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ANTI-SOVIET INSURGENCIES:  
GROWING TREND OR PASSING PHASE?

Mark N. Katz  
Research Associate  
Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies

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Since the end of World War II, there have been several insurgencies in which Marxist forces have fought against pro-Western governments. In some cases, the Marxists have come to power, as in Vietnam, Cuba, Kampuchea, Laos, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, South Yemen, and Nicaragua. In others, the Marxists have been defeated, as in Greece, Malaya, and Oman. But whether they have won or lost, the West has seen itself on the defensive against the Marxists. Since the mid-1970s, though, a new phenomenon has taken place. Pro-Soviet Marxist Third World governments have had to fight armed internal opponents in Afghanistan, Kampuchea, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua. Further, these Marxist governments have been unable to defeat their opponents even after many years of fighting.

The term "anti-Soviet insurgency" is not really the most accurate description of these conflicts. For the most part, the forces opposing pro-Soviet governments are not primarily motivated by anti-Soviet or even anticommunist concerns, but by local factors. The term "anti-Soviet insurgency" is nevertheless a useful one, for it points out a larger problem faced by Soviet foreign policy. No matter what the cause of each of these insurrections might have been, they demonstrate that the rule of pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist governments in the Third World is not especially secure. Although none of these pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist governments has yet been overthrown by guerrilla forces,<sup>1</sup> neither have Marxist governments been able to defeat the guerrillas. This is especially striking in those cases where the guerrillas have managed to survive even where forces from established socialist states have fought against them, as have the Cubans in Angola, the Vietnamese in Kampuchea, and the Soviets in Afghanistan. Now that these conflicts have been going on for several years, the Soviets must be extremely

concerned whether the anti-Soviet insurgents can be defeated, whether more conflicts will erupt in other nations allied to the USSR, and whether guerrillas might ever succeed in overthrowing a pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist government.

Are these Soviet difficulties potential opportunities for the West? The U.S. government would undoubtedly consider the overthrow of a pro-Soviet Marxist government by internal forces to be a foreign policy victory. The Reagan administration has given military aid to the Nicaraguan *contras*, the Afghan *mujahideen*, and most recently, the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). But is it really possible for the West to bring about the overthrow of a pro-Soviet Third World government or prevent the USSR and its allies from eventually defeating the anti-Soviet guerrillas? After all, there have been anti-Soviet insurgencies before, and all of them have been defeated. From the Russian revolution until the mid-1930s, Moslems in Soviet Central Asia fought against Bolshevik rule. Although the insurgents, who the Soviets called *basmachi*, or bandits, held out for many years, Moscow was victorious over them in the end. There was also an insurgency in the Ukraine that lasted from the end of World War II until 1947 with similar results.

While it might not be surprising that the Soviets were able to defeat insurgencies in their own country, there have also been two previous attempts to overthrow pro-Soviet regimes distant from the USSR. The first was the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. This is commonly remembered as a CIA-sponsored action, but the military operation itself was carried out primarily by Cuban exiles. In addition, after a Marxist government came to power in South Yemen in 1967, several South Yemeni exile groups based in both Saudi Arabia and North Yemen tried on many occasions from 1967 to 1973 to either overthrow the

radical government or make the eastern part of the country independent. Both in Cuba and South Yemen, these attempts at counterrevolution failed.

Are anti-Soviet insurgencies likely to be a long-term problem for Soviet foreign policy, or are they merely a passing phase in the consolidation of pro-Soviet Third World regimes? Can any of them realistically be expected to succeed in overthrowing the Marxist governments they are fighting against? What has Moscow's response been to the phenomenon of anti-Soviet insurgencies and what policy choices does it face? What are the opportunities and the dangers that this phenomenon presents for American foreign policy? In seeking to answer these questions, it is first necessary to examine the particular circumstances of each of the six anti-Soviet insurgencies.

### **The Six Anti-Soviet Insurgencies**

One feature that all six of the ongoing anti-Soviet insurgencies have in common is that they each began immediately upon or soon after the establishment of the pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist government that they are directed at. In one case, Ethiopia, the regional insurgency in Eritrea actually predated the Marxist revolution. None of these Marxist governments had been firmly settled in power for a long period of time before these conflicts broke out. In addition, in each of these conflicts, there is an element of indigenous support for the guerrillas as well as an element of foreign support, though the relative mix of each varies widely among the six conflicts. Further, the degree of internal support for the Marxist regime varies quite widely, from very little in Afghanistan to fairly substantial in Nicaragua. Finally, the degree of military involvement on the part of

established socialist states also varies widely, from extremely heavy in Afghanistan and Kampuchea to very limited in Nicaragua and Mozambique.

*Angola.* At the time of the 1974 left-wing military coup that ousted the conservative Portuguese dictatorship, there were three main rebel groups in Angola based roughly on Angola's main tribal divisions. The Front for the National Liberation of Angola (FNLA), led by Holden Roberto, was backed by the Bakongo in the North; the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), led by Agostinho Neto, was backed by the Mbundu in the center; and UNITA, led by Jonas Savimbi, was supported by the Ovimbundu in the South. The Marxist MPLA was strong in the capital, Luanda, and had the support of many leftist Portuguese and *mesticos* there.

In early 1976, the Soviet- and Cuban-backed MPLA rallied and drove the FNLA into Zaire and South African forces back into Namibia.<sup>2</sup> The FNLA was completely defeated and has never recovered its strength. It appeared that UNITA was also defeated, but this proved not to be the case. The MPLA was never able to assert its authority in the Ovimbundu heartland. UNITA was not only able to stave off defeat, but also to consolidate its hold in the South and expand its influence northward. By the summer of 1985, it was estimated that UNITA controlled approximately 55 percent of Angola and was able to mount operations in other parts of the country, including the capital, despite the presence of Cuban troops. In September 1985, however, MPLA forces launched an offensive against UNITA with Cuban and Soviet support, and succeeded in driving the latter southward. The MPLA offensive ceased by early October 1985 some 150 miles north of Jamba, UNITA's capital.<sup>3</sup>

UNITA's main strength is derived from its solid base of internal support among the Ovimbundu. This has allowed UNITA to develop a firm territorial



base inside the country from which to operate. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Savimbi controlled some 18,000 "regular" fighters and a militia force of 23,000 in 1985.<sup>4</sup> The United States did not provide UNITA with any military aid from the passage of the Clark Amendment in 1976 until its repeal in 1985, but South Africa has given it a substantial amount of assistance over the years. South Africa has also conducted military operations in southern Angola in order to weaken the South West Africa Peoples Organization (SWAPO), which is trying to win independence for Namibia. Savimbi's willingness to cooperate with South Africa has made it difficult for the West, China, and black African states to support him, but in March 1986 the Reagan administration began sending Stinger shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles to Savimbi's forces.<sup>5</sup> UNITA's strength among the Ovimbundu might ultimately limit its popular appeal in Angola, especially among the Mbundu who prefer to be ruled by their own tribesmen in the MPLA.

The MPLA government has been strongly supported by Cuba and the USSR since 1975. In 1975-76, Cuban forces in Angola reached a high of 36,000, according to Fidel Castro, then fell to about 12,000, but rose again to their current level of 25-35,000 when UNITA and South African military operations grew more threatening. The USSR, which signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with Angola in October 1976, has provided most of Angola's weaponry and maintains about 500 military advisers there.<sup>6</sup>

A rough rule of thumb that is often cited with regard to insurgencies is that counterinsurgency forces need to have a 10-to-1 advantage over the insurgents in order to defeat them.<sup>7</sup> The MPLA's regular armed forces consist of 49,500 troops. Together with 25-35,000 Cubans, 500 Soviets, and 500 East Germans, the MPLA has some 75-85,000 regulars at its disposal, as compared to

18,000 UNITA regulars.<sup>8</sup> This means that the MPLA only has a 4-to-1 advantage, and thus is not likely to be able to defeat UNITA.

