

Chapter IV

SOVIET POLICY TOWARDS ANTI-COLONIAL AND ANTI-RACIST MOVEMENTS IN ZIMBABWE AND NAMIBIA

Soviet Union had supported the Rhodesian Liberation movement since the early 1960s, when the armed struggle against white dominated Ian Smith regime started and took a definite shape. Since then, it had shown impeccable conviction in opposing the apartheid regime at major international forums and had emerged as the prominent supplier of arms, material aid and facilitated training for Zimbabwean nationalists either in Soviet Union or in friendly regimes.

The first contact between Soviet Union and Zimbabwean nationalists dates back to 1963, said to be the result of an extensive travelling by Joshua Nkomo and other nationalist leaders during the 1950s and early 1960s as a part of their endeavour to garner international support.¹ Although, Soviets have dated their support to ZAPU AND Zimbabwean cause not before 1965, when Moscow reportedly provided ZAPU financial, political and propaganda support

¹ Keith Somerville, "The Soviet Union and Zimbabwe: The Liberation struggle and After, in Dan C. Heldman, The USSR and Africa: Foreign Policy Under Khrushchev (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981), p.196

along with arms and training facility in Soviet Union.² But certainly there were pro-ZAPU propaganda as early as 1962.³ Forums like Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) and Afro-Asian People's Conferences had been instrumental in facilitating the 'common platform' for the increased Soviet-Rhodesian nationalist interactions.⁴ Apart from these institutional forums, Moscow's old proteges in the region also played a significant role in bringing Moscow and Zimbabwean nationalists together, as ZAPU reportedly made its first contact with Soviet Union through African National Congress.⁵

At these conferences, nationalist leaders' desire to win international support and Moscow's avowed championship to the cause of peoples fighting against colonial and racist thrall converged together to pave the way for a better relationship between the two. The offices run by ZAPU in Cairo, Dar-es-Salaam and London also served as contact points.⁶

The 1963, AAPSO conference in Moshi, saw the Zimbabwe nationalist movement discarding its earlier reformist stance. The

² Moscow Radio, 13 March 1976

³ L.Demkina, "Anti-enslavement Grows", International Affairs, no.11, 1962, p.26.

⁴ Richard Gibson, African Liberation Movements (London: Oxford University Press, 1972) p.156.

⁵ Ibid, p.272.

⁶ This is suggested by John Day in International nationalism: The Extra-Territorial Relations of Southern Rhodesian African Nationalists (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 96-102.

consequent intensification of armed struggle forced them to come closer to socialist states in general, in order to meet the increased demands for material and arms supply. The West and Zimbabwean nationalist leaders general impression of the West as a sympathizer of colonial racist forces had forced them to turn towards socialist states who had for long been providing material and moral support to these movements.

However, the Rhodesian Liberation movement received a serious set back in 1963, when some of dissident ZAPU executive members formed a parallel movement ZANU under the leadership of Robert Mugabe. ZAPU's preference for political over military means was consistently providing a ground for intra -movemental power struggle, which finally culminated in the split of the movement.⁷

After the split, Moscow chose to support ZAPU instead of ZANU. Although ZANU leader Robert Mugabe was considered to be more radical and Marxist oriented than his rival counterpart Joshua Nkomo. Further, Mugabe's 'sphere of influence' was broader in terms of mass support, but still Moscow's chose for an unorthodox ally. At one glance this Soviet allotheism might be appearing strange to many

⁷ John Day, "The insignificance of Tribe in the African Politics of Zimbabwe- Rhodesia", Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, 18, no.1, 1980, pp.89-93.

of Africanists. But in the light of Moscow's long term designs it hardly appears surprising. The main reasons for this unorthodox choice were:

- i) Robert Mugabe relied on aid from China.⁸
- ii) Mugabe was insisting on control of his forces and their deployment. While Nkomo seemed willing to rely on Soviet and Cuban advisers, who assumed responsibility for training his 6000 man army in Zambia.⁹
- iii) Mugabe was determined to run his own show, while Nkomo was possibly a more accommodating client and receptive to an active role from the communists.¹⁰ ZAPU's close links with ANC, another Soviet protégé in the region further provides a smooth network for the better USSR-ZAPU interactions.

