff's assessment of North Korea's skill in statecraft is bleak, as he describes Kim's "narrow and short-sighted political motivations", "tone-deaf political statements", "foreign relations blunders", and "incompetency in diplomacy". Kerkhoff states that North Korea was able to host several smaller conferences between 1980 and 1983, on issues such as agriculture and education. By 1986, however, "North Korea had spent its political capital [. . .] with very little in return." North Korea simply "did not grasp the intricacies of the organization" and became marginalized.³²

This chapter, in contrast, argues that North Korea's participation in the NAM was more successful than it appears. In 1986, its biggest moment was yet to come – the hosting of the Pyongyang Conference of 1987. While this conference is not mentioned in Kerkhoff's analysis of North Korea and the NAM, it allowed North Korea to get involved in the debate about a New International Economic Order (NIEO).³³ The concept of the NIEO was launched by the NAM in 1973 at a summit in Algiers. Kerkhoff argues that North Korea only "paid lip service" to this economic aim, citing a "lack of preparation or willingness to attune itself with NAM goals".³⁴ Nevertheless, the Pyongyang Conference signifies another side of the story.

In addition to spreading an anti-South Korean agenda, North Korea leveraged its membership of the NAM to gain access to African allies and claim credibility as a non-aligned player.³⁵ The Pyongyang Conference was the first NAM event on South-South cooperation and North Korea could therefore claim to host a "significant historic meeting".³⁶ 76 out of 101 NAM members attended the conference, as well as 14 non-NAM members and 15 non-state actors. North Korea had also invited representatives of the Vatican and observers from international organizations such

³² Ibid.

³³ P. N. Agarwala, *The New International Economic Order: An Overview*, New York: Pergamon Press, 2014.

³⁴ Kerkhoff, "North Korea and the Non-Aligned Movement".

³⁵ 력 맹 특별 . [Special Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Parties] (see fn 8), vol. 1, DAROK 25166.

³⁶ Ibid., vol. 14, DAROK 25179.

as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).³⁷ This was a grand, international event that strengthened North Korea's image abroad.

Naturally, South Korea vehemently opposed North Korea's place in the spotlights. In 1988, South Korea was scheduled to host the Olympics in Seoul.³⁸ It was a momentous occasion to showcase the development of the South Korean state, exactly forty years after its establishment.³⁹ Seoul believed that North Korea would use the Pyongyang Conference to "engage in slanderous propaganda" and feared that the Korean peninsula would be included in the programme, although this had "nothing to do with the original purpose of South-South cooperation".⁴⁰ South Korea launched a diplomatic charm offensive to influence NAM members that were invited to Pyongyang. South Korean diplomats travelled to state capitals across the world to deliver personal letters with offers of stronger political ties, economic cooperation, and visits to Seoul.⁴¹ In return, South Korea requested their hosts to "play a positive role in blocking any lopsided decision in which the position of the Republic of Korea is not reflected".⁴² Special envoys were sent to Asia, Central and South America, the Middle East, and Africa.⁴³

For the African mission, South Korea sent delegations to Nigeria, Gabon, Cameroon, and Ivory Coast.⁴⁴ The objectives were to ensure that, first, the Pyongyang Conference would not interfere with the 1988 Seoul Olympics, and second, that these countries would support the accession of South Korea to the United Nations. In all cases, South Korea received promises of general cooperation or assurances that their requests would be considered.⁴⁵ Yet, these activities in West

37 Ibid., vol. 13, DAROK 25178.

38 Ibid., vol. 1, DAROK 25166.

39 The Pyongyang Conference of 1987 and the Seoul Olympics of 1988 were followed by another major event in 1989: the World Youth Festival, held in Pyongyang. World Youth Festival, Pyongyang, North Korea, July 1989, TNA, FCO 21/4436.

40 력 맹 특별 [Special Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Parties] (see fn 8), vol. 1, DAROK 25166.

41 Ibid., vol. 2, DAROK 25167.

42 Ibid., vol. 3, DAROK 25168.

43 The Diplomatic Archives of South Korea contains extensive reporting from the special envoys per region. For Asia, see 력 맹 특별 [Special Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Parties] (see fn 8), vol. 5, DAROK 25170, and vol. 9, DAROK 25174. For Central and South America, see ibid., vol. 6, DAROK 25171 and vol. 10, DAROK 25175. For the Middle East, see ibid., vol. 7, DAROK 25172, and vol. 11, DAROK 25176. The two files on Africa are discussed in greater detail below.

44 력 맹 특별 [Special Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Parties] (see fn 8), vol. 4, DAROK 25169.