The United States has called for Cuba's departure from Angola in return for Namibian independence accompanied by a complete South African military withdrawal.<sup>9</sup> If the Cubans depart, UNITA might find itself in a better position, but the MPLA would still have an almost 3-to-1 advantage in regular forces. And if South Africa withdrew from Namibia, UNITA would not receive as effective military assistance from Pretoria as it does now. Thus the prospects for UNITA's survival are very good, but it is much less likely that UNITA will be able to defeat the MPLA or force it into a power-sharing agreement--a formula called for by Savimbi but rejected by Luanda.

*Mozambique.* The Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) was formed in 1964, and by 1969 was dominated by Marxist-Leninists. Its operations were at first largely confined to northern Mozambique, where FRELIMO benefited from sanctuaries in Tanzania. FRELIMO's influence grew rapidly after June 1974, when the new Portuguese government announced it would withdraw from Africa the following year. When Mozambique became independent, FRELIMO assumed power without having to fight serious rivals as the MPLA did in Angola.<sup>10</sup>

The new FRELIMO government openly allowed Robert Mugabe's guerrillas to use bases inside Mozambique to launch attacks against the forces of white-ruled Rhodesia. The Ian Smith government in Rhodesia responded by sponsoring the Mozambican National Resistance (MNR) to fight against the Marxist government in Maputo, the Mozambican capital. When Rhodesia became Zimbabwe, the MNR transferred its headquarters to South Africa. At first, the MNR made little impression in Mozambique, and by 1979 it had only about 1,000

guerrillas under arms.<sup>11</sup> But worsening economic conditions combined with the unpopular policies of the government gave rise to popular dissatisfaction with FRELIMO.<sup>12</sup> This has allowed the MNR to develop a basis of internal support within Mozambique in addition to its backing from South Africa. Certain ex-FRELIMO members also joined the MNR, including Afonso Dhlakama, who is the current leader of the MNR.

The MNR has expanded its military operations to all 10 of Mozambique's provinces, especially those in the central region of the country. Like other black African nations, Mozambique is not free of tribal cleavages, and the MNR has been able to take advantage of this to gain support from some of the Manica, Nbau, Makonde, Makusas.<sup>13</sup>

The MNR claims to have 16,000 guerrillas under arms, while FRELIMO puts MNR strength at 10,000. Others estimate the figure as being lower still. The International Institute for Strategic Studies has said that there are 6,000 trained guerrillas and 3,000 MNR reservists. Mozambique's army has about 14,000 troops, but approximately 75 percent are conscripts whose reliability is doubtful.<sup>14</sup> FRELIMO, then, does not come anywhere near having a 10-to-1 advantage over the MNR, and indeed might not even have a 2-to-1 advantage.

FRELIMO has received military assistance from the Soviet bloc. In March 1977, Maputo and Moscow signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation. The USSR has also provided some military equipment, and Soviet naval vessels have visited Mozambique. There are also about 750 military advisers from Cuba, 100 from East Germany, and 300 from the USSR in the country.<sup>15</sup> Yet despite the obvious threat that the MNR poses to FRELIMO--arguably a greater one than UNITA poses to the MPLA--the Soviet bloc has either been unable or unwilling to make the same sort of large-scale military commitment to Maputo that it has

to Luanda.

In order to defend itself, the FRELIMO government has chosen to turn more and more toward the West. At the end of 1981, Mozambique and Portugal announced plans for joint military cooperation. In April 1982, the two signed an agreement whereby Portuguese military instructors would provide training in counterinsurgency warfare to the Mozambicans.<sup>16</sup> In April 1984, Mozambique and South Africa signed the Nkomati Accord in which the former agreed to stop supporting the African National Congress (ANC) and the latter agreed to cease aiding the MNR. The willingness of FRELIMO's leader, Samora Machel, to sign this agreement with South Africa only shows how threatened he is by the MNR. His government previously gave much assistance to Zimbabwean rebels and was one of the strongest critics of the white regime in Pretoria.

When the accord with South Africa was signed, FRELIMO indeed stopped supporting the ANC, but MNR activities continued. In 1985, the South African government admitted that it had continued to support the MNR even after the agreement was signed.<sup>17</sup> Thus the Nkomati Accord does little to help FRELIMO defeat the MNR.

The MNR has benefited from the absence of a large-scale Soviet-Cuban military presence. Yet the MNR's prospects for overthrowing FRELIMO are doubtful. Observers note that aside from anticommunism, the MNR has yet to articulate a political program that would appeal to the Mozambican people as a whole. Nor has it made much effort to set up an alternative government. Rather, it has concentrated on attacking FRELIMO positions and then withdrawing. In addition, there are over 7,000 Zimbabwean troops in Mozambique helping FRELIMO. FRELIMO and Zimbabwean troops launched an offensive in August 1985 that succeeded in capturing the MNR's headquarters in

central Mozambique, but in February 1986 the MNR recaptured it.<sup>18</sup> Finally, it is not clear whether South Africa really wants the MNR to come to power. Pretoria might prefer a weak Marxist government that is increasingly willing to cooperate with it instead of a strong noncommunist government that is not willing to do so, or a weak noncommunist government that South Africa might have difficulty keeping in power. It is much easier for South Africa to support the MNR in its effort to weaken FRELIMO than it would be to help it stay in power as a government that might in turn face armed opposition. Nevertheless, FRELIMO is one of the pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist governments most seriously threatened by anti-Soviet insurgents.

*Ethiopia.* After the 1974 Marxist coup in Ethiopia, the Somali attack to regain the Ogaden in 1977, and the expulsion of the Soviets and Cubans from Somalia, the Ethiopians, with the aid of 1,500 Soviet advisers and 12-15,000 Cuban troops, were able to drive the Somalis out of the Ogaden by March 1978.<sup>19</sup> But this was not the end of the regime's problems, as it was also faced with growing insurgencies in other parts of the country, especially Eritrea.

In the late 19th century, the Italians failed in their attempt to colonize Ethiopia, but occupied Eritrea. Except for the brief period when Mussolini occupied Ethiopia, Eritrea was ruled separately until the end of World War II. The British then occupied Eritrea, but the United Nations decided after World War II that it should be ruled as an autonomous region by Haile Selassie. In 1962, he annexed Eritrea and an insurgency soon arose there. Since the 1974 revolution, several other regional revolts, including rebellions in Tigray, Afars, and Oromo have, have flared up.<sup>20</sup>

The new Ethiopian regime was just as determined to assert its authority

over the rebellious Eritreans as the old regime had been. After driving the Somalis out of the Ogaden, Addis Ababa launched an offensive against the Eritrean rebels. Although the Soviets had helped the Eritrean Marxists for years, Moscow quickly switched to helping the Ethiopian Marxists in their attempt to suppress the Eritreans. The Cubans, however, refused to do so. After aiding the Eritreans for so long, Castro would not send Cuban soldiers to fight against them. Instead, he urged a political solution to the Eritrean conflict.<sup>21</sup>

The several attempts that Addis Ababa has made to crush the Eritreans have all failed. In 1982, for example, the Ethiopians launched a major offensive against an Eritrean stronghold in Nakfa, but this failed partly because rebels in Tigray kept attacking Ethiopian supply lines. In 1983, Addis Ababa tried to defeat the rebels in Tigray, but again was unsuccessful.<sup>22</sup>

Ethiopia's armed forces, including the regular army and the People's Militia, total 217,000 troops. Addis Ababa signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with Moscow in November 1978 and has received modern Soviet weapons. There are also some 1,500 Soviet and 550 East German military advisers in Ethiopia. Cuba once had as many as 17,000 soldiers in Ethiopia, but this number has fallen to 5,000, due in part to the expectation that Somalia will not attack again and in part to Ethiopia's unwillingness or inability to continue paying for such a large Cuban presence. There are about 28,500 Eritrean, 5,000 Tigrayan, and 600 Oromo rebels.<sup>23</sup> Although they apparently do not receive aid from the West, conservative Arab states assist them.

