

By Dunstan W. Kamana

In recent months, there have been desperate attempts to equate Zambia's position on Angola with positions and policies of certain African and non-African countries.

First, an attempt has been made to show that the Zambian Government is opposed to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola. Zambia's delay in recognizing the M.P.L.A., the legitimate Government of Angola, has been interpreted to mean that President Kenneth D. Kaunda's Government favors the forces of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (U.N.I.T.A.) and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (F.N.L.A.).

Second, Zambia's detractors have spent a lot of time discussing its current economic problems, pointing out that Zambia's economy is based on a major industry—copper. They have asserted that the low price of copper and its effect on Zambia's economy has been a factor in formulating Zambia's policy on Angola.

Third, they argue that because Zambia is landlocked and because one of its outlets to the sea has been the port of Lobito, in Angola, Zambia is pro-U.N.I.T.A. because the railroad to that port passes through territory that hitherto has been in U.N.I.T.A. hands.

Fourth, the perpetrators of this campaign seem to think that since U.N.I.T.A. appeared to be fighting on the same side as racist South Africa, and because they regard Zambia's position as favorable to U.N.I.T.A., Zambia must have had something to do with South Africa's involvement in Angola!

Where the detractors have been African, they have taken their positions for two main reasons.

The first reason is that certain African countries have wanted to appear more revolutionary than Zambia although not one single solitary citizen of theirs has ever been killed in the battle that has raged between the Portuguese, Rhodesian and South African fascists on one hand and freedom fighters on the other.

Only Zambia so far has had the misfortune of bearing the brunt of Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.) policies against the racists and, in the process, of losing many of its people as a result of incursions along its borders by South African, Rhodesian and hitherto Portuguese colonialists in pursuit of freedom fighters waging a liberation struggle in their countries.

Buttressed by the safety of distance, some African countries have found their lip-service revolutionary approach a good enough weapon to run down President Kaunda's policies. Indeed, some of the most vocal have not been the most willing to pay dues to the O.A.U. liberation committee coffers.

The second reason is that Angola provides certain African countries with the happy prospect of getting the Soviet Union to strengthen their defense apparatus. It is ironic that in certain cases Angola provides such countries with an opportunity to increase their defense capabilities with Western help!

Angola has enabled some countries far removed from the Angolan scene to contain their largely Marxist electorate by their recognition of the M.P.L.A. Peace and stability will not come to Angola until the other movements are accommodated, but such thoughts are of no immediate concern or consequence to these countries. As long as they can contain their industrial unrest and feel secure that an expeditionary force of similar Marxist leaning could come to their aid in the event of aggression from a neighbor, they could not care less about Angola.

Where the campaign to equate Zambia's position on Angola with that of other countries has been launched in the West, the idea has been to use President Kaunda's stature, influence and statesmanship as a basis for trying to steer a difficult policy on Angola through national legislatures.

I will now examine how Zambia itself has looked at the Angolan problem and the principles that have guided Zambia in the formation of its policy.

First, respect for principles of pan-Africanism: Nonintervention by foreign powers in any form in African affairs, and noninterference in the internal affairs of independent African states in accordance with the Charter of the Organization of African Unity.

Zambia has been against foreign intervention in Angola from whatever

quarter. Zambia has demanded that all foreign troops in Angola—South African or otherwise—must leave so that Angola's people may be free to decide their own future. In condemning foreign intervention, Zambia has also been careful not to lump these interventionists into one camp, since they obviously belong to different categories.

In accordance with the O.A.U. Charter, Zambia has never wished to interfere in Angola's internal affairs. It is perhaps not clear to many that Zambia's position on Angola has been consistent with O.A.U. policy. It was the O.A.U. that recognized all the three movements in Angola; it was the O.A.U. that asked and mandated Zambia along with Tanzania, Zaire and the Congo to carry out the task of uniting the three movements.