45 Ibid., vol. 8, DAROK 25173.

Africa were countered by Kim Il Sung in other parts of the continent. Kim invited political leaders from Ethiopia, Madagascar, Guinea, Botswana, and Zambia to his birthday party in Pyongyang. Other leaders, such as the Tanzanian president Ali Hassan Mwinyi, were invited to North Korea for general visits.⁴⁶ This is illustrative of Kim's "invitation diplomacy", which, according to Sang-Seek Park, was an essential instrument in North Korea's successful African diplomacy.⁴⁷

The run-up to the conference therefore had a distinct African dimension. The honour to host a NAM conference on South-South cooperation was bestowed on North Korea in Zimbabwe at the 8th Non-Aligned Summit in Harare in 1986.⁴⁸ Kim Il Sung pulled out all the stops to get a good result at the summit. He utilized his personal relations with the Zimbabwean leader Robert Mugabe, who benefited from his support during the liberation struggle and the first years of postcolonial rule.⁴⁹ Kim courted influential African leaders and donated a significant sum of money for the organisation of the summit.⁵⁰ Although the final declaration did not contain all of North Korea's wishes, it was decided that the NAM would reconvene next year in Pyongyang for an Extraordinary Ministerial Conference.⁵¹ This was, as Soulé-Kohndou Folashadé indicated, also the first time that the term "South-South cooperation" appeared in a summit declaration of the NAM.⁵²

⁴⁶ Ibid., vol. 12, DAROK 25177.

⁴⁷ Park, "Africa and Two Koreas: A Study of African Non-Alignment".

⁴⁸ *Zimbabwe News* 20 (1989) 11, L968.91005 Z711 v.20, Northwestern University Library (NUL), Evanston; 력 맹 특별 [Special Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Parties] (see fn 8), vol. 1, DAROK 25166.

⁴⁹ Government of Zimbabwe, "Prime Minister Addresses State Banquet in North Korea, 9 October 1980", Policy Statement No. 1 [Harare: Government Printer, 1980], Basler Afrika Bibliographien, Basel.

⁵⁰ North and South Korea and the Non-Aligned Movement Summit, Harare, August–September 1986, TNA, FCO 21/3602; 탄 , 1985–86 [North Korea–Tanzania relations, 1985–86], DAROK 23558.

⁵¹ North and South Korea and the Non-Aligned Movement Summit, Harare, August–September 1986, TNA, FCO 21/3602.

⁵² F. Soulé-Kohndou, "Histoire contemporaine des relations sud-sud. Les contours d'une évolution graduelle" [Contemporary history of South-South relations. The contours of a gradual evolution], *Afrique Contemporaine* 248 (2013) 4, pp. 108–111.

3 The Pyongyang Conference for South-South Cooperation

The Extraordinary Ministerial Conference was held between 9 and 13 June, in 1987. Kim Yong Nam, deputy prime minister and foreign minister of North Korea, chaired the event, which was hosted in the People's Palace of Culture in Pyongyang. North Korea chartered special aircraft services from Moscow and Beijing to Pyongyang to make travel convenient and free of charge.⁵³ Organized as a traditional multilateral conference, the working languages were English, French, Spanish, and Arabic.⁵⁴ In addition to a flurry of plenary and committee meetings, delegates were treated with a display of mass gymnastics (called “Prospering Korea of Juche”), musical performances by 5,000 artists (called “Paean to Happiness”) and several banquets that featured Korean dishes.⁵⁵ The full scale of North Korea’s cultural prowess was on display.

Kim Il Sung’s sketched the outline for a programme of solidarity in a keynote speech, titled “Let us develop South-South cooperation”. In his view, the world may have gained political independence but was yet to achieve economic independence. “The present international economic system is a product of colonialism”, Kim argued, and only when economic independence is realized, countries are able to “exercise full sovereignty in foreign relations and consolidate the political independence they have won”. The non-aligned world should help each other via South-South cooperation, which Kim believed must be based on “collective self-reliance”. The emphasis of self-reliance corresponds with his use of Juche (which is usually translated as self-reliance) to connect with the Global South. To this end, Kim proposed a series of measures in trade, agriculture, science and technology, foreign debts, and other areas.⁵⁶

Interestingly, Kim did not mention South Korea in his speech. In only the vaguest terms, Kim called for complete disarmament and the abolishment of foreign military bases, which hinted at the presence of American soldiers in South Korea. The great turnout in Pyongyang signalled, in his words, “a clear expression

⁵³ 력 맹 특별 . [Special Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Parties] (see fn 8), vol. 14, DAROK 25179.

⁵⁴ Ibid., vol. 2, DAROK 25167.

⁵⁵ Ibid., vol. 17, DAROK 25182.

⁵⁶ The speech is contained in *ibid.*, vol. 16, DAROK 25181. It is also accessible in book form, see Kim Il Sung, “Let Us Develop South-South Cooperation. Congratulatory Speech at the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference on Non-Aligned Countries on South-South Cooperation”, in: Kim Il Sung, *For Achieving Global Independence*, Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 2022, pp. 49–61.

of the excellent friendly relations between Korea” and the non-aligned world. A significant portion of the speech was dedicated to Africa. First and foremost, Kim expressed his “deep gratitude” to Zimbabwe for the help in convening this event in Pyongyang. He again singled out his African allies when he discussed agriculture. Kim proclaimed that it was North Korea’s “sacred duty” to make South-South cooperation a success. He therefore celebrated the deployment of North Korean technical experts in Africa, who had set up institutes of agricultural sciences and experimental farms in several countries. He vowed to “expand cooperation with African countries” in the spirit of South-South cooperation.⁵⁷ Indeed, North Korea ran numerous projects across the continent as a specific form of development aid.⁵⁸

