
SOVIET ACTIONS IN THE THIRD WORLD

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I—*THE THIRD WORLD IN SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY*

1. That rather abstract and misleading term «The Third World», or the equally unsatisfactory and nearly synonymous phrase, «underdeveloped countries», still assumes a fairly concrete meaning within the conceptual framework of Soviet foreign policy. For Lenin and his generation of Soviet leaders, the colonial and semicolonial dependencies of the West appeared to be the crucial future battlegrounds of the struggle between the worlds of socialism and capitalism.

At the 1920 Conference of the Comintern, Lenin spoke eloquently about the connection between the revolutionary struggle of the working class and the situation of oppressed colonial peoples.

To him, national liberation of the colonial peoples was a two stage process — the first stage of rapprochement involves the victims of colonialism in the beginnings of their national liberation struggle against their oppressors who are, by definition, capitalist imperialism.

There are those who argue that ideology is dead, and that MOSCOW is merely interested in maintaining and advancing the national interest of the Russian State, developing the theory of «correlation of forces» instead of «balance of powers». Anything that happens anywhere in the world affects the correlation in some way, and everything is systematically connected with everything else.

That theory of correlation of forces provided a conceptually flexible tool enabling its practitioners to define, pursue, and rationalise their policies,

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simultaneously, at the complementary levels of ideology and power politics. Soviet policy in Africa and Asia followed that conciliatory pattern between the Soviet national interest and the requirements of revolutionary theory.

2. In «Patterns of Soviet Third World Policy», Francis Fukuyama (1) expressed a very interesting analysis of Soviet Foreign policy in the Third World since the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917. That policy has been an alternation between what have come to be known as «left-wing» and «right-wing» strategies.

<i>Dates</i>	<i>Orientation</i>	<i>Characterization</i>
1. 1917 — 1921	left	War Communism
2. 1921 — 1928	right	New Economic Policy (NEP)
3. 1928 — 1935	left	«Third Period»
4. 1935 — 1939	right	Popular Front
5. 1939 — 1941	left	Nazi-Soviet Pact
6. 1941 — 1947	right	Wartime alliance
7. 1947 — 1952	left	Zhdanovshchina
8. 1954 — 1964	right	Khrushchev's opening to «bourgeois nationalists»
8a. 1964 — 1972	right	Moribund Khrushchevism
9. 1973 — 1982	left	Support for Marxist-Leninist vanguard parties
10. 1982 —	right	Andropov-Gorbachev policy

Source: «Patterns of Soviet Third World Policy», F. Fukuyama (2).

The distinction between left and right revolves around the issue of the appropriate choice of allies in the West for communist power or Soviet influence. In left-wing periods, communist parties have tended to avoid alliances of any sort, concentrating instead on maintaining their internal orthodoxy and discipline. Right-wing periods, by contrast, have been ones of broad alliance between communist parties and other sympathetic non-communist groups. In the case of the colonial Third World, these have been local «bourgeois» nationalists, national liberation movements, and other «anti-imperialist» groups.

II—THE COMPETING COMMUNISMS IN THE THIRD WORLD

1. The ideological objective of spreading communism in the Third World became, after 1949, a very difficult area of understanding between the two great motherlands of revolution: Soviet Union and China. Soviet Union's approach to the socialist revolution was more oriented to the role of the political «elites», the class struggle, and the political fight developed by the local communist parties. The Bolshevik prototype gave support to this approach, since the instruments of success has been the social class struggle, the movements of people masses in towns, the political urbanism in huge rallies, and the role of the Red Army. On the other side, the success of the Chinese Revolution was much more attained in the fields, the concept of the People's War, with the use of guerrilla techniques, and the support of the people to the fighting arm of the revolution.

The controversies between the Soviet Union and China on the issue of how, when, where, and under what circumstances communist countries should support revolutionary movements had too strong an importance during the 50's and the 60's. The Chinese accused the Soviets of having abandoned the cause of revolution and of preaching the following false doctrines: (1) Imperialism can be overthrown peacefully, without violence. (2) War is so terrible, and in the nuclear age so dangerous, that it must be avoided at all costs. By contrast, the Chinese said that their views were the following:

Revolutions cannot be carried out by peaceful means, but only through violence, through «people's wars», «national liberation wars», «revolutionary wars». (2) Such wars do not inevitably escalate into nuclear wars. Revolutionary wars, therefore, must not be feared, for otherwise the peoples of the underdeveloped countries would be doomed to perpetual slavery. If the imperialists or «social-imperialists» (i. e. the Soviets) unleashed wars, this would bring revolutions, but if the people overthrew imperialism, there would be more wars. As Mao expressed it, «with regard to the question of world war, there are but two possibilities: one is that war will give rise to revolution and the other is that revolution will prevent war».