But among many reasons, Moscow's apathy to Mugabe was a direct result of growing Soviet-Sino rivalry in third world in general and Africa in particular. Since the surfacing of Soviet-Sino acrimony during 1963 AAPSO conference, Moscow had chosen to support only those movements who were quite clear in affirming their undivided

⁸ David Smith and Collin Simpson with Ian Davies, Mugabe (London: Sphere Publishers, 1981), p.109

⁹ New York Times, June 7, 1978.

¹⁰ Anthony R. Wilkinson, Southern Rhodesia: The New Politics of Revolution (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1976), p.230.

loyalty to it in the exclusive Sino-Soviet context.¹¹ Moscow's refusal to Mugabe's request for aid was among many other factors attributed to Mugabe's reluctance to delink its Chinese connections or to take a definite stance in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

After the break-off, ZAPU was the first movement to approach Soviet Union for assistance. While ZANU inclinations were relatively more militant than ZAPU, naturally it moved towards China. As a result, immediately after ZANU's formation in September 1963, five members of the party were sent to China for six-month training, which included military science and political education.¹² Although China had tried to maintain a 'dialectical balance' in supporting both the factions.¹³ As a result ZAPU cadres also received training in China till 1965 when China finally suspended its aid to ZAPU.¹⁴ This growing ZANU-Chinese cooperation was seen by Moscow as a hostile overture by ZANU and therefore they decided to back Nkomo led ZAPU, despite their less socialist inclinations.

Another factor, which was instrumental in ZAPU's choice, was Moscow's non-dualistic formulations of choosing only one out of

¹¹ Colin Legum, "National Liberation in Southern Africa", Problems of Communism, 24, 1975, p.7.

¹² David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, The Struggle for Zimbabwe (Salisbury: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1981), p.11

¹³ Bruce D. Larkin, China and Africa, 1949-70 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p.187.

¹⁴ Nathan Shamuyaria, National Liberation Through Self-reliance in Rhodesia, 196-1972 (Ph.D dissertation, Princeton University, 1976)

many. Thus, with the exacerbation of Sino-Soviet noxiousness Moscow had become more precise in its selection of allies and had chosen to assist only one movement in each territory.¹⁵ In the light of above mentioned arguments ZAPU was almost a 'natural recipient' of Soviet benevolence.

Thus, the Rhodesian liberation movement became a ground for the practical implications of Sino-Soviet rivalry in the continent. The proceedings of Khartoum conference further confirmed that Moscow viewed ZAPU as the only legitimate liberation movement. The Khartoum conference of 1969 was attended only by Soviet supported movements. This was further evident in the Moscow's conscious neglect of the ZANU's activities and publications, while highlighting the same for the ZAPU.¹⁶ The exclusion of ZANU was criticized by China as "calculated to control the liberation struggles of the Portuguese colonies and Southern Africa....."¹⁷ Although ZANU tried to bridge the ruptures by rapprochement through Nyerere and Machel, the Presidents of Tanzania and Mozambique respectively to Cuba and Moscow for aid. However, only Cuba came forward and then helped

¹⁵ Interview with Mayor Urimbo, ZANU chief Political Commissar and Central Committee Member in Harare, 16 April 1982.

¹⁶ V. Rayabtsev, "Rhodesia: Racialist Hide out", *International Affairs* (Moscow), 1, January 1966, pp.99-102.

¹⁷ Larkin, n.13, p.187.

Mugabe's wing to take training in Mozambique.¹⁸ With the further intensification of struggles the need for more sophisticated weapons forced Mugabe to seek Soviet assistance. The slackened Chinese aid after the death of Mao, prompted Mugabe to look towards Moscow for assistance.¹⁹ Thus the need for more arms and Chinese inability to provide it, compelled Mugabe to look towards other socialist countries for assistance. He sought it publicly that he is " expecting aid from socialist countries that have not assisted us in the past ".²⁰

Zimbabwean movement presents a case where we did not only find a strange behaviour of Soviet Union alone but also its surrogates. Unlike other cases in the region where surrogates were aiding and assisting only those movements, which were supported by Moscow, here we see surrogates assisting a movement independent of Moscow's inclinations and wishes. Thus, FRELIMO did not only allowed ZANU to infiltrate Rhodesian insurgents from its territory but also lobbied for ZANU to get Soviet assistance, albeit abortively. Further, another quasi-surrogate Cuba also helped ZANU to take training in Mozambique.