The programme of the Pyongyang Conference dealt with the issue of South-South cooperation in the most general terms. There were sessions dedicated to an “overall review of South-South cooperation”, the “strategy and policy for South-South cooperation”, “South-South cooperation in the priority fields”, and the “mechanisms to coordinate South-South cooperation”. Nevertheless, although the conference had a global scope and was visited by delegates from all continents, the agenda contained one specific session that was defined in terms of geography: “South-South cooperation to meet the critical economic situation in Africa.”⁵⁹

Why was Africa singled out in the conference programme? It underlines the special relationship between North Korea and the African continent. African participation in the Pyongyang Conference was extensive. A wide range of African politicians attended the proceedings, representing a variety of independent states, non-state actors, and international organizations. Forty-four African states sent delegations, in addition to liberation movements such as South West Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO), the African National Congress (ANC), and the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania, the United Nations Council for Namibia, and the Organization of African Unity.⁶⁰ Virtually the entire continent was represented; the majority of the conference was African. This is indicative of the success of North Korea’s African diplomacy, which was a vital part of its foreign policy.⁶¹ On the other hand, it also signifies that Africans were interested in cooperation with North Korea.

57 Kim.

58 van der Hoog, “On the Success and Failure of North Korean Development Aid in Africa.”

59 력 맹 특별 . [Special Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Parties] (see fn 8), vol. 1, DAROK 25166.

60 Ibid., vol. 17, DAROK 25182.

61 Owwoeye, “The Metamorphosis of North Korea’s African Policy”.

Although Kim Il Sung provided the keynote speech, the inaugural speech of the conference was given by Witness Mangwende, the foreign minister of Zimbabwe. Mangwende read a statement of Robert Mugabe, the prime minister of Zimbabwe and friend of Kim.⁶² Mugabe used this opportunity to call for international pressure against the South African apartheid regime. He stressed that the security conditions in Southern Africa were rapidly deteriorating, a point that was echoed in another speech by Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, the Secretary-General of SWAPO (the primary liberation movement of Namibia). The South African government fiercely resisted the claims of self-determination by both the Namibian and South African majorities, and the ensuing violence spilled over to Zimbabwe and other neighbouring states.⁶³ Ya Toivo, who spoke on behalf of all liberation movements, welcomed the prospects of South-South cooperation and called for more “political, diplomatic and material assistance” to organizations such as SWAPO.⁶⁴

4 Remaking the Global Order

Getachew argues that decolonization was an attempt to “remake rather than expand international society”. In that sense, decolonization was not just a simple transfer of power, it was as a “radical rupture” that required “a reconstitution of the international order”. A reinvention of global economic structures was at the core of this ambition. Anticolonial nationalism was envisaged as a revolutionary project that could be described as worldmaking.⁶⁵ This was, to an important extent, inspired by the political thought of Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, and other African revolutionaries, who developed an anticolonial modernization project to reconfigure the global order.⁶⁶ An analysis of the “Pyongyang Declaration and Plan of Action on South-South Cooperation”, the

⁶² 력 맹 특별 . [Special Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Parties] (see fn 8), vol. 17, DAROK 25182.

⁶³ G. M. Khadiagala, *Allies in Adversity: The Frontline States in Southern African Security, 1975–1993*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994.

⁶⁴ Report of the delegation of the United Nations Council for Namibia to the extraordinary ministerial conference of the movement of non-aligned countries on South-South co-operation, held at Pyongyang from 9 to 13 June 1987, A/AC.131/260, 5 October 1987, PA4/1/2/73/22, UNAM Archives, Windhoek.

⁶⁵ Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*.

⁶⁶ S. Chan, *African Political Thought: An Intellectual History of the Quest for Freedom*, London: Hurst, 2021; F. Gerits, *The Ideological Scramble for Africa: How the Pursuit of Anticolonial Modernity Shaped a Postcolonial Order, 1945–1966*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2023.

22-page outcome of the Pyongyang Conference, offers fresh insights into the influence of North Korea on worldmaking.

The Pyongyang Declaration criticized the “unfair international economic order” where the policies of developed countries and financial institutions hindered the growth of the Global South.⁶⁷ Indeed, Getachew emphasized that the enduring legacy of racial inequality prohibited the development of modern society.⁶⁸ According to the declaration, South-South cooperation was a “key element in their struggle for the establishment of the new international economic order” and an integral part of a wider desire for “economic, cultural and social emancipation”.⁶⁹ Getachew underlined that the NIEO was central to challenging the economic hierarchies of the twentieth century.⁷⁰ In the spirit of collective self-reliance, the Pyongyang Conference proposed a flurry of measures. This included support for a Global System of Trade Preferences, a Common Fund for Commodities, a Solidarity Fund for Economic and Social Development, and a South Bank.⁷¹ According to Getachew, international institutions that could “secure the conditions of nondomination” were a key part of an envisioned post-imperial world.⁷² The declaration therefore called for joint ventures in farming, the development and exchange of technology, cooperation in the fields of health, energy, education, and more.⁷³ Although the language was often vague, the bold ambition to transform the world was evident.

