

22 December 1975

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: West European Attitudes on Angola  
(Contributions to NSSM 234)

In General

1. The West European governments, although disturbed over Soviet intervention in support of the MPLA in Angola, are not prepared to give public backing to counter-measures -- especially in association with South Africa.

- The West Europeans recognize that the MPLA leader Augustinho Neto is Marxist-oriented. They doubt, however, that the Soviets will be able to overcome African nationalist tendencies sufficiently to establish lasting dominance over Angola by supporting the MPLA.
- Only the conservative press for the most part, unlike the political leaders, sees the US facing a test of its will and ability to contain Soviet expansion.
- While West European leaders have accepted the news of US material aid for MPLA opponents with little criticism, they do not favor US military intervention. With the exception of France and possibly Greece, most would be relieved if the US wound down its direct

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involvement. They are skeptical about the wisdom of US involvement, and hope that other approaches can be found.

-- All will be reluctant to go against any consensus that may be reached at the OAU meeting in January.

-- The West Europeans evidently see Africa as a sphere where their influence will continue to be important and believe they will be able to compete effectively with the Soviets there by such arrangements as the EC's Lome accord, which grants preferential treatment to 46 African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries.\*

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[redacted] government favors non-intervention and maintains that none of the factions has earned recognition by establishing its control of Angola. At a recent NATO meeting, Foreign Secretary Callaghan recommended strong support for the OAU's recent call for the removal of all foreign troops and the setting up of a government of national unity in which all three factions would participate. Callaghan argued that

\* The opinion of Western European business leaders in Angola is not clear, although we have had the impression in the past that a number of them supported FNLA/Unita. [redacted]

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France

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6. Paris is more inclined than other West European governments to play an active role in Angola. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] In relations with Moscow, the French government is taking the line across the board that the Soviets must be told with clarity and determination exactly how the West expects them to act within the framework of detente.

7. The French have been sending military equipment to FNLA/Unita through Senegal and Zaire, and probably would not be opposed to continued or increased US support -- short of sending US nationals to fight in Angola. Nevertheless, for domestic political reasons, Paris has chosen a public stance of neutrality. In particular, France hopes to avoid the need for any public defense of involvement in a conflict in Africa on the same side as the South Africans.

8. As a long-term objective, France hopes to create a "Latin Africa" grouping by bringing Portugal's former colonies into closer association with ex-colonies of France, Belgium, and Spain. The French are prepared to pay a certain price in aid and verbal support to enlarge their African orbit and, in return, expect access to extensive resources.

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Italy

9. Italian leaders apparently hope that the Angolan situation does not escalate into a superpower dispute in which Rome would be expected to take sides, thus adding another issue to the country's domestic conflict between left and right. The Italian Communist Party, which has given lukewarm endorsement to the MPLA, is also eager to avoid sharp debate on the issue. The party's efforts to distance itself from the Soviets could suffer if the party were forced, through sharp debate, to step up its support for the Soviet-backed group.

Others

10. In NATO discussions, Greece stressed that, despite the rhetoric or detente, the allies should watch the behavior of the Soviets and their friends in situations such as Angola. The Dutch and the Danes, on the other hand, advocate the cessation of all foreign intervention there and would support a coalition of contending Angolan movements. If the MPLA should succeed in dominating Angola, they believe that this would not necessarily lead to Soviet-satellite status. They argue that the West might most usefully encourage nationalist tendencies to check Soviet influence.

NATO

11. Angola has been discussed in NATO councils, producing ambivalent statements of concern over the Soviet role, along with expressions of hope that the US can somehow prevent a Soviet success without being

involved in fighting. It can be inferred that West European governments would oppose any vigorous role for NATO in the Angolan affair. They would do so on the grounds that the problem lies outside NATO's defined area, and that NATO is not under obligation to support US policy there if its members find such action not consistent with their own policies and perceived interests. And while they share the US concern over the Soviet involvement, their attitudes on European intervention range from skepticism to outright opposition.

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