¹⁸ ACR 1978-79, p.A69.

¹⁹ Africa Confidential 19, no.7, 1978, p.1.

²⁰ The Daily Telegraph, 8 February, 1979.

Perhaps the reason for this unique surrogate behaviour was Mugabe's status as an avowed Marxist. Consequently, his ZANU movement was never considered a direct anti-thesis to the aims and objectives of Soviet supported ZAPU. The affinity of goals i.e. the dismantling of racist white government allowed these two factions of originally one movement ZAPU, to work together almost parallel without hampering the interests of the other. This was precisely the reason, ZANU was never considered 'untouchable' despite Moscow's avowed bolstering to rival movement ZAPU.

Even Moscow's discomfort with Mugabe was trifle, arising as a byproduct of Soviet-Sino acrimony rather than any direct disagreement either on ideological or orientational matters. Moscow was ready to extend assistance to ZANU with the precondition that Mugabe should dissociate from China and stop describing himself as a "Marxist-Leninist of Maoist thought".²¹

Moscow had also forced ZANU consistently to accept ZAPU's leadership in the struggle against white minority regime. ZANU's unwillingness to accept this Soviet proposal was a principal cause of Soviet discomfort with ZANU.²² As a result of this unease, Soviet

²¹ ACR 1978-79, p. A19

²² Martin and Johnson, n.12, p.317.

leaders had rebutted ZANU's repeated appeals for assistance and the only Soviet arms it could receive were supplied by "Mozambique and Ethiopia".²³

Thus, ZAPU emerged as the obvious recipient of Soviet benevolence. For that, Moscow had always highlighted the statements by ZAPU leaders to show ZAPU's leanings towards socialism. Although many scholars have interpreted ZAPU as less revolutionary and socialist than ZANU and pointed that "despite Soviet patronage, Nkomo was the leader whom most white Rhodesians and Anglo-American business community would like to see win".²⁴

Ignoring all this, Moscow had supplied weapons to ZAPU guerrillas and facilitated training for them. Apart from it ZAPU had also received weapons from Moscow's Warsaw pact allies like German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia.²⁵ After installation of MPLA regime in Angola, Soviet training camps had been shifted to Angola.

ZAPU began to receive more sophisticated and heavy weapons during mid 1970's when Moscow stepped up its avowed assistance to ZAPU. And immediately after the conclusion of Lancaster House

²³ Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux, The Ethiopian Revolution (London: verso Publishers, 1981), p.267.

²⁴ Colin Legum, "Southern Africa: The year of the Whirlwin", ACR 1975-76, p.A19.

²⁵ Interview with Joshu Mpotu

Conference in December 1979, Soviet Union supplied ZAPU \$60 million worth of arms, including SAM-7 missiles armored vehicles, recoilless rifles, light weapons and ammunitions.²⁶ The Soviets also provided ZAPU with rocket launchers SA-7 in the second half of 1970.²⁷

The fall of Portuguese colonialism and emergence of two Marxist-Leninist regimes had not only boosted the Soviet confidence but also provided a sound base for the effective monitoring of remaining movements. The appointment of Solodovnikov, a Soviet Africanist as an ambassador to Zambia, was a clear indication that Soviet Union was taking the crisis more seriously.²⁸ Simultaneously the newly facilitated bases, for example Angola, were being more frequently used for training of ZAPU cadres.²⁹ Although American and British meddling in Zimbabwe in disguise of negotiations was a bigger danger which exacerbated the increased Soviet aid to both ZAPU and SWAPO. Furthermore, Soviet apprehension of impending South African interference was a further incentive for Soviet Union to increase its armed and other aids to ZAPU. Although many scholars

²⁶ ACR 1981-82, p.863.

²⁷ Anthony Wilkinson, "Insurgency in Rhodesia 1956-73," Adelphi Papers no.100, 1973, p.26.

²⁸ Pravda, 5 March 1977.