The Pyongyang Declaration also contained several specific references to African decolonization, perhaps a result of the speeches of Mugabe and Ya Toivo. Self-determination, wrote Getachew, “required a combination of nation-building and worldmaking”, and the declaration contained references to both objectives.⁷⁴ The NAM ministers explicitly rejected South African apartheid rule and called for comprehensive mandatory sanctions against its government. It furthermore expressed its concern with the neighbouring Frontline States, who suffered from the spill-over of violence, and urged the international community to provide as-

67 력 맹 특별 . [Special Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Parties] (see fn 8), vol. 15, DAROK 25180.

68 Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*.

69 력 맹 특별 . [Special Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Parties] (see fn 8), vol. 15, DAROK 25180.

70 Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*.

71 력 맹 특별 . [Special Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Parties] (see fn 8), vol. 15, DAROK 25180.

72 Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*.

73 력 맹 특별 . [Special Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Parties] (see fn 8), vol. 15, DAROK 25180.

74 Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*.

sistance to SWAPO and the ANC. The declaration praised the AFRICA Fund, which came into effect a few months earlier to support African decolonization, and appealed to the world to make generous contributions. In the context of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, the Global North was urged to “increase the flow of resources in real terms to Africa”.⁷⁵

The Pyongyang Conference is an example of North Korean-African attempts at world making. In this regard, it is important to not focus solely on North Korean strategy, but to understand African demands and desires for development as well. Kwame Nkrumah famously said “seek ye first the political kingdom and all else shall be added unto you”.⁷⁶ However, African nationalists soon discovered that political independence did not automatically translate into economic, cultural, and social emancipation. Freedom was not enough, the process of decolonization was not yet completed: only a transformation of the global system could achieve full liberation. Kim Il Sung understood this and invited African countries to think about a way forward. The contents of the Pyongyang Conference dealt precisely with the need for this new global order.

Importantly, the final declaration was devoid of political statements on the Korean peninsula. South Korea and its Western allies were afraid that the Pyongyang Declaration was part of the ongoing and fierce diplomatic competition between the two Koreas. However, at the end of the conference, even South Korea had to concede that the proceedings were focused on non-aligned economic cooperation.⁷⁷ South Korean diplomats noted that North Korea had shown “a surprisingly moderate and mild posture” and that the success of the conference contributed “to improving North Korea’s image in the international community and raising its voice in South-South cooperation”. It was expected that Kim would use this achievement to elevate his status in the NAM.⁷⁸ In addition to foreign policy benefits, North Korea also utilized the conference for its domestic propaganda. North Korean newspapers, for example, proudly displayed photos of Kim Il Sung posing with foreign delegations.⁷⁹ Such rhetoric was not directed at traditional Cold War divisions, but centred around non-aligned politics.

75 력 맹 특별 . [Special Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Parties] (see fn 8), vol. 15, DAROK 25180.

76 A. Mazrui, “Seek Ye First the Political Kingdom”, in: A. Mazrui and Ch. Wondji (eds.), *General History of Africa*, vol. VIII: *Africa since 1935*, Paris: UNESCO, 1993, pp. 105–126.

77 력 맹 특별 . [Special Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Parties] (see fn 8), vol. 16, DAROK 25181.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid., vol. 17, DAROK 25182.

5 Conclusion

“Let us develop South-South cooperation”, proclaimed Kim Il Sung in 1987 at the Pyongyang Conference, a message that resonated with his largely African audience. African political elites were highly invested in worldmaking and worked together with their North Korean counterparts in several international fora to alter the global order. The establishment of the North Korean state and the majority of African states occurred in a moment of widespread contestation of the liberal, post-WW II order. Many anti-imperialist revolutionaries believed that mere political independence was not enough and that a transformation of global socio-economic structures was necessary. The Pyongyang Conference was an attempt to deliver a blueprint for this vision.

In the historiography of North Korea’s international relations, the Pyongyang Conference of 1987 has been largely ignored. A recent discovery of diplomatic cables in the Diplomatic Archives of South Korea made it possible to produce the first description and analysis of this event. This offers an opportunity to interrogate larger analytical questions, such as North Korea’s role in the Cold War, the importance of Africa for North Korean diplomacy, and the question whether North Korea’s foreign policy was motivated by ideology of pragmatism.

This chapter indicates that North Korea was not a traditional Cold War actor. Although Western states were convinced that North Korea was firmly part of the communist bloc, African states saw this differently. Through the use of concepts such as non-alignment, South-South cooperation, and the Bandung spirit, North Korea branded itself as a postcolonial powerhouse, rather than as a communist country. The Pyongyang Conference is illustrative of the fact that communism was on the periphery of North Korean-African interactions – it did not feature in the conference deliberations, which focused on the notion of self-reliance and the need for a New International Economic Order.