2. It will be irrelevant to explore and relate the history of the last three decades of international influence in important areas of the Third World. The actors have been the United States, China, Europe, and the Soviet Union, and new ones are coming. The interests have been quite different, but have moved abruptly from ideology to economic and military influence. The doctrines comprised of several factors like the spread of socialist revolution, elevating peoples to human levels, democracy building, and containment of communist influence. The instruments were different ranging from recruiting and training cadres to economic aid.

The objects, and the suffering ones, had been the peoples of those regions, where war, different every day, continues to produce pain, death, famine and very difficult times. The definition of a model matrix, in order to study the actual situation, is a difficult task, but, in order to avoid it, let us advance some postulates which will make more understandable the actual military apparatus of the Soviet Union in such distant areas as CUBA or ANGOLA.

First Postulate

The competing interests of the Soviet Union and China in expanding communism have been evident in areas like ASIA, LATIN AMERICA, and AFRICA. China's support to liberation movements, in Asia and in Africa, was much more evident and successful than that of the Soviet Union, which insisted in the role of some elites and the influence of the Communist Parties in the European colonial powers. China developed relations with liberation movements such as ZANU (RHODESIA), SWAPO (NAMÍBIA), FRELIMO (MOZAMBIQUE), FLNA and UNITA (ANGOLA) surpassing the Soviet Union in the amount of assistance given to African States. In 1974 Chinese aid totaled, in US dollars, \$237 million, while the Soviets provided only \$17 million. In fact, the Chinese had outdistanced the Soviets in terms of total aid to Africa over the previous 20 years, and had concentrated their largesse in the southern half of the continent. Chinese aid to TANZANIA, ZAMBIA, ZAIRE and even CONGO far exceeded that provided by the Soviets.

Second Postulate

Fidel Castro and Che Guevara were two different approaches to the spread of communism in Latin America. The Che Guevara theory of «armed focus», theorized by Régis Debray, failed while the Cuban experience, and the role of strong communist parties succeeded and almost added Chile to the Soviet Union sphere of influence. In the Cuban experience, the military aid provided by the Soviet Union was as decisive a factor in the initial success as the Security Services and Intelligence were decisive in consolidating political power, and spreading influence in all the countries of Central America to this day. It is my perception that Latin America will be an area of insecurity, where competing interests of the Soviet Union and the United States have to look carefully at the diverse players: the political process of democracy, the very unstable social fabric, the Catholic Church, and the public opinion. How to make one's neighbours safe or how to influence them from a distance is the real question between the United States and the Soviet Union, given the small influence of China in the area. MEXICO, BRASIL, ARGENTINA, PERU and VENEZUELA are great players which will have a very important role in the future.

Third Postulate

ASIA has been a «tough nut to crack» for the Soviet Union, and is becoming more so. Soviet policy has to accommodate to Asia's size, to its four different main subregions, and to the other global actors in the area: CHINA, the UNITED STATES and JAPAN. It is perceived that the foreign policy of the Soviet Union in the area has been more defensive than offensive, and oriented to containing difficult neighbours more than to spreading influence. Afghanistan, not finished yet, is a very good example of the flexible approach in the area.

Fourth Postulate

Since the Fundamentalist Revolution in Iran, Islam overlaps Socialism in some areas of the globe, and is followed by regional conflicts declared in the Middle East and potential ones in North Africa. The Soviet Union

is following the problem of Islam and the Middle East very carefully, not only for internal reasons and the upheaval of the Muslim minorities within its borders, but for external reasons too, given the military build-up in the area, and the danger of escalation of the conflict either horizontally or vertically.