²⁹ Oye Oguhbadejo, "Soviet Politics in Africa", African Affairs, 79. No.316, 1980. Pp.310-311.

have claimed that this fear had made Moscow cautious, particularly with regard to committing advisors at spot.³⁰

However, in the concluding phase of the movement Soviet Union appeared to be quiet confused over the means of solution. Despite the fact that their propaganda from 1977 spoke of the intensification of armed struggle and generally condemned the negotiations , they continued to emphasize the desirability of both the means, political and military.³¹ Similar ambivalence was clear in their approach towards Lancaster House talks when Soviet media praised the flexibility of Patriotic Front while simultaneously condemned the forum.³²

But even in this confusing situation Moscow continued its pro-ZAPU propaganda. Although it welcomed the patriotic Front and often referred to it as “ a constructive response” to the OAU steps towards “intensifying material moral ad diplomatic support for the freedom fighters.”³³ It kept on concentrating on ZAPU, describing Nkomo as the ‘leader of the Front’.

³⁰ Seth Singleton, “ Soviet Policy and Socialist Expansion in Asia and Africa”, Armed Forces and Society, 6, no.3, 1980, p.361.

³¹ Anatoly Gromyko, “ Neo-colonialism’s Manoeuvres in Southern Africa”, International Affairs, no.12, 1977, pp.98-99.

³² Pravda, 23 September, 1979.

³³ Pravda, 30 July, 1979.

However, towards the end of 1970's Soviet dissatisfaction over the ideological bent of ZAPU became increasingly visible. The African Communist criticized the 'non-class' character of Zimbabwean movement and held its nationalist views as "ill equipped for class struggle".³⁴ Although there was no evidence that Soviet Union was switching over to Mugabe. But certainly Soviet Union expressed its dissatisfaction through other subtle symbols by coming closer to Mugabe. Moscow accorded Mugabe positive references and Mugabe visited Soviet Union in 1978.³⁵ There was even a rumor that Moscow was considering a shift to Marxist Mugabe.³⁶ The Soviet pressure technique became obvious, as despite a brief flirtation with Mugabe, it did not help ZANU and remained loyal to Nkomo,³⁷ fearing any assistance to Mugabe might indirectly boost up the Chinese interests.

Thus, Moscow's role in Rhodesian movement reveals that Soviet behaviour was primarily guided by the motive of undermining the Chinese and Western influence more than anything else. Precisely for this reason Moscow had been quite critical to any western initiative to the crisis, and interpreted western initiatives as 'cunning' and maneuvered', contrary to the interests of the Zimbabwean

³⁴ John Ngara, "The Internal Settlement and the Zimbabwean Revolution", *African Communist*, no.75, 1978, p.81

³⁵ *Pravda*, 23 May, 1977.

³⁶ *The Guardian*, 6 May, 1979.

³⁷ *Sunday Times*, 17 October, 1979.

people.”³⁸ Although, Soviet Union was never against negotiations as such, rather it was averse to any negotiation under western auspices.³⁹ Infact Soviet Union was apprehensive that the negotiations might give scope for western powers to manoeuvre the settlement enabling Smith Government to contain the process of ‘social emancipation’ by the means of ‘internal settlement’. Soviet discursiveness about the military versus political means was more than any thing else attributed to this fact.

In fact Soviet willy-nilly approach was an outcome of its instant dilemmas where neither they could have opposed the negotiated settlement of the crisis explicitly, nor it could have swallowed its absence from the negotiating table and debacle of its ‘armed struggle’ strategy. Negotiated settlement was a direct loss to Soviet prestige and strategy as it had calculated a violent solution on the battlefield alone.

SOVIET POLICY TOWARDS NAMIBIAN CRISIS

Soviet Policy towards Namibian crisis revolves around their general support for South West African Peoples Organization (SWAPO) and diplomatic maneuverings to undermine western and South African designs of limiting the Soviet influence in the South African

³⁸ Radio Moscow, 6 August, 1979.

³⁹ Izvestia, 26 January, 1978.

region. Soviet support for SWAPO dates back to early 1960's even before the removal of South Africa's League of Nations mandate to govern Namibia by the UN in 1966. Since then SWAPO had fought a low-level sporadic war against South African forces in Namibia and Soviet Union had shown a firm conviction in supporting SWAPO.