The Pyongyang Conference was organized under the auspices of the Non-Aligned Movement, which encompassed members from across the world. In practice, however, African states appear to be the most important actors for North Korea’s diplomacy. The decision to organize the conference in Pyongyang was made in Zimbabwe, the conference was attended by numerous African delegates, and the final declaration contained specific references to issues that were important for African decolonization. The conference thereby highlights how Africa was central to North Korean foreign policy. Although North Korea also wielded its cultural diplomacy in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia, it was the African continent where Kim Il Sung achieved his greatest successes.

Existing scholarship on North Korean foreign policy has utilized a transactional approach of international relations that is focused on who gets what and

why. While there is no denying that transactions were important, there was more to North Korean-African relations: an attempt at worldmaking, as showcased by the Pyongyang Conference. This chapter moved beyond a pragmatic, transactional understanding of North Korean-African cooperation and examined the idealism behind Kim Il Sung's connections to the African continent. North Korean-African interactions are often reduced to the question which security benefits either parties are able to extract out of each other. Indeed, African governments and non-state actors received weapons and military training from North Korea, while North Korea leveraged their diplomatic relationships in Africa to win votes for Korea-resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly. In contrast, this chapter serves as a counterargument against the military lens of North Korean-African relations that is prevalent in the historiography.

Decolonization was much more than political independence; it was a movement that sought to reshape the world. For a brief moment in time, North Korea was part of these efforts. Rather than rehashing its traditional image as a sponsor of terrorism, this chapter has highlighted a different side of North Korean politics. Nevertheless, Pyongyang's significance was short-lived. In the 1990s, North Korea faced economic hardship and a leadership change. Under Kim's son and successor, Kim Jong Il, North Korea took a different path and focused on regime survival by earning hard foreign currency and developing weapons of mass destruction. These decisions led to North Korea's isolated position on the world stage, while its military diplomacy continues to generate revenue and stir controversy.⁸⁰ Today, a modern iteration of an internationalist, progressive gathering such as the Pyongyang Conference would be unthinkable. North Korea's historical attempts at world making are obscured by its contemporary status as a rogue state. But it is worth remembering that the world used to be different in the not-so-distant past.

⁸⁰ T. A. van der Hoog, "Defying United Nations Sanctions: Three Reasons for African Engagement with North Korea", *On Korea: Academic Paper Series*, Washington, D.C.: Korea Economic Institute of America, April 2022.

Helder Adegar Fonseca, Chris Saunders, and Lena Dallywater

14 Communist Actors in African Decolonial Transitions: Concluding Reflections

This book has offered comparative perspectives on the role of mainly non-African communist actors in three key moments of the long process of decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa. In the ‘beginnings’ phase, the transfer of power was mostly marked by a liberal script, sometimes followed by civil and secession wars (as Congo Kinshasa) or coups (as Congo Brazzaville). The more radical ‘turning-point’ of 1975–1980 saw the birth of the new independent states of Lusophone Africa. The 1988–1994 ending phase involved a complex transition process in the rest of Southern Africa, where interconnected civil, regional, and internationalized wars involving Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, and South Africa overlapped with multiple negotiations that eventually made possible an “ending” wave of democratic transitions. This took place as the global Cold War wound down. Before then, the Cold War and Sino-Soviet rivalry helped determine which partners African liberation movements aligned themselves with, what tactics they pursued, and the outcomes of their struggles.

The chapters above have illustrated these themes and emphasized the diversity of the communist actors involved in the three phases of African decolonization. They included, on the one hand, a wide range of communist states, from those in the Soviet orbit to North Korea, but also communist parties in France, Italy, and Portugal, along with groups of militant anti-imperialists and anti-colonialists in transnational networks, at times labelled “far-left” or “socialist internationalist”.¹ One scholar has claimed that without the actions of these multiple communist actors, “decolonization could not have taken place”.²

In the first phase of the transfer of power in tropical Africa, the indirect actions of the Western European communist parties were often more effective than those of the communist states. In the “turning point” phase of the mid-1970s, the Portuguese Communist Party, the Soviet Union, and other East European partners played a very active role, but Cuba intervened most forcefully, sending thousands of troops to support the MPLA in its struggle for supremacy in Angola. The Cuban

1 N. Labanca, “La composition inconfortable des communistes vis-à-vis de la Décolonisation. Du colonialisme au postcolonialisme” [The uncomfortable position of communists in relation to decolonisation: from colonialism to post-colonialism], in: F. Blum et al. (eds.), *Les Partis communistes occidentaux et l’Afrique: une histoire mineure?*, Paris: Hémisphères, 2022, p. 255.

2 Ibid., p. 243.

military intervention there gained a new impetus in late 1987/early 1988, but after that, as communism collapsed in Eastern Europe and then the Soviet Union, the influence of external communists in the last phase of African decolonisation fell away, even as the influential South African Communist Party was able to return to South Africa after decades in exile.