Fifth Postulate

For much of the postwar era, arms transfers have been a crucial part of Soviet relations with the Third World. This emphasis on military aid is estimated as 120.6 billion US dollars between 1974 and 1986 (SYRIA, IRAQ, LIBA, VIETNAM, INDIA, ALGERIA, CUBA, ETHIOPIA and ANGOLA received almost 80 % of the total deliveries). Although the Soviet Union has tried to establish close ties with the developing countries through a variety of nonmilitary means (including economic assistance, trade, educational exchanges, and political cooperation), it has been unable to sustain its economic aid at more than token levels in recent years, and has lost nearly all of its appeal as a model for development. Consequently, arms transfers have become the primary instrument that enables the Soviet Union to compete with Western countries and China for influence in Third World. In the 1980's military exports have also been a key source of hard currency, although problems have begun to arise for the Soviet Union in this lucrative trade because of the growing financial constraints that many of its Third World customers are experiencing.

III — *RECENT SOVIET ACTIONS IN THE THIRD WORLD*

1. The Soviet Union's policy in the Third World has produced both successes and failures. What can we, in conclusion, say of Soviet efforts in the Third World? Have they been more or less successful? Does the answer to this question depend upon region? Can we identify success with proximity to the Soviet Union, cultural environment, type of instruments used, or degree of commitment made by Moscow? What have been the

important instruments of Soviet policy in the Third World? Antecedent to all of these questions, of course, is the fundamental question:

What are the Soviet objectives in the Third World?

Although varying in the four main regions of the Third World considered (Latin America, Africa, The Middle East and Asia), some or all of the following objectives seem to apply in most Soviet Third World activities:

- to gain control over raw materials vital to Western economies;
- to demonstrate support for left-wing regimes;
- to «capture» Third World States for the Communist Bloc;
- to keep Chinese influence out of the Third World;
- to gain strategic advantage, through the acquisition of military facilities that might be useful in war;
- to acquire footholds for use in peace as a means of extending influence;
- to divert the attention of Western powers away from Soviet borders;
- to obtain useful economic concessions, as in fishing rights.

This list has looked much the same since the death of Stalin, but very few of these objectives began to be realised until the latter part of the 1960's.

What has made their realization possible has been the growth of the military component of Soviet power, which began in those years when, after the Cuban crisis, the Soviet Union realized its low capacity to project power from a distance. Almost simultaneously, the Soviet Union also began to realize that, in competition with the West, the other instruments of influence — political, cultural, diplomatic and economic — were not those which she could wield with any great success. Only the military instruments remained, and this has been refined over the past decade to the point where it is responsive and subtle in application whether through the supply of arms, through supportive military activity or through direct military intervention in many different guises. In the early 1960's, the Soviet Union lacked an ocean-going navy, sea-based air power, long range transport aircraft and amphibious shipping. She could not maintain a fleet at sea and had few friendly ports of call. Even her marchant marine was small and lacked the kind of heavy-lift equipment needed to off-load cargo like tanks in countries with minimal dock facilities. She had no specialised roll-on/roll-off shipping for rapid disembarkation of vehicles.

By the end of the 1970's, all but one of these disadvantages had been corrected. The one that still remains is the lack of sea-based airpower, but the Soviet Union has gone way to make up for the lack of reconnaissance at sea by the extensive deployment of land-based maritime patrol aircrafts and maritime reconnaissance satellites.

2. Since the late 1970's the Soviet Union has been the largest supplier of military equipment and services to the Third World, having dislodged the United States from the top position: for the period from 1981 through 1985 Soviet arms transfers accounted, in value terms, for 33 percent of all weapons exported to the Third World, compared to only 19 percent supplied by the United States.

Soviet Military deliveries to noncomunist Third World States during this seven-year period were worth nearly four times as much as the Soviet arms supplied during the 20 years from 1955 through 1974. Even if, as some estimates suggest, Soviet arms shipments to most regions have leveled off or declined since the early 1980's, as a result of the reduced demand for weapons among indebted Third World states, both the quantity and the quality of arms supplied by the USSR remain at very high levels.

From 1954 through 1981, approximately two-thirds of total Soviet arms shipments went to countries in the Middle East and South Asia, the remainder going largely to East Asian states, primarily Vietnam, North Korea, and (before 1960) China.