Soviet Union rendered its support to SWAPO along with other African anti-colonial movements in the 1960s. Naturally, propaganda and other supports differ little from other anti-colonial movements. This support including some arms and money began apparently in 1962, four years after the founding of SWAPO in 1958.⁴⁰ Since then SWAPO had participated with other movements in the various meetings organized by Soviet Union and SWAPO leaders had regularly visited Soviet Union. However, military assistance in the form of arms and equipments appear to have been smaller than other movements, prior to Angolan war.⁴¹ This insufficient Soviet aid had even indicated a restrained Soviet SWAPO relation until the second half of the 1970s.⁴²

⁴⁰ William Griffith, " Soviet Power and Policies in the Third World: The Case of Africa", in " Prospect for Soviet Power in the 1980's", Adelphi Papers, no. 152, 1979, p. 43.

⁴¹ Danial Papp, "The Soviet Union and Southern Africa" in Donaldson , Soviet Union in the Third World, Africa Contemporary Record 1978-79, p.79.

⁴² Africa Contemporary Record, 1976--77, p. A 27.

Throughout their long struggle against South African occupation SWAPO has received full material, political, military and diplomatic support from Soviet Union. Moscow has provided arms to Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia and PLAN Leaders have received training in USSR. The official position adopted by CPSU on the Namibian question was set out by Brezhnev, in his message to Africa on African Liberation Day in 1981:

The people of Namibia, under the leadership of their sole legitimate representative -- SWAPO- are struggling selflessly to become the genuine masters of their country. We shall continue to render support to the just struggle of the people of Namibia, headed by SWAPO, for freedom and the settlement of the Namibian question without delay, and in full conformity with the UN resolutions and the demands of the OAU.⁴³

However, Soviet support had been less apparent before mid 1975. After 1975, however, Soviet not only did increase the quantity and quantity of military aid to SWAPO , but also began training SWAPO people in Angola.⁴⁴ However, open support became

⁴³ Tass, 24 May 1981, SWB, part1, 27 May 1981

⁴⁴ There were one report that this increase preceded the Angolan war, after two trips of Moscow by Nujoma in 1973, Africa Contemporary Record, 1973-74, p. A-79.

increasingly vociferous in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This increase in support and military aid was facilitated by frequent Moscow visits by Nujoma on the one hand, and the general wish of socialist solidarity to bolster these movements on the other. Nujoma made as many as three trips to Moscow in 1976 alone as compared to only two trips from 1978 to 1981 period including attendance at the 1981 CPSU Congress.⁴⁵ Around at the same time Nujoma met Fidel Castro in Africa in 1977 followed by his two trips to Cuba.⁴⁶ Similarly, 1979 African trip by East German Defense minister, Hoffman also occasioned effusive promises of military aid to SWAPO .⁴⁷

Although, the Soviet Union like OAU considers SWAPO as the sole legitimate movement, aid has been given on a bilateral basis rather than through the liberation committee of the OAU, Moscow's hitherto preferred method of assistance to anti-colonial movements. The continued support for SWAPO was further expressed by Eduard Samoylov, an official of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, on the 23rd anniversary of SWAPO's formation:

The people of Soviet Union always give support to the liberation movement. They will always be on the side of the

⁴⁵ Africa Contemporary Record, 1981-82, p.A-170.

⁴⁶ Africa Research Bulletin, April 1977, 4407, Facts and Reports 6, no.5 10 March, 1976.

⁴⁷ Africa Contemporary Record, 1982-83, p.A-38.

people of Namibia who are struggling for their freedom. The people of Soviet Union always show great anger at the crimes perpetrated by South Africa against the peoples of Namibia. We in Soviet Union believe that the people of Namibia under the leadership of SWAPO, will eventually have the last word. They have acquitted them well in the fight against the enemy.⁴⁸

The USSR by virtue of its close ties and military assistance to SWAPO had played a important role in Namibian question . Although, its exclusion from the internationally recognized 'contact group' constituted by western powers-- US, Canada, UK, France and West Germany, which had been engaged in the talks over the future of Namibia, Moscow's role had been limited to only battlefield rather than on negotiating table.

The efforts to resolve the Namibian crisis was culminated in UN general Assembly resolution 435 in 1978 which outlined a process for independence and self government which has since then served as the basis of discussions, concerning Namibia's future. Since then USSR had continued to advise arms and training for SWAPO guerrilla's inside Angola.