Though this volume could not possibly be comprehensive, it has, we hope, provided a nuanced exploration of the roles played by certain communist actors during the protracted process of decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa. The contributions have sought to highlight the diverse and often contradictory ways in which communist states, parties, and movements engaged with African liberation struggles. While future volumes may consider how social democrats or liberals influenced that process, our focus has been firmly on the communist role. Though individual communists were to be found in African liberation movements, only in the South African case was a firmly established communist party involved significantly in the process of decolonization/liberation.

Our contributors have not found it easy to assess the significance of the communist role, but what emerges from these chapters is that communist involvement was shaped by the interplay of ideological aspirations, geopolitical realities, and the agency of African leaders and movements. While communist actors provided ideological frameworks, material resources, and military support to liberation movements, their influence was far from uniform. African actors navigated their engagements with communists with considerable agency, selectively appropriating communist ideas to align with local contexts and nationalist goals. This book has demonstrated the complexity of these interactions, shaped as much by African circumstances as by the competing visions within the communist world.

A key challenge in assessing the influence of communist actors lies in the very diversity of their actions and the dynamic contexts in which they operated. The Soviet Union, China, Cuba, and other communist states often pursued distinct strategies, influenced by ideological differences and geopolitical and economic calculations. Given these complexities, there is an inherent difficulty in drawing definitive assessments about the successes and failures of communist engagement in African decolonization.

This volume underscores the limitations of existing scholarship, pointing to several areas in need of further research. The roles of smaller communist states and non-ruling communist parties remain understudied, as also the influence of grassroots communist activism and cultural exchanges. The reciprocal dynamics of engagement – how African movements shaped their communist allies – deserve greater attention. Additionally, there is scope for deeper investigation into the legacy of communist involvement in the decolonization process, particularly its long-term impact on governance, political culture, and ideological discourse in Africa.

While providing varied insights into the plural and contested nature of communist involvement in Africa's decolonial transitions, this volume also serves as a reminder of the inherent complexity of these processes. The contributors have challenged simplified narratives of Cold War geopolitics and African liberation, highlighting instead the dynamic interplay of ideology, strategy, and agency. It is our hope that, in advancing comparative perspectives, this book will lay a foundation for future research to continue unraveling the intricate and multifaceted legacies of communist engagement in sub-Saharan Africa's journey to independence.

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List of Abbreviations

AAD	Access to Archival Databases
AALC	Afro-American Labour Centre
AAN	Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie (Central Archive of Modern Records in Warsaw)
AAPSO	Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization
AC	Angola Committee
AND	Arquivo da Defesa Nacional (National Defense Archive)
AHD	Arquivo Histórico Diplomático (Diplomatic Historical Archive)
AHPR	Arquivo Histórico da Presidência da República (Historical Archive of the Presidency of the Republic [Portugal])
AHS	Arquivo de História Social (Social History Archive, ICS, Lisbon)
AIPNW	Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Warszawie (Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw)
ALL	Arquivo Lúcio Lara (Lucius Lara Archive)
ALN	Armée de Libération Nationale (National Liberation Army)
AMANGOLA	Amigos do Manifesto Angolano (Friends of the Angola Manifesto)
AMSZ	Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
ANC	African National Congress
ANTT	Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (National Archive of Torre do Tombo)
ASC	Fundo António Soares Carneiro (António Soares Carneiro Fund, ANTT)
ATD	Associação Tchiweka de Documentação (Tchiweka Documentation Association)
AVP RF	Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation
BAB	Basler Afrika Bibliographien
BU	Biblioteka byłych wojskowych organów bezpieczeństwa państwa polskiego (Library of Former Military Security Bodies of the Polish State)
CC	Central Committee
CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Revolutionary State Party, Tanzania)
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCPA	Conselho Coordenador do Programa [do MFA] em Angola (Coordinating Council of the [MFA] Programme in Angola)
CD25A	Centro de Documentação 25 de Abril (25 April Documentation Centre)
CEMGFA	Gabinete do Chefe do Estado-Maior General das Forças Armadas (CEMGFA, Office of the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces)
CFMA	China's Foreign Ministry Archives
CGT	Confédération Générale du Travail (General Confederation of Labour)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CLSTP	Comité pela Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe (Liberation Committee of São Tomé and Príncipe)
CLL	Coleção Luta da Libertação (Struggle for Liberation Collection)
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CMFA	Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs
CND	Comissão Nacional de Descolonização (National Commission for Decolonization)
CNTA	Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores de Angola (National Confederation of Workers of Angola)