The Ethiopian government has a better than 6-to-1 force advantage over

the guerrillas. However, it is believed that Addis Ababa keeps only 100,000 troops in Eritrea.<sup>24</sup> It therefore only has an actual advantage of 3.5-to-1 in that rebellious province. Ethiopia has not sent more troops into Eritrea partly because it must deploy a share of its forces in the Ogaden region and keep a large number in the Ethiopian heartland to maintain internal security. As long as this remains the case, the Ethiopian government will find it difficult to defeat the guerrillas.

While Addis Ababa might be unable to crush the rebels, the continuing insurgency does not threaten the Ethiopian government in the same way that UNITA threatens the MPLA or the MNR threatens FRELIMO. It is not the aim of the Ethiopian rebels to overthrow the Marxist government in Addis Ababa, but to gain independence, or perhaps just autonomy.

Another factor hindering the guerrillas in Eritrea is that they are divided into four separate groups and have spent as much time fighting each other as they have Ethiopian government forces.<sup>25</sup> This of course helps Addis Ababa to maintain its presence in the province. As a result of internal divisions and the smaller size of their forces as compared to Addis Ababa's, the Eritreans are not likely to obtain independence by militarily defeating the Ethiopian army. As long as Eritrea cannot win its independence, the more united but numerically much smaller Tigray People's Liberation Front has no real hope of winning independence for its province either. Perhaps the best they can both hope for is that Addis Ababa will get tired of fighting and will be willing to negotiate a political settlement granting them some form of political autonomy.

*Kampuchea.* In 1975, the Khmer Rouge came to power in Kampuchea at the same time that South Vietnam fell to Hanoi's forces. Although Marxist, the

Khmer Rouge was bitterly opposed to the Hanoi government because it feared the Vietnamese sought to dominate Kampuchea. The Chinese backed the Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot in his independent stand vis-à-vis Vietnam--a policy that did much to sour Sino-Vietnamese relations from 1975 onward. Tensions grew along the Vietnam-Kampuchea border as the Pol Pot government reasserted claims to territory in Vietnam that was formerly Kampuchean. At the end of December 1978, Vietnamese forces invaded Kampuchea and quickly overwhelmed the Khmer Rouge. Hanoi established a new government in Phnom Penh led by the Kampuchean Marxist, Heng Samrin, who had earlier broken with Pol Pot. The new Vietnamese-backed government was recognized by the USSR and its allies, but through the efforts of China and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Pol Pot regime continued to hold Kampuchea's seat at the United Nations.<sup>26</sup>

Although the Vietnamese succeeded in sweeping through most of Kampuchea, they did not completely destroy the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge was able to remain in parts of western and northwestern Kampuchea as well as conduct guerrilla operations elsewhere. Both China and ASEAN funneled military aid to the Khmer Rouge via Thailand. A pattern emerged in which during the dry season of every year (January through April), the Vietnamese would launch an offensive against the resistance that would make substantial progress, but during the wet season resistance activity would resume. Vietnamese forces have on several occasions pursued the Kampuchean rebels across the border into Thailand, and this has led to several clashes between Vietnamese and Thai forces.<sup>27</sup>

The Khmer Rouge is not the only Kampuchean group resisting the Vietnamese; there are also two noncommunist groups. One is led by Prince



Norodom Sihanouk--the neutralist leader of Kampuchea until he was overthrown in 1970 by Lon Nol--and another is led by former Prime Minister Son Sann. In 1982, the Khmer Rouge joined a "coalition government" with the two noncommunist resistance movements in order to reduce the risk of losing its UN seat because of Pol Pot's past activities. The Khmer Rouge, however, remains the most important element in the coalition. In 1985, the Khmer Rouge had a guerrilla force of 35,000, while Son Sann had some 18,000 fighters and Prince Sihanouk had only 7,000. The Heng Samrin government has a conscript army of about 35,000, and the Vietnamese have a force of 160,000 troops in Kampuchea.<sup>28</sup>

The Vietnamese and the Heng Samrin government only have a force advantage that is somewhat greater than 3-to-1. This shows that having a 10-to-1 force advantage over insurgent forces is not always necessary for counterinsurgency warfare to succeed. The Vietnamese, however, are much better equipped than the Kampuchean resistance. In addition, much of the Kampuchean resistance is based in Thailand.

Although united in a coalition, for the most part the three resistance forces operate independently. In their 1985 dry season offensive, the Vietnamese for the first time were able to drive virtually all the resistance forces out of Kampuchea into Thailand. The Kampuchean resistance groups, especially the Khmer Rouge, succeeded in moving their forces back into the country during the subsequent wet season, but their operations were reduced.<sup>29</sup>

Unlike the rebels in Angola and Mozambique, the Kampuchean resistance forces do not appear to have any chance of ousting the Heng Samrin government so long as Vietnamese forces remain in the country. Prince Sihanouk once said

that he was fighting in order to get the Vietnamese to enter negotiations, not to defeat them, as he did not see this as possible. But although the Kampuchean rebels have little chance of succeeding and even their ability to continue operating in Kampuchea is doubtful, the Heng Samrin government is unable to survive without Vietnamese help.<sup>30</sup> Thus Vietnam must continue to maintain large numbers of troops in Kampuchea in order to keep its protégé in power.

*Afghanistan.* A coup in April 1978 brought a Marxist government to power in the Afghan capital, Kabul, and its radical policies quickly led to the growth of internal opposition. Exacerbating the situation was the fact that the Afghan Marxists were divided into two opposing factions, the Khalq and the Parcham. Both were pro-Soviet, though the Parcham was more so. The first two Marxist rulers, Noor Mohammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin, were Khalqis. By December 1979, internal opposition had become so strong that the Soviets invaded with 80,000 troops in order to preserve Marxist rule. The Soviets immediately executed Amin and replaced him with a Parchami, Babrak Karmal. But if the Soviets had been under the impression that invading and pacifying Afghanistan would be as easy as subduing Hungary and Czechoslovakia, they were quickly disabused of this notion.<sup>31</sup>

At present, the Soviets have about 115,000 troops in Afghanistan and the Kabul regime has an army of about 30-40,000. The Afghan army is not an especially effective force, and its numbers are considerably smaller than they were prior to the Soviet invasion due to large-scale defections to the rebels. Defections still take place at a high rate, and the Kabul regime has had to resort to press gang techniques to keep the army at its current size, but these soldiers are not reliable. The Afghan rebels are believed to have a

force of anywhere from 75,000 to 100,000 guerrillas, along with the sympathy and support of most of the population and 2-3 million refugees in Pakistan.<sup>32</sup> Thus even including the Kabul regime's forces, the Soviets at best have only a 2-to-1 advantage over the guerrillas.