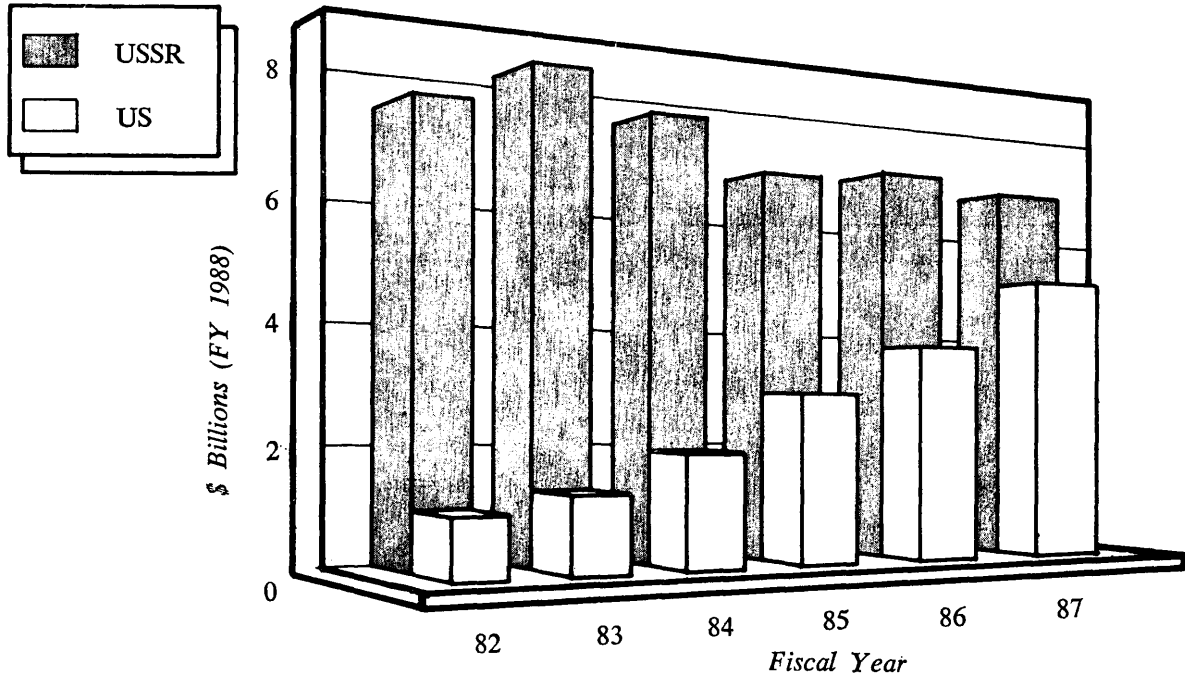
Over the past decade, the share of total Soviet arms shipments going to the Middle East and Southern Africa has become even more disproportionate, rising to 74 percent. The non communist Third World countries that received the largest amounts of Soviet weapons are all located in the Middle East and South Asia, with Syria. Iraq and Lybia actually surpassing communist states such as Vietnam and Cuba in the value of military equipment received from the Soviet Union.

The Soviets continue to demonstrate a great appreciation for the ability of arms transfers to serve as a lever in gaining political influence. Moscow continues providing large ammounts of military equipment and material to strategically located lesser developed countries on an outright grant basis.

(Table 2)

During the last five years over 40% or an average 6 or 7 billion US dol per year, of the Soviet arms deliveries to the Third World were made

**Table 2: USSR and US Grand Military Aid to the Third World
(1982 through 1987)**



SOURCE: *The Annual Report of Secretary of Defense 1987/88*

Table 3: Numbers of Soviet Weapons Delivered to the Third World, Cumulative Totals, 1981-85

(Absolute numbers and share of total deliveries, by type, to Third World)

Weapon type	To Africa		To East Asia		To Latin America	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Tanks	1.070	51	485	58	445	54
Anti-aircraft artillery	1.095	75	180	62	220	52
Field artillery	1.750	55	295	21	555	45
Armored personnel carriers	1.915	45	450	35	185	16
Major naval surface combatants	19	44	4	15	4	7
Other naval surface combatants	17	12	51	55	56	40
Submarines	5	100	0	0	1	11
Missile attack boats	9	47	2	20	6	100
Supersonic combat aircraft	555	82	195	55	100	55
Subsonic combat aircraft	15	15	0	0	0	0
Other aircraft	110	20	75	22	40	12
Helicopters	255	57	60	22	85	27
Surface-to-air missiles	4.745	89	320	12	1.295	69
Weapon type	To Middle East		To South Asia		Third World Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Tanks	1.790	20	605	77	4.395	52 (12)
Anti-aircraft artillery	340	10	130	50	1.965	55 (2)
Field artillery	825	8	455	60	3.880	25 (17)
Armored personnel carriers	3.210	50	1.000	87	6.760	56 (21)
Major naval surface combatants	4	20	2	20	53	24 (11)
Other naval surface combatants	17	11	6	14	107	22 (5)
Submarines	2	20	0	0	8	51 (0)
Missile attack boats	9	23	0	0	26	26 (0)
Supersonic combat aircraft	625	49	165	46	1.620	57 (14)
Subsonic combat aircraft	85	61	0	0	100	17 (46)
Other aircraft	35	18	125	37	385	22 (2)
Helicopters	340	69	150	95	870	55 (11)
Surface-to-air missiles	5.585	58	520	72	12.265	50 (15)

