

Post
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The OAU Summit on Angola

THE ANGOLA SUMMIT of the Organization of African Unity must be read as a serious setback for the Soviet Union, which had hoped to see the OAU endorse its client, the Popular Movement, condemn South African intervention, and perhaps even acknowledge Moscow's support for Angolan "liberation." The OAU did none of these things. Finding itself divided right down the middle, it chose to live with its divisions rather than fight the issue out in a way that might have given one side a political victory but thus humiliated the other. The organization refused either to recognize the Popular Movement, as the Movement desired, or to call for a government of national unity, as the Movement's Angolan rivals desired. It further refused to denounce South African intervention alone, taking the position in effect that it would condemn all intervention, including Russia's and Cuba's, or none at all.

The upshot is that the struggle in Angola will go on, but without the great boost to the Popular Movement and its Communist patrons which many had expected to come out of Addis Ababa. The organization has now said, in as clear a voice as its members' circumstances permit, that Angola is for Angolans. As Zaire's president fairly stated, for the first time South Africa and the Soviet Union have been equated in African minds. We think this outcome gives the Popular Movement fresh reason to consider compromising with its Angolan rivals. The Popular Movement has Soviet weapons and advisers and Cuban troops but, though these offer military advantages, more and more they constitute political liabilities. Particularly would this be the case if South Africa were promptly to withdraw all of its own forces and leave Moscow and Havana isolated as the lone non-African interventionists. By the best estimates, moreover, the Popular Movement does not control a

majority of either the land area or the population of Angola. A compromise would ensure the Movement a reduction of the national and regional tensions otherwise bound to plague Angola for years.

The Ford administration had prophesied that the Senate's action in clamping down on further CIA activity in Angola would cripple Africans who oppose Soviet intervention. But this did not happen at Addis Ababa. Those Africans did not and do not need American prompting to know where their own best interests lie. We are aware that the administration's use of the CIA in Angola starting last July was done at the behest, and with the blessing, of various African states. We feel, nonetheless, that by so using the CIA, the administration made easier a South African intervention that otherwise might not have taken place, while undermining its own later attempts starting only in November to denounce the Soviet-Cuban role. The further possibility exists that initial use of the CIA provided some part of the pretext for the far larger Soviet operation that eventually flowered. In any event, by undertaking a CIA operation that controversy had rendered vulnerable to leaks and that could not easily weather disclosure and domestic storm, the administration was inviting a political defeat of potentially greater consequences than any victory it might have won by a quick successful intervention.

The OAU summit has not ended the Angolan affair. But we trust it has ended the period in U.S. Angolan policy when Washington felt it necessary to conduct a test of wills with the Soviet Union. The United States does not have so much political capital these years that it can afford to put it at risk in places like Angola, where the outcome of a local power-struggle is difficult to ordain at best and, in any event, only as important to national security as Americans themselves make it out to be.