The guerrillas hold most of the countryside while the Soviets hold the main cities and roads, but the rebels often successfully attack these too. The Soviets have launched several offensives against the rebels, and these have usually done well as long as Soviet forces have been concentrated on the attack. However, after the Soviets withdraw the bulk of their forces, the rebels are usually able to reclaim lost areas. As the Soviets have not succeeded in making the Karmal government at all popular, the regime would be quickly overthrown without the presence of Soviet troops.<sup>33</sup>

The Afghan rebels, however, suffer from several disadvantages. Instead of being united, they are divided into six separate groups--three traditionalist and three Islamic fundamentalist. They have often fought each other as well as the Soviets. Efforts have been made to join them together, but the largest rebel group, the fundamentalist Hizb-i-Islami, refuses to cooperate.<sup>34</sup> In addition, the Soviets have resorted to increasingly brutal tactics. One French observer noted that because the Soviets understand that the guerrillas are supported by the population, they have undertaken campaigns to destroy agricultural areas in order to drive as much of the population either into Pakistan or into the main cities where the Soviets have more control.<sup>35</sup>

Thus far, the Soviets have been unable to defeat the Afghan rebels, and it does not seem likely that they will be able to do so in the near future. On the other hand, the Afghan rebels do not have any real possibility of

driving the Soviets out of their country. The rebels have obtained most of their arms by capturing them from the Soviets, but they have also received some weapons via Pakistan. The rebels would like to receive more sophisticated Western arms, especially surface-to-air missiles capable of shooting down Soviet aircraft and helicopters. The United States and other nations have given a substantial amount of aid to the Afghan *mujahideen*, but Pakistan is understandably reluctant to allow too much aid to be transferred to the rebels for fear of Soviet retaliation. In March 1986, though, the Reagan administration began sending Stinger shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles to the Afghan guerrillas.<sup>36</sup> At best, the Afghan rebels can hope to maintain or even expand control over as much of their country as possible, but they cannot defeat the Soviets and fighting is likely to continue for a long time to come

*Nicaragua.* In 1979, a pro-American regime headed by Anastasio Somoza and based on the Nicaraguan National Guard was driven from power by the Sandinistas.<sup>37</sup> Although predominately Marxist, the Sandinistas were supported in their effort to oust Somoza by a broad range of Nicaraguan society, including the Chamber of Commerce. In their final battles with the National Guard, they apparently received some Cuban military assistance, though exactly how much is uncertain.

The reaction of the Carter administration to the new regime was to give it economic assistance in the hope that the Sandinistas would not become strongly pro-Soviet and eventually allow free elections. Citing Sandinista assistance to the Marxist rebels in El Salvador, the Reagan administration ended economic assistance to Managua soon after coming to office, and by the end of 1981 had begun a program of covert assistance to the *contras* fighting

against the Sandinistas.<sup>38</sup>

The Sandinistas claim that the United States is completely responsible for the *contras*, but their own policies have also given rise to internal discontent. Like many other radical regimes when they first come to power, the Sandinistas tried to socialize the economy too quickly and economic chaos resulted. They have imposed press censorship and have periodically closed down the independent newspaper *La Prensa*, which supported them before Somoza's overthrow. In addition, the Sandinistas did not allow opposition candidates much freedom to campaign in the 1983 elections, and their imposition of conscription was highly unpopular.<sup>39</sup>

There are four separate opposition movements in Nicaragua. By far the largest is the Nicaraguan Democratic Front (NDF), composed of about 15,000 guerrillas. This group has bases in Honduras and operates in northern Nicaragua. The CIA gave the NDF approximately \$80 million in covert aid from 1981 until June 1984, when Congress cut off funding. It is led by ex-officers of Somoza's National Guard, and this fact alone seems to limit the NDF's appeal inside Nicaragua. Another group, the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE) was led by the former Sandinista guerrilla leader Eden Pastora ("Commander Zero"). It had about 2-3,000 fighters, and operated out of Costa Rica. In the spring of 1986, most ARDE fighters joined the NDF and Pastora gave up the struggle. Finally, there are two resistance groups among the Miskito and other Indians of Eastern Nicaragua, whom the Sandinistas have treated particularly badly. Together, these two groups are said to have anywhere from 1-6,000 guerrillas under arms. The two groups agreed to form an alliance in June 1985.<sup>40</sup>

The Sandinista army has 60,000 troops. The Reagan administration

estimates the total number of *contras* at 15,000, meaning that Managua has a 4-to-1 force advantage over the guerrillas. With this ratio, the White House expects that the Sandinistas do not have enough troops to defeat the *contras*. Assisting the Nicaraguans are 50 Soviet and 3,000 Cuban military advisers.<sup>41</sup>

Should the *contras* ever be in a position to seriously threaten the Sandinistas, the Soviets are not in a geographically advantageous position to help them. Despite the claims of the Reagan administration, the Soviets have not provided Managua with much military assistance, and do not seem to be willing to do so. Indeed, Castro was reported to be annoyed with Moscow in 1985 for not increasing its aid to Managua.<sup>42</sup>

It is doubtful that the *contras* will soon be in a position to actually overthrow the Sandinistas. The NDF's leadership has not come up with a political program beyond overthrowing the Marxists. Many fear that they seek to restore the old order, including reclaiming land taken from large landholders. Pastora was not tainted with the Somoza connection and was committed to building a republican democracy. His forces, however, were able to accomplish little. The Indian groups' appeal is strong among the Indians, but not among the rest of the population, and thus they cannot be expected to grow into a national movement. Therefore, while it is not impossible for the *contras* to overthrow the Sandinistas, they will probably have to become much stronger, especially in terms of internal support within Nicaragua, in order to oust the Marxists.

### The Soviet Response

For the most part, Soviet writers have not seen the phenomenon of

anti-Soviet insurgencies as a permanent or growing problem faced by the USSR. Instead, they have tended to discuss these conflicts as problems in the consolidation of socialism in the Third World. The blame for them is placed firmly on Western "imperialists" as well as their Chinese and reactionary Third World allies. The internal causes of these conflicts are usually overlooked. Whether they really believe it or not, the Soviets portray these conflicts as only temporary, and appear to have no doubt that the pro-Soviet Marxist regimes will eventually prevail.

One of the premier Soviet military theorists, Colonel E. Rybkin, discussed the existence of anti-Soviet insurgencies as early as 1978. In an article attempting to classify all the various conflicts occurring in the world into specific types, Rybkin took note that there were several of these insurrections taking place. Instead of calling them anti-Soviet insurgencies, he termed them "wars of nations on the path of socialist development in defense of socialism." In other words, these are conflicts in which pro-Soviet Marxist governments in the Third World are defending themselves against armed opposition. The USSR does not have, nor perhaps does it desire to have, full-fledged defense commitments to these governments such as those it maintains with its East European allies. Rybkin did not acknowledge that the opposition to these governments could be widespread or result from such a government being unpopular in a given nation. Instead, external forces were seen as the cause of armed opposition.<sup>43</sup>

This refusal to acknowledge the internal causes of revolt against Marxist Third World dictatorships is in sharp contrast to Rybkin's earlier writing about revolts against conservative Third World dictatorships. In these, he saw the entire basis for such conflicts not in the overall East-West

competition, but in strictly local terms. He also made distinctions within the opposition to conservative dictatorships, seeing it contain both communist and noncommunist elements.<sup>44</sup>

This was rather more sophisticated than the American view of such conflicts, which portrayed noncommunist governments facing externally-backed communist opposition movements. But all this sophistication disappeared when Rybkin discussed revolts against Marxist dictatorships. Such conflicts are also seen strictly in terms of communist versus anticommunist, though the actors are reversed.