In parentheses US share of total shipments to Third World

on a grant basis. In fact, the Soviets allocated over \$3 billion a year in outright military grants to only five countries (CUBA, VIETNAM, NICARAGUA, ANGOLA and SYRIA).

Even the minor recipients of Soviet arms receive approximately 30 to 45 percent of their arms on a grant basis.

In addition to this grant aid the Soviets are providing other financial concessions, including offering credit at concessionary rates, accepting payment in soft currency or in commodity shipments, and rescheduling or forgiving long-term debts.

Soviet arms transfers have also provided a means for gaining basing rights abroad, as well as an entry for Soviet advisors to the receiving country.

For example, Soviet involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa remains high. In Ethiopia there are approximately 1,700 military advisors. Likewise, in Mozambique about 850 Soviet military advisors train Mozambique's Armed Forces. In Angola, the presence of 45,000 Cuban military surrogates augments direct Soviet support which in 1987 consisted of deliveries of additional FLOGGER fighter aircraft, HIP H helicopters, SA-2 and SA-8 surface-to-air missiles (SAMS), and numerous tanks, artillery pieces and BMP airmoved vehicles.

3. As a result of this policy of arms transfer and military aid, the Soviet Union, either directly or indirectly by surrogates, specially Cubans, projected power to important areas of the Third World. This projection of power began in the early of the cold war, and has not finished up to now, being an important and decisive factor in some important conflicts in the last decades. After some failures and inconclusive actions, the Soviet Union, especially at the time when Portugal finished what European misperceptions called, regretfully, the «last empire» made an important change of methods in supporting marxist régimes in Southern Africa and Latin America. The supportive action of players dealing with low intensity conflicts gave place to extraordinary build-up of conventional forces that had unbalanced the military power in such countries as ANGOLA, MOZAMBIQUE, ETHIOPIA, NICARAGUA and AFGANHISTAN.

For example, and this is very important, after the independence of ANGOLA and MOZAMBIQUE, in 1974-75, where no battle tank, APC

or significant air defense systems existed at the time, the actual picture of sophisticated weapons systems and equipment that is challenging regional security is the following:

	<i>Tanks</i>	<i>APC's</i>	<i>AA</i>	<i>Air Fighters Groun Attackers</i>	<i>Helicopters</i>
ANGOLA	175 - T34	200 - BRDM	ZU - 23 - 2	40 - MIG 23	Mi - 24
	150 - T54	150 - BTR	ZPU 14,5		35 - Mi 8
	120 - T62	100/150 - BTRGO	SA - 3/6/7/ /8/9/14	25 - MIG 17	
	50-PT - 76			40 - MIG 21	
MOZAM- BIQUE	300 - T34	150 - BRDM	ZU - 23		
	54/SS	300 - BTR-60	SU - 23.4 SP	35 - MIG 19/ /21	7 - Mi 8 S
	42-PT - 76		SA 3/7	24 - MIG 17	

SOURCE: «World Defense Almanac Military Techonology», 1987-88

The deliveries of these weapons and equipments began in 1975/76, but the majority of them ocured after 1983. The military inbalance produced in Southern Africa results from simple facts:

- (1) The actual Angola Air Force is the second largest in Africa, consisting of 40 Mig-21 Fishbed, 40 Mig-23 Flogger and a smaller, but undisclosed number of Su-22 fighter aircraft. The Mig-21's are flown by Soviet trained Angolan pilots, while Mig-23's and SU-22's are thought to be flown by Cuban and a smaller number of East German and/or soviet pilots.
- (2) After the raids by the South Africa Air Force, a very complete and sophisticated Soviet supplied air defense system is being installed. Over 75 mobile radar sets, of seven different types, based on 23 sites, form the basis of a comprehensive command and control network.