CPL	Communist Party of Basutoland
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CONCP	Conferência das Organizações Nacionalistas das Colónias Portuguesas (Conference of Nationalist Organizations of the Portuguese Colonies)
CSLA	Conselho Supremo de Libertação de Angola (Supreme Council for the Liberation of Angola)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EMA	Fundo Ernesto Melo Antunes [Ernesto Melo Antunes Fund, ANTT]
EPLA	Exército Popular de Libertação de Angola (People's Army of Liberation of Angola)
FAA	Forças Armadas Angolanas (Portuguese Angolan Armed Forces)
FAB	Fundo António Belo (António Belo archival fund)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FAP	Forças Armadas Portuguesas (Portuguese Armed Forces)
FAPLA	Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola (People's Armed Forces of Liberation of Angola)
FLEC	Frente de Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda (Liberation Front of the Enclave of Cabinda)
FLN	Front de libération nationale (National Liberation Front, Algeria)
FNLA	Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (National Front for the Liberation of Angola)
FMS	Fundação Mário Soares (Mário Soares Foundation)
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Liberation Front of Mozambique)
FUA	Frente de Unidade Angolana (Angolan Unity Front)
GARF	State Archive of the Russian Federation
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GPA	Governo Provisório de Angola (Provisional Government of Angola)
GPRA	Gouvernement provisoire de la République Algérienne (Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic)
GRAE	Governo Republicano de Angola no Exílio (Republican Government of Angola in Exile, March 1962–mid-1963); Governo Revolucionário de Angola no Exílio (Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile, mid-1963 onwards)
ICS	Instituto de Ciências Sociais (Social Sciences Institute)
JGA	Junta Governativa de Angola (Ruling Junta of Angola)
JL	Fundo José Laranjo [José Laranjo Fund, AHS]
JPRS	Joint Publications Research
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security, USSR)
KSC	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
MFA	Movimento das Forças Armadas (Armed Forces Movement)
MFA-A	Movimento das Forças Armadas em Angola (Armed Forces Movement, section Angola), in February 1975 renamed CCPA
MFA-M	Movimento das Forças Armadas em Portugal (Armed Forces Movement, section Metropolis)
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
MLEC	Movimento de Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda (Liberation Movement of the Enclave of Cabinda)
MNC	Congolese National Movement (Mouvement national Congolais)

MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola)
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress of Azania
PAIGC	Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde)
PCC	Partido Comunista de Cuba (Cuban Communist Party)
PCF	Parti Communiste Français (French Communist Party)
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party)
PCP	Partido Comunista Português (Portuguese Communist Party)
PDA	Partido Democrático de Angola (Democratic Party of Angola)
PIDE/DGS	Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado/Direcção-Geral de Segurança (Portuguese Security Police)
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSA	Parti Solidaire Africain (Congo)
PZPR	Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (Polish United Workers' Party)
RGANI	Russian State Archive of Modern History
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAPMO BArch	Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (Foundation Archive of the Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives)
SbMSB	Sub-fundo Manuel Silva Barata (Manuel Silva Barata archival sub-fund)
SCCIA	Serviços de Centralização e Coordenação de Informações de Angola (Information, Centralization and Coordination Services of Angola)
SGDN	Secretariado Geral da Defesa Nacional (Secretariat General of National Defence)
SKSSAA	Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee
SKTUZ	Standing Commission on Technical Assistance and Cooperation (Ständige Kommission für Technische Unterstützung)
SMA	Shanghai Municipal Archives
SWANU	South West Africa National Union
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
TANU	Tanganyika African National Union
TNA	The National Archives, London
UJC	Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas (Union of Young Communists of Cuba)
UN	United Nations
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola)
UPA	União das Populações de Angola (Union of the Populations of Angola)
UPC	Union des Populations du Cameroun (Union of the Peoples of Cameroon)
US	United States
USDS	US Department of State
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WCDA	Wilson Center Digital Archive
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union

Contributors

Alexander Balezin is Chief Research Fellow at the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences and Professor at the State University of Humanities. Educated at the Lomonosov Moscow State University as a specialist in African History and the Swahili language, he holds a PhD and D.Sc. in History from the Institute of World History. He is the author of eight monographs, among them: *African Rulers and Chiefs in Uganda: Evolution of Traditional Rulers under Colonialism (1862–1962)* (1986), *Civilizers in the Country of Savages? Formation and Evolution of the German Settlers' Community in SWA/Namibia (1814–1990)* (1996), and *Black Africa and Europe: Some Aspects of Encounter of Cultures under Colonial Rule* (2015). His main research interests concern African-Russian and African-European relations, colonial institutions, and the historiography of Africa.

Thomas Burnham is a Zijiang Young Scholar at the Academy of History and Documentation of Socialism at East China Normal University (Shanghai) since July 2025. He graduated from Oxford University with a thesis comparing Soviet and Chinese aid to and involvement in Africa in the 1960s. His postdoctoral research examines the impact of key Stalinist texts on China in the Mao era and beyond. He has published articles on Chinese and Soviet engagement with Africa in the peer-reviewed *Cold War History* and *Beijing Cultural Review*.

Lena Dallywater is researcher and coordinator at the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography Leipzig, Germany. She holds a PhD in Global Studies from Leipzig University. Her research focuses on transnational intellectual history, (Pan-)African philosophy, aesthetics and literature, and modes of Black solidarity in a global perspective. With the editors she shares an interest in global and transnational history, decolonization and transregional solidarity networks.