⁴⁸ Radio Moscow in Zulu 13 April 1983; SWB, part1, 23 April 1983.

Although theoretically western diplomacy was conducted through the 'contact group' in the early 1980s, but for all other practical purposes, it had been the exclusive domain of US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Chester Croker. The 'Contact Group' was virtually dominated by the US, which had been confirmed by the dissent from within as well. Canada and France had stated it publicly over the lack of consultation between allies.

Soviets are opposed on principal to any US-brokered negotiation conducted through private channels. For that Soviet Union had actively campaigned to discredit the 'Contact Group' and Chester Coker's unilateral efforts to secure Namibian independence. The hegemonic overtures of US diplomacy through 'Contact Group' and the isolation of USSR from the negotiations had constantly been challenged by Moscow and it had always favored a return to diplomacy under the auspices of UN security Council where it is represented and henceforth can play a effective role⁴⁹.

However, a close analysis of Namibian crisis and the diplomatic maneuverings of Moscow reveals that Moscow's other plank of policy

⁴⁹ Alexei Kovalenko, "Imperialism's Namibian Stake" Asia and Africa Today (Moscow), no.1,1984,p15

is to use Namibian issue to attack western and particularly American policies in southern Africa.

The criticism of US policies on Namibian question might well fulfill dual interests of Soviet Union. It might served to discredit US as the sole superpower with a exclusive influence on resolving regional conflicts while simultaneously it might build up Soviet credentials as the natural ally of subjugated people by association with the cause of liberation and thereby extending communist influence in the region. Precisely for this reason Moscow had condemned the US efforts of negotiations and Soviet commentary had been devoted primarily in depicting the US-South Africans nexus as the acting in collusion to preserve apartheid and promote imperialism in the region.⁵⁰

However, most of soviet attacks have validity, as not only Moscow but most of Front-line states and the O.A.U had also expressed strong doubts about the sincerity of Pretoria and the west to resolve this issue. SWAPO had also had similar ideas about the 'contact group' and they had argued to minimized its role or even its abrogation. For example, Moses Garoeb, SWAPO's Administrative

⁵⁰ . Y. Tarabrin, " US Expansionist Policy In Africa", Africa, ' International Affairs (Moscow) ,no.10, October 1983, pp. 41-49

Secretary said in July 1983 that it had outlived its usefulness and should be done away with'.⁵¹ In tune with SWAPO, OAU and other Front-Line states Moscow sees the negotiations carried out by 'contact group' and South Africa as part of their 'delaying tactics' or at best as a means of strengthening the positions of the Pretoria backed internal parties at the expense of SWAPO .⁵² Soviet Union had also reserved their harshest criticism for the American policy of 'linking' the issue of Namibian independence to the removal of Cuban troops from Angola.

Meanwhile with the conclusion of Lusaka Accord in 1984, the diplomacy over Namibia took a fresh turn. The Accord called for the gradual withdrawal of South African troops from Angola in exchange for Angola's assistance in stemming infiltration of SWAPO guerillas. Sensing the long term repercussions of accord in both limiting Soviet influence as well as hampering the progress of its Namibian calculations, Moscow criticised it as meaningless barely able to check the South African policy of regional destabilization.⁵³

⁵¹New African (London) August 1983, p.28

⁵²Soviet Television, 27 August 1983; SWB, part I, 1 September 1983

⁵³ Commentary by Alexander Bovin, Translated in FBIS Daily Report, The Soviet Union (Here after FBIS-SOV), 19 March 1984, p.K/1.

The Luska Accord did not only embarrass Moscow but also increased the dangers of SWAPO going the MPLA, FRELIMO way. Thus, Soviet Union responded the accord with an accelerated diplomatic contact with SWAPO leaders fearing that Nujoma might strike a bargain with South Africa.⁵⁴ Consequently, Eduard Shevardnadze met Nojuma in Algiers in May 1984 where he stressed Moscow's support for the peoples of Southern Africa for the liquidation of racism and apartheid and for the granting of independence to the peoples of Namibia with SWAPO at its head "____ reinforcing the view that Moscow is opposed to power sharing solution in Namibia.⁵⁵ At the same time Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Il'chev invited his SWAPO counterpart to discuss "the situation in Angola and Namibia settlement.⁵⁶