How the USSR should respond to these anti-Soviet insurgencies appears to be a matter of some debate among Soviet writers. Several Soviet military writers, who probably reflect the ideas of the military leadership, have concluded that intervention in local wars can be successful. There has been a marked evolution in Soviet military thinking about the utility of external intervention in Third World insurgencies. During the Vietnam War, the standard Soviet military judgment about U.S. involvement was that while American forces were militarily superior to the Vietnamese communists, the Americans were "doomed to failure" because their fight was morally unjust.<sup>45</sup> After the war, however, Soviet military writers began to see the American failure as resulting less from moral factors than from the poor use of military force. In the late 1970s, some Soviet military writers began to see certain American military actions in Vietnam, such as the use of helicopters in mountainous countryside for counterinsurgency operations, as having been effective. While they did not favor Israel in either the 1967 or 1973 Middle East wars, they saw Israeli strategy and tactics as extremely effective and that this military effectiveness led them to victory.<sup>46</sup>



Since late 1983, one of the most important Soviet military journals, *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, has published many articles under the general heading "local wars." These articles have not been general, theoretical treatments of local wars or propaganda blasts at the U.S. role in such wars, as were many past articles on this subject, though these types of articles have not disappeared. Rather, they deal with very specific tactical questions with regard to local warfare. Almost all the discussion focusses on the success or failure of Western tactics in local conflicts. Occasionally, the success or failure of present or former Soviet allies such as Syria and Egypt are examined, but the military operations of the USSR or its socialist allies are not.

These articles discuss subjects such as air defense, air tactics against air defense, air tactics against enemy aircraft, air tactics against airfields, armed forces organization in local wars, the use of helicopters in local wars, naval attacks against shore positions, and others. Detailed conclusions regarding the specific lessons that the Soviet military should learn in planning its own tactics and weapons procurement are not spelled out, but the overall conclusion in most articles is clear. Such tactics can be used successfully by intervening forces in local wars.<sup>47</sup> As many of these articles discuss intervention against insurgents, it is evident that several Soviet military writers believe that the USSR and its allies can successfully use these tactics in anti-Soviet insurgencies.

In a major study edited by General I. Shavrov, commandant of the General Staff Academy, lip service is given to the importance of moral factors in war, but the bulk of the book examines several case studies of local conflicts and looks carefully at the question of why the United States or its allies were or

were not successful.<sup>48</sup> Another study by two civilian scholars closely examines the Soviet experience with the Moslem insurgencies that took place in Soviet Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s. The authors openly state that this experience has relevance to Afghanistan. They note that Moslem insurgents were defeated then, and imply that they can be defeated again.<sup>49</sup>

There are other Soviet writers, especially in the international institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, who seem to be wary about the USSR becoming too militarily involved in Third World insurgencies. One wrote an article emphasizing the theme "the revolution must defend itself," indicating that Marxist Third World governments should bear the brunt of any fighting necessary to put down armed opponents.<sup>50</sup> The established socialist states could not be expected to do this for them. There are even signs that some in the Soviet military think this way. For example, in an interview in the British publication *Détente*, a Soviet officer identified only as "Colonel X" admitted that Moscow's military intervention in Afghanistan "does not serve our interests." He proposed that "non-alignment pacts" should be signed in countries where conflicts are occurring, and that the great powers exert pressure on their clients to form coalition governments with insurgent forces. The superpowers should then work to halt all outside assistance to any insurgent forces that refuse to join the coalition, and should give economic assistance to the new government. That he mainly thought of this arrangement for anti-Soviet insurgencies was evident when he stated, "Instead of paying these hooligans to make war, let us pay them to keep the peace"--not the sort of language the Soviets use to describe pro-Soviet forces of "national and social liberation."<sup>51</sup>

A conclusion that could be drawn from this argument is that the USSR

would welcome the opportunity to withdraw Soviet, Vietnamese, or Cuban forces from various Third World conflicts and see Marxist rule somewhat diluted by giving the insurgents a share of power. If they did this, of course, the Soviets would not be in a position to prevent the insurgents from seizing full power, except through renewed intervention by one of the established socialist states. It is not at all clear that the Soviets are willing to take this risk. In the one nation that "Colonel X" discussed what a "nonalignment pact" would look like--Afghanistan--he called for a coalition government composed of both the insurgents and government, but insisted that, first, a nonalignment pact should be concluded with Pakistan to ensure that aid to the insurgents could no longer be channeled through it.<sup>52</sup> In other words, strict guarantees against the West helping the insurgents must be in place before the Soviets agree to stop backing the Karmal government. Thus the Marxists would remain in power along with a few ex-guerrillas. What those Soviets who do not want continued large-scale Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan really desire is to be able to withdraw while keeping their allies in power, preferably with Western consent.

The Soviets' response to anti-Soviet insurgencies has been varied, not only in their writing, but also in terms of their foreign and military policies. At one extreme, the USSR has sent 115,000 troops to battle the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan, and it supports both the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea and the Cuban intervention in Angola. At the other extreme, none of the established socialist states have sent nearly as many advisers to either Nicaragua or Mozambique, and the Soviets have only sent relatively limited military assistance.

The USSR can obviously project force into a nation on its borders more

easily than into one that is far away. The same is true of Vietnam in Kampuchea. But distance is not necessarily a barrier to military force projection, as Cuban intervention in Angola and Ethiopia has shown. It is not surprising that Cuban and Soviet involvement in Nicaragua has been limited, as Nicaragua is close to the United States and very far from the USSR. Nicaragua is of course close to Cuba, but if large numbers of Cuban forces entered Nicaragua and the United States responded by intervening, there is little that the Soviets could do to help their allies. What seems unusual is the relatively limited amount of Soviet and Cuban military assistance given to Mozambique as compared to Angola and Ethiopia. Instead, Zimbabwe sent troops, thus relieving the established socialist states of the need to do so.

In addition to geographic accessibility and the likely response of the United States, the degree to which insurgents threaten pro-Soviet Marxist governments must be an important factor in deciding what degree of military support from the established socialist states is necessary. In Afghanistan, the guerrillas would quickly overthrow the Marxist government were it not for the presence of Soviet forces. In Kampuchea, the Heng Samrin government only came to power because of the Vietnamese, and could not be expected to survive long if they withdrew. There is a strong though less certain probability that the MPLA would be ousted by UNITA if the Cubans left Angola. In Ethiopia, the insurgents do not actually threaten the government, and so a considerably smaller military presence from outside is needed. Perhaps the reason why more help has not been given to Mozambique is that the Soviets and Cubans judge that while the MNR is a nuisance, it does not really threaten FRELIMO's rule. Thus far, the Sandinistas have been able to hold the *contras* at bay without much Soviet and Cuban assistance.

At present, none of the six anti-Soviet insurgencies seems about to succeed in toppling a pro-Soviet Marxist government. This is true not only in those countries where the established socialist nations have a heavy military presence, as in Afghanistan and Kampuchea, but even in those where there is a moderate presence, as in Angola and Ethiopia, or a light presence, as in Mozambique and Nicaragua. But what would the USSR and its allies do if the insurgents in countries where they do not have a strong military presence suddenly grew more powerful? What would they do if anti-Soviet insurgencies broke out in other countries, such as might have happened in South Yemen if the fighting that erupted between the Marxist factions there had been prolonged or non-Marxist forces seized the opportunity to rebel? The USSR and its allies could undertake a large-scale military intervention that would risk alienating Third World countries and induce America's traditional allies to cooperate more closely with the United States, but without giving them any more guarantee of being able to crush the rebels than the Soviets have had in Afghanistan. Or they could choose the option of giving only so much military aid and no more to the besieged Marxist government and risking that it be overthrown. The latter scenario would be especially unwelcome to the Soviets because if a pro-Soviet Marxist government were actually overthrown by its internal opposition rather than simply by an external power as was the government of Grenada, not only would a Soviet ally be lost, but anti-Soviet guerrillas in other countries might be greatly encouraged. They might redouble their efforts to overthrow their Marxist adversaries once they saw it had successfully been done elsewhere.