The fighting arm of this consists of three types of jet fighters, six anti-aircraft (AA) missile systems and four calibres of anti-aircraft guns. In addition, field units are reported to employ three forms of shoulder-launched missile weapons.

The radar network apparently consists of eight sector operations centres, and 15 control and reporting centres. (Chart 2-Annex). Mobile AA missile systems operational in Angola are the SA-2 Guideline, SA-3 Goa, SA-6 Gainful, SA-8 series B Gecko, SA-9 Gaskin and SA-13 Gopher.

AA guns include the 14.5 mm KPV on various mountings, 23 mm ZSU twin-barrel wheeled and ZSU-23-4 quadruple barrel tracked, 37 mm M 1939 and 57 mm 5-60. Portable shoulder-launched AA missiles consist of the SA-7 Grail and SA-14 Gremlin. There is also a report of a Soviet rival to the Stinger, designated S-16, being used.

IV — PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS

1. By the early 1980's, there was a general recognition, in the Soviet theoretical literature, that earlier hopes for strong clients, and lasting influence resulting from the promotion of Marxist-Leninist vanguard party-states were not being realized. Though the new generation of Marxist-Leninist allies willingly cooperated with Moscow, both politically and military, they themselves were not doing well. They tended to be economically backward, even by Third World standards, and this condition was made worse by the premature introduction of such socialist «measures» as collectivization of agriculture and wholesale nationalization of foreign property. Due to their small domestic political base and ideological narrowness, many of these regimes were perceived as illegitimate by a sizeable segment of their own population. Several, including those in ANGOLA, MOZAMBIQUE, AFGHANISTAN, CAMBODIA and NICARAGUA, faced internal guerrilla insurgencies.

Rather than having the need for Soviet military and economic assistance taper off when Marxist-Leninist regimes came to power, in many cases, the need for assistance grew substantially over time, to the point of making the Soviet Third World «empire» a considerable drain on Soviet resources. It is also noticed that the role of ideology in defining Soviet foreign policy objectives, and in providing political instruments for expansion has been steadily declining in the postwar period. The changes already brought about by Gorbachev have further accelerated that decline.

Whatever the real-world implications of the «new political thinking», the old ideological language of Marxism-Leninism and vanguard parties is now seldom heard. Moscow no longer has at its disposal a world communist movement through which it can work, and to which it can give orders, because international communism has not recovered, and is unlikely to recover, from the splits with Yugoslavia in the 1940's and with China in the 1950's and 1960's.

2. Searching for new ways and approaches for a «real-politik» of a superpower, the Soviet Union is moving in a right-wing period of its foreign policy. The «Gorbachev doctrine» needs to spent much more internally than abroad, to expand influence for some people in the Politburo, and the new International Department will be worth much more if it is oriented toward capitalist-oriented countries like INDIA, MEXICO, ARGENTINA and BRAZIL.