Subsequently, Nojuma visited USSR in October 1984 for high level discussion with Soviet officials. He met first Deputy Foreign minister Nikita Ryzhov and the then head of International Department of Central Committee Boris Ponomarev. At these meetings both Nojuma and Soviet officials expressed their opposition to South African and west backed international settlements in Namibia and

⁵⁴. Peter Clement, "Moscow and Southern Africa", Problems of Communism, March/April 1985, pp.31-42

⁵⁵. Moscow Domestic Service, May 29, 1984, Translated in FBIS-SOV, May 30, 1984, p.cc/12.

⁵⁶. Izvestia, June 29, 1984

they committed to continue armed struggle in Namibia.⁵⁷ These talks were highly publicized in Soviet media, Pravda published an interview with Nujoma entitled, "we believe in victory" it cited US-South African efforts to stall Namibian independence and quoted Nujoma as saying that " under such circumstances the only way out is to seek independence by force of arms".⁵⁸

In fact Soviet Union had never calculated a peaceful settlement of Namibian question and it had always wished to settle it on battlefield alone. More than its fears of isolation in negotiated settlements, they were perturbed about the loss of their influence in case of any peaceful solution. In their strategic calculation a protracted military stalemate would allow them to establish a more influential position among SWAPO hard-liners. Similarly, prolongation of the war has the advantage of reinforcing the role of East Germans who were training PLAN guerrillas and thereby increasing the chance that SWAPO leadership would become comfortable with Soviet Union. And last but not the least Soviet strategic thinkers did not want a peaceful settlement at the risk of a lesser demand for Soviet arms and thereby a diminished Soviet influence.

⁵⁷ Isvestia, 26 October, 1984.

⁵⁸ Pravda, October 8, 1984.

However, Since the exacerbation of domestic violence in South Africa during mid 1980s , both South Africa and US hardly had time to concentrate on Namibia. Naturally, it slipped down in their priority list. Consequently no major diplomatic initiative was taken for some time. Nevertheless, a low level guerrilla campaign continued between SWAPO and South African forces, on the other hand Soviet and South African publicists continue to exchange accusations on each other for hampering the progress in Namibia. Moscow continued to harp on South African withdrawal from Namibia along with immediate implementation of UN resolution 435 as the sole solution for the Namibian crisis. During this period, Soviet scholars seems to relegate the Namibian question to the South African problem as they continued to suggest the resolving of South African problem as the first pre-requisite of Namibian independence.

Conclusion

The Soviet involvement in Zimbabwean and Namibian question confirms the fact that Soviet support for anti-colonial movements remained epiphenomenal in broader Soviet designs of dissemination of its influence and undermining Chinese and western influence in the Southern African region. In their entire support to these movements, since the early 1960's the course and quality of

assistance had been determined by the vicissitude of their broader calculations in the region more than the natural course of the movements themselves.

In both the cases Soviet Union is appeared to be more interested in undermining the influence of its arch rivals-- China and the west in the Zimbabwean problem while US led contact group in Namibian crisis rather than initiating process to resolve the crisis. Moscow's consistent effort to prolong the military campaign and the shared opposition of socialist bloc to the negotiated settlements of Zimbabwean and Namibian crisis upholds the hypothesis that its anti-colonial support is primarily designed to undermine the Western, South African and Chinese influence in the region.

Soviet support for a 'bourgeois nationalist' Joshua Nkomo in place of an avowed Marxist Robert Mugabe reveals the truth that Moscow was more interested in defying the growing Chinese ideological challenge. The Chinese acrimony became so dominant in Soviet policy formulated that it did not even hesitate to deviate from its professed doctrinal goal of supporting fraternal movements.

Similarly in Namibian crisis Soviet reluctance to accept negotiations were attributed to the Soviet intentions of hampering the Western influence. Soviet Union's relentless effort to discredit 'contact Group'

was a result of growing frustration over its exclusion more than anything else. That is why they repeatedly favoured a diplomacy under auspices of UN security Council where it had a major saying.

Thus, Soviet support for ZAPU and SWAPO were secondary in nature while USSR was more interested in fulfilling its primary goal i.e., to attack Chinese and western designs in the region.