These are developments that would be most unwelcome to Moscow, and so if confronted with a stronger or a new anti-Soviet insurgency, the USSR is most

likely to react by seeking to help Third World Marxist governments militarily defeat rebel insurgencies. However, if this could not be done with arms transfers or a relatively small number of military advisers and required another large-scale military intervention, the Soviets could be faced with a serious problem. The intervening forces would have to come from somewhere. The Vietnamese are probably not willing to become involved in operations outside Southeast Asia. Their forces already have major commitments in maintaining internal security in Vietnam, occupying Laos and Kampuchea, and being prepared to defend against another Chinese attack.

Soviet forces remain in Afghanistan, but Moscow has never before attempted a large-scale overseas military intervention. This would be much more difficult for the Soviets than launching an invasion across its own border. An overseas Soviet military intervention would be regarded as extremely threatening by the West and could severely jeopardize the Soviet goals of achieving arms control agreements and keeping Western defense expenditures and cooperation from growing rapidly. Finally, the Soviets do not want to risk a military confrontation with the United States that an overseas military intervention by Soviet forces could lead to.

The one nation that has the capability of militarily intervening in anti-Soviet insurgencies is Cuba. Castro did not anticipate that once the MPLA had driven UNITA, the FNLA, and South Africa away from Luanda in 1975-76 that Cuban forces would still be there a decade later on the defensive against UNITA. Cuba intervened in the Horn of Africa to help the Ethiopians fend off a Somali attack, but Castro refused to become heavily involved in fighting the Eritrean guerrillas. Even if Castro is willing to send forces elsewhere, there is a limit to the number of counterinsurgency struggles Cuba can

intervene in at any one time. Cuba, after all, is a nation of only 10 million people, and its armed forces number 161,500, of whom 99,500 are conscripts. Finally, Moscow can hope that other leftist but not fully Marxist-Leninist governments might use their troops to help a neighboring pro-Soviet regime, but as Zimbabwe's faltering commitment to Maputo shows, this is not something Moscow can rely on.

Should any of the present anti-Soviet insurgencies intensify or more break out, the Soviets will face very difficult choices. Their decision whether or not to intervene or support an ally such as Cuba in doing so will depend on geographical proximity to the USSR, proximity to any other socialist or socialist-oriented country, the seriousness of the internal opposition, the amount of outside support the opposition receives, proximity to the United States, the likely American response to socialist intervention in a given nation, and in some cases the willingness of Moscow's allies to undertake military intervention at the Kremlin's behest.

Of course, it is the Soviet goal not just to prevent pro-Soviet Marxist regimes from being overthrown, but also to completely defeat the guerrillas attempting to do so even when these guerrillas cannot succeed due to a strong socialist military presence such as in Afghanistan. When in March 1985 President Zia al-Haq of Pakistan went to Moscow for Chernenko's funeral and met with General Secretary Gorbachev, Gorbachev threatened to give aid to Pakistani rebels unless Pakistan stopped aiding the Afghan rebels. Further, the Soviets threatened to aid Pakistani rebels if the United States continued to assist the Nicaraguan rebels.<sup>53</sup> It is probably not coincidental that government forces launched offensives against the rebels in Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, and Mozambique during the summer of 1985. This could be an

ominous sign that Gorbachev is much more willing than his predecessors to undertake confrontational measures in order to protect Moscow's weak allies in the Third World.

How far the Soviets will actually follow through on their threat to Pakistan is not yet clear. What is dangerous, though, is the implication in the threat that the Soviet leadership believes its own propaganda about the anti-Soviet insurgents in Afghanistan and elsewhere being supported mainly by external and not internal forces. In Afghanistan, the rebels are supported by the Afghan people, but if the Soviets insist on blaming Pakistan for their actions, Moscow might be tempted to take some form of military action against Pakistan and thus widen the war. Such an action might be similar to Nixon's widening the Vietnam War, when the United States attacked communist sanctuaries in Laos and Kampuchea. Another example of this tendency is Vietnam's attacks on Thai territory where Kampuchean rebels have their camps.<sup>54</sup>

#### **U.S. Policy Options**

One crucial element in determining the ability of anti-Soviet insurgents to succeed, or merely to avoid defeat, is the level of external military assistance they receive. To what extent should America become involved in aiding them?

As anti-Soviet insurgencies are a problem for Moscow's foreign policy, so they are an opportunity for Washington's. The United States would benefit if indigenous forces in a Third World nation overthrew a pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist regime for several reasons. First, the USSR would lose an



ally in the government that was overthrown and the United States would probably gain one in the new government. Second, unlike Egypt, Somalia, or other not fully Marxist Third World governments that have asked the USSR to leave, the overthrow of a strongly pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist government by indigenous forces would be a serious ideological loss for the Soviets. In the Soviet view, once a Marxist revolution occurs, it is not supposed to be subject to reversal. If as in Grenada the Marxists are overthrown by the United States, the Soviets would consider it a loss, but an understandable one due to overwhelming "imperialist" force. But for a Marxist government to be overthrown by indigenous forces is simply not supposed to happen. If such an event actually occurred, it would show even though the USSR is now stronger than ever before, Marxism is not irreversible. This could have two concrete benefits. Third World leaders attracted to the USSR and Marxism-Leninism because the Soviets have a better record of helping their Third World allies stay in power than the United States will have to question just how worthwhile the USSR actually is in this regard. Further, the overthrow of one pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist regime might encourage anti-Soviet insurgents elsewhere to improve and expand their own efforts, and perhaps eventually succeed.

There is no guarantee that, other than the blow of losing an ally, the overthrow of a pro-Soviet Marxist Third World regime would lead to additional problems for Moscow. But the prospect of the Soviets losing an ally and suffering other adverse consequences provides an incentive for the United States to support anti-Soviet guerrillas in their attempts to overthrow Marxist-Leninist regimes. At this time, the guerrillas in Mozambique, Angola, and Nicaragua only have an uncertain chance of victory. They cannot win in Afghanistan, Kampuchea, and perhaps not in Ethiopia either. Yet supporting

anti-Soviet guerrillas even where they cannot win might be seen as in America's interests because the continuation of these struggles demonstrates that Marxist governments are not popular. If the USSR and its allies are going to be militarily active in the Third World, the United States is better off if they have to struggle just to remain in the nations where they already are instead of concentrating all their efforts on expanding their influence elsewhere in the Third World at America's expense. But besides such great power motivations for supporting anti-Soviet insurgents, there is also a moral dimensions. If the United States is really committed to helping other nations to become independent and determine their own system of government, then it should give help to people such as the Afghans who have demonstrated that they do not want either Soviet troops or a Marxist government in their country by fighting against both for many years.

Yet while America giving aid to anti-Soviet insurgents might appear an easy way to bring about a foreign policy failure for the USSR, or at the minimum discomfit Moscow by making it more difficult for the USSR to protect its weak Marxist allies, there are several dangers for the United States that could arise from this policy. One of the foremost is that if the United States gives large quantities of arms or sends military advisers to insurgent forces and the Soviets greatly increase their military assistance to their clients, there is the possibility that such conflicts could widen and that the superpowers themselves might be drawn into them. Obviously, both the United States and the USSR want to avoid this. This consideration will serve to limit the type of assistance that the United States will be willing to provide the insurgents. In the past, when one superpower has sent its own forces to fight in a Third World conflict, the other has limited its involvement. Thus

the United States will not undertake actions, such as sending advisers to Afghanistan, that could lead to a wider conflict. The type of assistance that the United States is ordinarily limited to in order to avoid the risk of provoking a wider conflict are arms transfers, funding, and training in either the United States or third nations.

