

AFRICAN VIETNAM

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IN Irving Wallace's novel, *The Man*, a hit of about ten years ago, there is an episode which till now preserves its ominous topicality: the US president is sitting deep in thought in front of an inconspicuous grey telephone, a direct line to the Pentagon. All of a sudden his face lights up: a crucial decision has been taken. He picks up the phone, and in a few hours a couple of US crack divisions are dropped at the airfields of a certain African country, Baraza. The US force prevents an uprising of the pro-communist population of Baraza against the local ruler who, naturally, admires the Western ideals of democracy, and speaks with a well-cultivated Harvard accent.

Irving Wallace conjured up Baraza, but took the rest of his story from real life. At that time the United States was already rapidly sinking into the morass of the Vietnamese venture, having no idea how difficult it would be to get out. Washington took it for granted that it was the privilege of the strong to dictate to peoples their choice of society and to determine their future. Rather, that was the sacred duty of a country which had taken upon itself the right of a great power to rule the world.

It took several years and tens of thousands of zinc coffins airlifted from Vietnam to make Washington understand that military intervention was a weak argument in the battle with the ideas of socialism and national liberation spreading among the masses in the developing countries.

Apparently those ideas have affected the atmosphere on Capitol Hill. In December, the US Senate voted against the further use of the military budget to finance secret US intelligence operations in Angola. One can hardly say that the legislators' reaction was timely. The CIA interference in Angola, which smacks of early Vietnam, had already cost the US at least 26 million dollars. Another 7 million were 'on the way', and even the report of the House Intelligence Sub-committee, which 'leaked' those figures, will be unable to check that particular spending. The decision of the Senate only temporarily saved another 28 million dollars which had already been earmarked for the purpose in the Pentagon's budget under the innocent item 'transportation expenses'.

The report has not yet been made public, but the sum total of 60

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million dollars cited by it as the CIA's entire spending in Angola up to date has already been put in doubt. Senator John Tunney, for instance, believes that through Angola's ill-disposed neighbours in Africa and by financial machinations the CIA has squandered far more there than Congress controllers have managed to trace. And if not, everything is in the offing, assures Senator Hubert Humphrey. He thinks that this is only a beginning, and that in 1976 intelligence chiefs will ask for 150 million dollars.

The beginning of US involvement in Vietnam was a replica of the present situation. Perhaps it was more modest in terms of money spent, but the US legislature and world public opinion were deceived in the same way. Eight-digit figures are not the most appalling thing about the CIA scheme in Angola. Fragmentary information from the committee's report makes up a sinister picture of the dissent fostered in the Angolan national liberation movement. Supplying weapons and millions of dollars 'for pocket money' to the African twin brother of Thieu, Washington is again trying to reverse political processes which are taking place 7,000 miles away from the US borders.

History is repeating itself down to the smallest details. Newsman Seymour Hersh won the Pulitzer prize for unravelling the bloody Vietnam tragedy of My Lai. Today Hersh has managed to obtain information about a sitting of 'Committee 40' in January 1975, when this US government body supervising intelligence operations abroad gave its OK to advancing new pawns in the power game in Angola. The central one was Holden Roberto, the present head of the disruptionist grouping, 'FNLA'.

Roberto's life story as told by Hersh gives a clear idea of the process of building up native puppets who later demand an airborne party to save the 'democracy' they allegedly embody. Since 1961 he had been a rank-and-file mercenary agent, according to Hersh, who socked the CIA for 10,000 dollars a year for 'collecting intelligence information'. By decision of 'Committee 40' he was given 300,000 dollars, and was overnight promoted to the rank of a fighter for the liberation of Angola. 'The money has considerably buttressed his stand,' admitted an official witness of the metamorphosis, in a talk with Hersh. 'For nearly ten years he was sitting in Kinshasa. Then all of a sudden this great aid—so he begins to move.'

After that one could only feel sorry for American propagandists who had to assert that this man had as much right to represent the people's interests as the legitimate government of the People's Republic of Angola. The international community has not taken this

crude bait. The People's Republic of Angola is recognised by more than 30 countries, whereas the self-styled FNLA-UNITA 'cabinet' is recognised by no one.

Washington appears to be planning to use its stooges to obtain resources for the re-colonisation of Angola from the treasury . . . of Angola itself. On December 22, the US Gulf Oil Corporation announced that it had frozen the rent due to the Angolan government for the exploitation of oilfields in the area of Cabinda. This enclave, controlled by MPLA forces, is believed to be the third biggest oil-producing area south of the Sahara. Since 1968, 120 oil rigs of Gulf Oil have been pumping out 150,000 barrels of oil a day from the continental shelf of Cabinda.

On December 31, the Corporation was due to put 95 million dollars to the account of the People's Republic of Angola—but thought it better to keep the money. The UPI News Agency pointed out that the decision was taken under direct pressure from the US State Department. This gross economic subversion against the newly-free African state once again reminds everyone that Washington's African policy is formulated in the headquarters of the North American monopolies.

Against this background the babble sounds all the more theatrical about 'the international duty of a great power', with which the CIA could perhaps have coped brilliantly if it had not been for the interference of the Senate. The decision of the legislators to discontinue the financing of secret operations in Angola was declared 'the greatest tragedy', which allegedly would gravely damage the international stature of the United States in future.

We are witnessing a rare occasion when an old tune sends no one to sleep. The same dubious concern about United States international prestige was used to squeeze out ever new allocations for military supplies to the anti-popular regimes in Saigon and Phnom Penh. US policy in Angola will undoubtedly greatly influence its international prestige, but in a very different way. The greatest tragedy? Perhaps that is so if we look at it from the point of view of the complete parallelism of the foreign policy lines in Angola of the United States and the South African Republic. The *New York Times* sums up this alarming equation by pointing out that the US are in fact shoulder to shoulder with soldiers of the country which throughout the world is regarded as a symbol of racialism.

Washington has been stubbornly denying the charge that US interference in Angola is beginning to look like a mirror reflection of the Vietnam venture. They say that parallels are out of place in this

case, if only because the US 'has no permanent interests in Angola' and even 'no objection to the MPLA'.

But facts make it impossible to take those statements at their face value. Washington obviously has been trying to use all available resources to strangle the legitimate Angolan government both militarily and economically.

Angola is not an imaginary Baraza copied by Irving Wallace from a very real Vietnam. Attempts to cast the US once more in the role of global policeman only testify to a failure to benefit by the Vietnamese lesson.