Irina Filatova is Emeritus Professor of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Honorary Research Associate at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. She received her degrees at Lomonosov Moscow State University in Russia and worked there from 1973 to 1992, finishing her tenure as Professor and Head of the African Studies Department. In 1992–2002, she was head of the Department of History at the University of Durban-Westville, in 2004–2022, she taught history at Russia's National Research University, Higher School of Economics. Filatova has authored dozens of articles, edited publications, and six books on African history, the history of ties between Russia and South Africa, and the history of communist movement in South Africa.

Helder Adegar Fonseca is retired Professor at the University of Évora, Portugal. After long time researching European Economic, Agrarian, and Social History, he has been devoting the past decade to the project “Historical Sources of Transnational Regionalism in Southern Africa: The Liberation Movements and ‘White Africa’ as Driving Forces (1960–1980) of regional integration”. His recent publications include: *Agostinho Neto and Biographical Historiography* (2020); L. Dallywater, Ch. Saunders, and H. A. Fonseca (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War “East”. Transnational Activism 1960–1990* (2019) and Ch. Saunders, H. A. Fonseca, and L. Dallywater (eds.), *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s* (2023).

Barbora Menclová is Assistant Professor at the Institute of International Studies at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. She holds a PhD in Contemporary History (2023) from Charles

University. Her doctoral research explored the technical assistance of Czechoslovakia to Angola and Mozambique in the late Cold War. Her main research interests concern the Global Cold War, decolonization, and interactions between the East and the Global South, focusing on Lusophone Africa.

Arianna Pasqualini is a PhD graduate in Global Histories, Cultures and Politics from the University of Bologna, Italy. Her doctoral research explored the entanglements between the Namibian liberation struggle and the Global Cold War, focusing on the socialist support provided to the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO). Her research interests include global communism, Southern African decolonization(s), oral history, and life stories. She authored the chapter "Solidarity, Anti-Racism and Human Rights: Italian Communists and the Struggle against Apartheid" in the volume *Gorbachev, Italian Communism and Human Rights: Rethinking Political Culture at the End of the Cold War*, edited by Silvio Pons (2022).

João Fusco Ribeiro is Researcher at the Political Science Research Centre (CICP) at the University of Évora, Portugal. He holds a PhD in Contemporary History (2023), an MA in African and European Historical Studies (2016), and a BA in History and Archaeology (2013) from the University of Évora. His doctoral research examined the anti-colonial trajectory of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) during its armed guerrilla struggle against Portuguese colonialism. His research focuses on the Angolan liberation movements, the decolonization process in Lusophone Africa and its interconnections with anti-colonial support networks from Eastern Europe.

Chris Saunders is Emeritus Professor of the University of Cape Town, South Africa, where he was head of the Department of Historical Studies before his retirement. He has published on many aspects of Southern African history and historiography. Recently he has worked on the transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa and Namibia and on the regional geopolitics of Southern Africa.

Gabriele Siracusano is Research Fellow at the University of Trento (Italy). In previous years, he held the same position at the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa and at the National Research Council (CNR). He obtained his PhD from the University of Rome "Tor Vergata" in co-tutorship with the University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne. He wrote a book entitled "*Pronto per la Rivoluzione!*" *I comunisti italiani e francesi e la decolonizzazione in Africa centro-occidentale (1958–1968)* (2023). On this subject he also wrote several articles in Italian, French, and English.

Jodie Yuzhou Sun is Associate Professor in Modern African and Global History at the Department of History, Fudan University, China, and Research Fellow of the International Studies Group, University of the Free State, South Africa. She holds an MSc in African Studies and a PhD in History from the University of Oxford. Her research interests are modern African history, Cold War history, and China-Africa relations. She is the author of *Kenya's and Zambia's Relations with China 1949–2019* (2023) and has published in *Cold War History*, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, and *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*. She is an elected Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and an Executive Board member of the Chinese in Africa/Africans in China Research Network.

Berthold Unfried is Dozent (Associate Professor) at the Institute for Economic and Social History at the University of Vienna and author of several books in the field of global history. The latest book

publication (2024) is a comparative history of the development policies of the two German states in the age of “development” (1960–1990). His current research focuses on policies of “development” and “international solidarity” as forms of moral politics and of political economy. His research concerns Cuba and the German Democratic Republic as developmental actors in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and Cuban and East German cooperation with Ethiopia and Angola in the field of higher education.

Tycho van der Hoog is Assistant Professor of International Security Studies at the Netherlands Defence Academy, Utrecht. He completed a PhD at the African Studies Centre of Leiden University and lectured at the Korean Studies Department of Leiden University. His book on North Korean-African relations, titled *Comrades Beyond the Cold War: North Korea and the Liberation of Southern Africa*, has been published by Hurst and Oxford University Press in 2025.

Alexander Voevodskiy is Associate Professor in the School of History at HSE University (Moscow) and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of World History at the Russian Academy of Sciences. His research focuses on Soviet policy in Southern Africa and the impact of the Cold War on liberation movements and also includes British colonial policy in the nineteenth century and the history of Protestant missions in South Africa.

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