But there are problems for the United States in undertaking these forms of aid. American aid to the *contras* in mining Nicaraguan ports led to a public outcry in the United States and the world that significantly contributed to Congress cutting off funds to the rebels. The sort of U.S. military assistance to anti-Soviet guerrillas that might be acceptable to Congress and the American public in general might be so limited that it is insufficient to help rebel forces overcome Marxist-Leninist governments, or even to avoid being defeated.

Yet even if American public opinion changed and decided that these groups should be supported, there is another problem. As the Soviets have already learned, it often takes guerrillas a long time to actually succeed even when they receive external military assistance. The Vietnamese communists fought the French from 1945 until 1954 before ousting them, and then they only won North Vietnam. They needed another 21 years to gain the South. Guerrilla forces in Angola and Mozambique began their operations in the early 1960s, but accomplished little until the 1974 Portuguese coup brought to power a government that declared it would pull out of Africa the following year. The Sandinistas came to power in 1979 after a relatively short struggle, but the Somoza regime they replaced had been in office for over 40 years. In addition, some insurgencies failed even though they might have lasted for many years. Marxist guerrillas were defeated in Greece (1944-48), Malaya

(1948-61), Oman (1965-75), North Yemen (1978-82), and elsewhere. The United States should not expect that by simply initiating or increasing military aid programs, anti-Soviet insurgents will be able to seize power quickly. Supporting insurgents is a long-term policy that can take several years to ultimately succeed, if at all.

Finally, should insurgent forces ever succeed in toppling a pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist Third World government, a strategy of backing anti-Soviet guerrillas could not be regarded as successful until a stable, domestically popular regime emerged. Should the policies of the former insurgents prove unpopular or even brutal, the world might judge that America is not interested in helping nations free themselves of a government or foreign influence that the local populace does not want, but in merely seeing left-wing dictatorships replaced by right-wing ones. The worst result of all would be if anti-Soviet insurgents succeed in ousting a Marxist government but the new American-backed government became so unpopular that the former Marxist rulers were able to rally the populace against the anti-Soviet regime and return to power. This is a situation the United States should take care to avoid because if it ever occurred, the Soviets and their allies would be able to argue that no matter what sort of "mistakes" the Marxists might have made, they had proved they were better than the non-Marxists. In addition, domestic and international support for further American efforts to aid anti-Soviet insurgents would probably be greatly reduced, perhaps making it impossible for the United States to help other such groups.

Thus, while the phenomenon of anti-Soviet insurgencies provides an opportunity for American foreign policy, it also poses serious dangers that could result from a poorly conceived policy of aiding anti-Soviet guerrillas.

How, then, can the United States take advantage of Moscow's problems most effectively? Based on the above discussion, several guidelines seem appropriate.

First, direct U.S. military involvement or sending U.S. military advisers to aid anti-Soviet insurgents should not be undertaken in order to avoid escalating or expanding the conflict, to stave off potential domestic opposition in the United States and among its allies that might force a withdrawal before the goal was achieved, and to make certain that the United States is not legitimizing a Marxist regime by allowing it to claim that, rather than fighting against domestic opponents, it is defending itself against foreign aggression, thus allowing it to gain more appeal among the populace than it had before.

Second, the United States should only support those insurgent groups that have a strong basis of internal support inside the country where they are fighting. Washington should not support those forces associated with a foreign power or an unpopular right-wing dictatorship that has been ousted, as these are not likely to command internal support, and hence are not likely to come to power even if they receive a great deal of aid.

Third, the United States should consider sending arms and perhaps even giving training in the U.S. or third countries to popularly supported anti-Soviet insurgents. The United States should not, however, attempt to organize and lead the rebel movement, as this will only allow the regime it is fighting to claim that the rebels are U.S. puppets. Nor should the United States expect anti-Soviet insurgents to be able to succeed rapidly. It should expect that even under advantageous circumstances guerrillas will take a long time to triumph. Even if they do not seem likely to win but are popularly

supported as in Afghanistan, the United States should consider sending them arms in order for them to expand and maintain control over as much of their country's territory as possible.

Fourth, U.S. policymakers should realize that any covert aid they give to anti-Soviet groups is probably going to become public knowledge sooner or later. Indeed, it is virtually impossible to keep knowledge of a sizable military operation secret because the target government has every incentive to publicize the fact that its opponents are receiving U.S. assistance. If American policymakers would judge the desirability of all aid to guerrillas as if it were overt, perhaps highly damaging incidents such as U.S. support for the mining of Nicaragua's harbors, which led to Congressional restrictions on U.S. aid to the *contras* and the cancellation of the operation itself, would be avoided.

Fifth, Washington should keep in mind that the overthrow of a pro-Soviet government is not the only possible benefit that can result from an anti-Soviet insurgency. Another is that if the Marxist government is at all independent of the USSR, it might modify its internal policies to become more popular or cease supporting Marxist insurgents in neighboring countries if it is doing so. The United States should be open to friendly relations with Marxist Third World governments and be prepared to exploit differences between such governments and Moscow, especially where guerrillas forces do not appear to have domestic support. To support a guerrilla movement that is not domestically popular is unproductive because the guerrillas are not likely to succeed, and the government they are fighting against is likely to move closer to the USSR in the face of American hostility.

What has the American record been thus far? The United States was

prevented from aiding UNITA by the Clark Amendment, but after its repeal in July 1985, the U.S. began sending UNITA some aid in the spring of 1986. The United States has not aided rebels in Ethiopia or Mozambique, nor do there appear to be any plans to do so. In Ethiopia, the United States did not support the Eritrean rebels before the revolution, and because the main Eritrean rebel group is Marxist, America did not supported it after the revolution. This restraint, however, has not aided the United States in improving ties with Addis Ababa or prevented the latter from moving even closer to the USSR. U.S. relations with Maputo have improved in recent years. The Reagan administration has even proposed giving some military aid to FRELIMO, and the president of Mozambique, Samora Machel, was received at the White House in September 1985. In Afghanistan, the United States has given about \$400 million in military aid to the *mujahideen* since 1979, and in late 1985 the administration and Congress agreed to increase the level of U.S. support greatly. The Afghan rebels are not tainted by association with a previous government and are fighting a Soviet invasion, and so Congress favors aiding them. There has also been a movement in Congress to provide the noncommunist Kampuchean rebels with some assistance, which up until now the United States has not done. In Nicaragua, the United States has given covert aid to the *contras*, but Congress cut this off. The Reagan administration has attempted to restore this aid, but so far has only persuaded Congress to provide "non-lethal" assistance. The administration has mainly supported the Nicaraguan Democratic Front--the group led by ex-Somoza officers whose popular support in Nicaragua is doubtful.<sup>55</sup> This could well prove to be a mistake not only because an unpopular guerrilla movement is unlikely to succeed no matter how much aid it is given, but because the possible failure of the NDF might

negatively affect the political climate for this administration or a future administration to seek Congressional support for an anti-Soviet insurgent group that has domestic internal support. The Reagan administration might be better off in the long run by not attempting to support the NDF, waiting and seeing if the NDF can build significant internal support for itself within Nicaragua. This is the policy that the USSR pursues before making large contributions to Marxist guerrilla movements.