Second, Zambia has been guided by principles of good neighborliness. Zambia has always believed that it could co-exist with any government that finally established itself in Angola. That government can be M.P.L.A.; it could be U.N.I.T.A. or F.N.L.A.; it could be a combination of two or three movements.

Any informed and enlightened observer of the Angolan scene will know that Zambia assisted the M.P.L.A. during its struggle and that Zambia is not, and could not, be opposed to the M.P.L.A.'s aspirations.

The importance of the port of Lobito to Zambia is not questioned, but if that were the only issue, then of course Zambia would have to place equal importance on Zaire as a country of transit. Is it not a fact that, while the port of Beira, Mozambique, is open to Zambia, Rhodesia, the country of transit, has its border with Zambia closed, and therefore Zambia cannot use that port?

Zambia wants Angola to be a good, peaceful, stable, united, strong and prosperous country.

Another set of principles that has guided Zambia in her Angolan policy has to do with democracy and non-alignment. Zambia believes that its policy on Angola must reflect its own at home. For this reason, Zambia has never found it necessary to usurp the right of the Angolan people to choose a government for themselves.

This is clearly the prerogative of the Angolan people, and even if the M.P.L.A. overruns all of Angola, as appears to be the case now, and defeats the other parties in a conventional war, this would be no proof of the popularity of the victor or the unpopularity of the vanquished.

Military victory by one party is not proof of the nonexistence of the other political parties.

Finally, Zambia has taken care throughout the Angolan crisis to distinguish between the question of assisting liberation of an African state from colonial rule and going beyond the threshold of liberating a territory and getting involved in the making of governments for sovereign states.

It believes that it is one thing to help Angola with its independence but quite another to help any group of Angolans impose a government over the people of Angola.

It will be seen that Zambia's position on Angola, much as it may appear to be at one with positions of a number of other countries, is in effect different and based on a set of well-defined principles.

This is not the first time that Zambia in adhering to noble principles of the O.A.U. and the United Nations has been left to pay the price. In this particular case the price is one of complete misunderstanding, distortion and maligning of her position on Angola.

At no time has Zambia been anti-M.P.L.A. Indeed, Zambia only recognized U.N.I.T.A. as late as last year when the O.A.U. decided to do so. The F.N.L.A. has always operated in Zaire. This has meant that the one party that collaborated with Zambia closely to prosecute the struggle against the Portuguese in Angola is the M.P.L.A.

However close Zambia's relations with the M.P.L.A. may be, President Kaunda, his party and Government have not found it necessary to dupe the M.P.L.A. into thinking that the M.P.L.A. can run a peaceful Angola at the complete exclusion of the other parties. To some people, the frequent visits to Lusaka, the Zambian capital, by Dr. Jonas Savimbia, leader of U.N.I.T.A., have implied some kind of special relationship between his movement and Zambia. This is simply not true. The fact is that Zambia's doors have remained open to the leaders of all three liberation movements in Angola. To this day, the M.P.L.A. maintains an office in Lusaka.

I will not attempt to minimize Zambia's economic situation given the low prices of copper and the general world economic situation. However, Zambia has invested so much already in the liberation of Africa in human and material terms that it is the height of malice to suggest that Zambia is in any way veering from its noble objective of helping to liberate Africa.

I will now look briefly at the grim future of the southern African region. For years now, President Kaunda has warned of a racial blood bath unless Western countries pay more attention to the aspirations of freedom fighters.

He has warned that Rhodesia and South Africa quite ironically have perpetrated their injustices against black people in the name of preserving "Christianity and Western civilization." He has warned that by turning a deaf ear to the voices of the oppressed majority in southern Africa the West has been driving freedom fighters to seek aid where they can get it and to resort to armed struggle for their liberation.

As of now, guerrilla armies have been trained. They have the equipment. They have nothing to lose. The option is not in their hands. The time bomb continues to tick away! The freedom fighters after they win their independence cannot be expected to forget those who assisted them during the struggle.

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