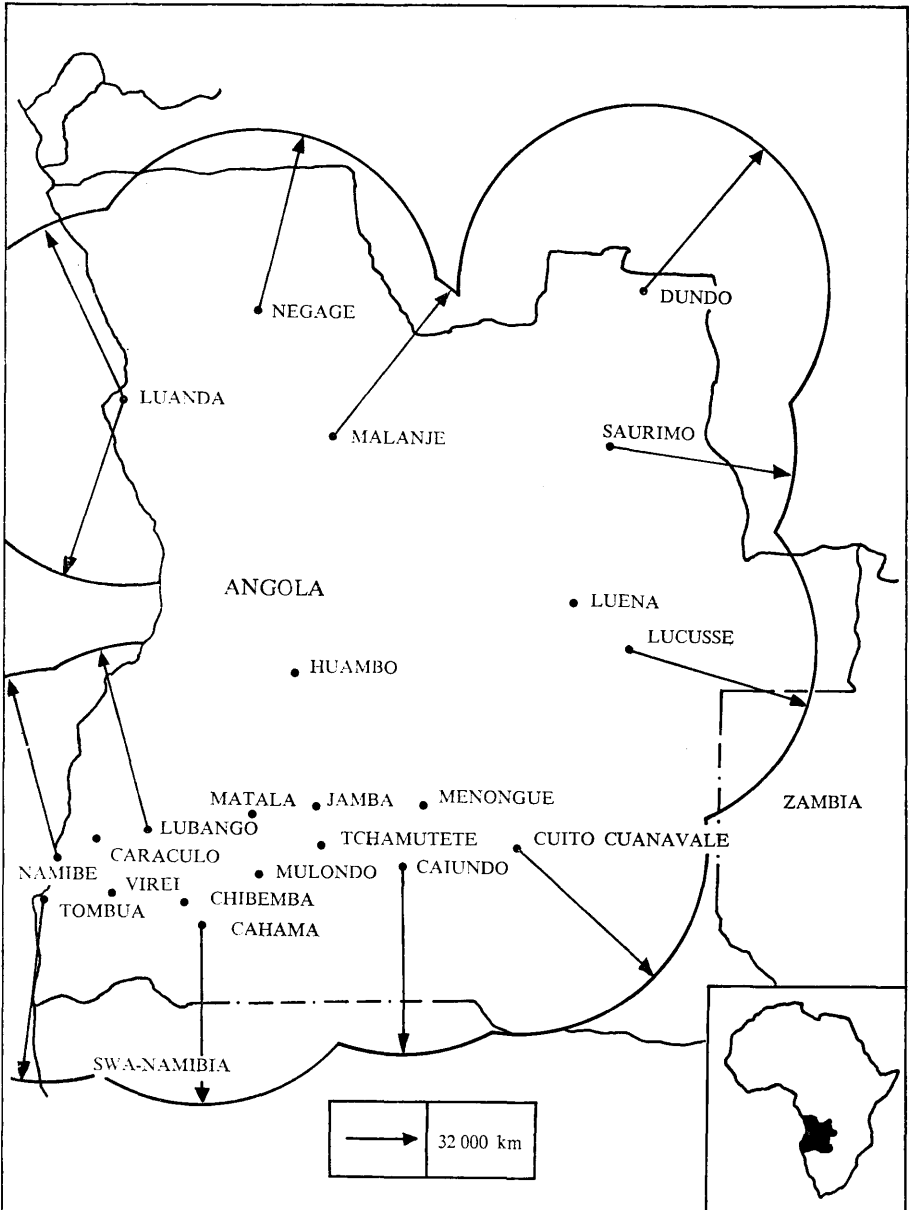
Contrary to the Khushev doctrine that «believed in a one-generation transformation from national liberation to socialism», the Kremlin is reverting to orthodox Marxism, which says that countries must go through a capitalist phase before they can achieve communism.

As Gorbachev said recently, «We favour socialism, but we do not impose our convictions on anyone. Let everyone choose for himself, and will eventually put everything in its place».

Realistically the West has to understand that where the Kremlin has longstanding commitments, as in Cuba and Vietnam, its promises are kept, although Moscow is eager to cease the burden. In other more promising areas, the Kremlin is using shrewd diplomatic and trade tactics to gain leverage. It threatens to undercut U. S. influence by playing both sides in the Iran-Iraq war, by making up with China, and by offering to help mediate the Palestinian problem. But nowhere is Moscow launching any new military adventures, and it is trying to get out of some old ones. The withdrawal from Afghanistan is a Soviet defeat, and the peace agreement still could be a disaster for Moscow if the pro-Soviet Afghan government is quickly overwhelmed by the Islamic rebels who refuse to stop fighting.

In China, the Middle East, and the Gulf, Moscow will try to expand its influence at Washington expense. In other areas, the United States might be able to rearrange the balance of power in its own favor by cutting deals with Cuba, Nicaragua and Vietnam.

Soviet-supplied air defence systems in Angola



Marxist Mozambique may already receive more aid from the West than from the Soviet Union, and it isn't clear whether Moscow is ready to write off Angola where, for 12 years now, Western backed rebels have stood off the Marxist government and 45.000 Cuban troops and advisors. US officials say that the Soviets are not cooperating with Washington's efforts to negotiate a settlement, in part because Angola's oil fields still earn hard currency.

Does Gorbachev mean what he says about wanting peaceful solutions?

A quick way to find out be to challenge him, once again, to help with negotiated settlements in Angola or the Iran-Iraq war. Even if Gorbachev keeps his side of the bargain, détente will not necessarily be at hand.

The Soviet leader still means to compete for global influence. If he fails in his attempt to promote «new thinking» at home and abroad, Gorbachev probably will be replaced, according some Kremlinologists.

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