Whether the phenomenon of anti-Soviet insurgencies is a great historical change signalling the inability of the USSR to maintain pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist regimes in the Third World, or whether it is only a temporary problem that the USSR and its allies will soon be able to overcome, is not yet certain. A well-planned, effective U.S. strategy for assisting anti-Soviet insurgents can help them be successful, but a poorly planned, ineffective U.S. policy can contribute to their failure.



## NOTES

1. Grenada was an exception. The Marxist regime there was not overthrown by local insurgents, but through American military intervention.
2. On the Soviet-Cuban intervention in Angola during 1975-76, see Bruce D. Porter, *The USSR in Third World Conflicts: Soviet Arms and Diplomacy in Local Wars, 1945-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), ch. 8; and Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1985), ch. 15.
3. Simon Jenkins, "Destabilisation in Southern Africa," *The Economist*, July 16, 1983, p. 21; and Allister Sparks, "Angolan Forces Fall Back from Site of Heavy Battle," *Washington Post*, October 9, 1985.
4. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1985-1986* (London: IISS, 1985), p. 91.
5. On South Africa's role in Angola after the Angolan revolution, see Jenkins, "Destabilisation in Southern Africa," pp. 20-22; and Kenneth W. Grundy, "Pax Pretoriana: South Africa's Regional Policy," *Current History* 84:4 (April 1985), pp. 150-154. On recent U.S. military aid to UNITA, see David B. Ottaway and Patrick E. Tyler, "U.S. Sends New Arms to Rebels," *Washington Post*, March 30, 1986.
6. Mark N. Katz, "The Soviet-Cuban Connection," *International Security* 8:1 (Summer 1983), pp. 94-95; *The Military Balance, 1985-1986*, pp. 30 and 91; and David B. Ottaway, "Rebel Threatens U.S. Firms in Angola," *Washington Post*, February 1, 1986.
7. This 10-to-1 force advantage was often cited by the Pentagon as being necessary for pro-Western forces to defeat Marxist insurgents in Vietnam and more recently in El Salvador. Those who support American aid to anti-Soviet rebels cite this figure in reverse to show that despite numerical inferiority, rebel forces can avoid being defeated. Whether this means they can also be victorious is another question.
8. *The Military Balance, 1985-1986*, p. 91.
9. The U.S. has attempted to arrange for a simultaneous withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola and South African forces from both Angola and Namibia. South Africa has announced that it would withdraw its troops from Angola and allow Namibia to become independent while the Cubans and Angolans have said that Havana would withdraw all but 6-10,000 Cuban troops, which would remain in Luanda and the oil-rich Cabinda enclave. Little progress toward a settlement has actually been made. David B. Ottaway, "U.S. Offers a Timetable for Cuban Withdrawal from Angola," *Washington Post*, April 6, 1985; Allister Sparks, "S. Africa to Remove Troops from Angola," *Washington Post*, April 16, 1985; and David B. Ottaway, "Angolan Says Talks Are at 'Impasse' Following Sabotage Attempt," *Washington Post*, June 14, 1985.

10. Robert D'A. Henderson, "Principles and Practice in Mozambique's Foreign Policy," *The World Today*, 34:7 (July 1978), pp. 276-286; and Thomas H. Henriksen, "Mozambique: The Enemy Within," *Current History*, 81:3 (March 1982), pp. 111-114 and 135-136.
11. Michael S. Radu, "Mozambique: Nonalignment or New Dependence?" *Current History* 83:3 (March 1984), p. 134.
12. Radu, "Mozambique," pp. 102-103.
13. Radu, "Mozambique," p. 134.
14. Radu, "Mozambique, p. 134; and *The Military Balance, 1985-1986*, p. 102.
15. *The Military Balance, 1985-86*, pp. 30, 33, 102, and 147.
16. Norman MacQueen, "Mozambique's Widening Foreign Policy," *The World Today* 40:1 (January 1984), pp. 22-28.
17. Glenn Frankel, "Aid to Mozambican Rebels Said to Continue," *Washington Post*, January 23, 1985; and Brian Pottinger, "Military Up in Arms Over Nkomati," *Sunday Times* (South Africa), September 22, 1985
18. Jenkins, "Destabilisation in Southern Africa," pp. 23-24; and "Mozambique: A Need to Settle," *The Economist*, March 22, 1986, pp. 38 and 41.
19. On these events, see Porter, *The USSR in Third World Conflicts*, ch. 9; and Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, pp. 630-653.
20. Mekal Harnet, "Reflections on the Eritrean Revolution," *Horn of Africa* 6:3 (1983-84), pp. 3-4; and Paul B. Henze, "Communism and Ethiopia," *Problems of Communism* 30:3 (May-June 1981), pp. 65-66.
21. Katz, "The Soviet-Cuban Connection," pp. 95-97.
22. James Myall, "The National Question in the Horn of Africa," *The World Today* 39:9 (September 1983), p. 338. Another Ethiopian offensive was launched in Eritrea during the summer of 1985. See Paul Vallely, "Relief Workers Moved in After Ethiopian Troops Rout Rebels in the North," *The Times* (London), November 1, 1985.
23. *The Military Balance, 1979-1980*, p. 79; and *The Military Balance, 1985-1986*, pp. 30, 33, 96-97, and 147.
24. Henze, "Communism and Ethiopia," p. 69.
25. For an account of intra-Eritrean disputes, see Harnet, "Reflections on the Eritrean Revolution," pp. 3-15.
26. David P. Chandler, "Kampuchea: End Game or Stalemate?" *Current History* 83:12 (December 1984), pp. 413-417 and 433-434.

27. Leszek Buszynski, "Vietnam's ASEAN Diplomacy: Incentives for Change," *The World Today* 40:1 (January 1984), pp. 29-36.
28. *The Military Balance, 1985-1986*, pp. 126 and 137.
29. See Daniel Southerland, "Sihanouk Doubts Cambodia Victory," *Washington Post*, April 13, 1985; and Paul Quinn-Judge, "Vietnam Said to Be Planning Major Offensive in Cambodia," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 13, 1985.
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50. P. Shastiko, "Revoliutsiia dolzhna umet' zashchishchat'sia," *Aziia i Afrika segodnia*, no. 1 (1982), pp. 2-5.
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52. "Colonel X's Peace Proposals," *Détente*, February 1985, pp. 2-4. Soviet statements about the desire to see the Afghan conflict brought to a peaceful political resolution were greeted with skepticism by U.S. officials at the time of the Reagan-Gorbachev summit in November 1985. See Gary Lee, "Soviets Voice Concern over Afghan War," *Washington Post*, November 18, 1985.
53. Dusko Doder, "Gorbachev Warns on Afghan Aid," *Washington Post*, March 16, 1985; and "Zia Confirms Soviet Warning," *Washington Post*, March 24, 1985.
54. In 1983, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Kapitsa reportedly warned the ASEAN nations that Vietnam would begin aiding rebels in Southeast Asian nations if they continued to aid Cambodian rebels. See Justus M. Van der Kroef, "Kampuchea: Protracted Conflict, Suspended Compromise," *Asian Survey* 24:3 (March 1984), pp. 314-334.
55. For a summary of American policy toward each of the anti-Soviet insurgent movements, see Stephen S. Rosenfeld, "The Guns of July," *Foreign Affairs* 64:4 (Spring 1986), pp. 698-714. See also "Text of President Reagan's United Nations Speech," *Washington Post*, October 25, 1985; and Ronald Reagan, "Freedom, Regional Security, and Global Peace," March 14, 1986 (Washington, D.C.: White House).