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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Soviet and Chinese Communist Attitudes
Toward the Rhodesian Problem

1. Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) provided a propaganda windfall for the Soviet Union and an opportunity to work for greater influence in a number of African capitals. The immediate object of this effort is to place the USSR in the "forefront" of those nations seeking to destroy the "racist" regime in Salisbury. In addition, Moscow may later on expect to succeed in complicating the situation still further for the West by encouraging Africans to stand behind the Rhodesian "liberation movement."

2. To date, Soviet propaganda coverage has been heavy, asserting that the UK is involved in a "colonialist deal," which could not have occurred without the "blessings" of other NATO countries-- primarily the US. Moscow's public and private allusions of "support" for the policies and actions of the African states, particularly those represented in the OAU, contrast with what many Africans regard as the weakness of the means suggested by Western capitals for dealing with the problem.

3. We do not expect the Soviet Union to involve itself directly in military action against Rhodesia. In mid-November, a counselor of the Russian Embassy in Tanzania stated, "The Soviet Union will of course take a strong position at the UN, but it has no intention of intervening militarily in any way in Rhodesia." The Soviets probably reckon that such involvement would carry risks of a direct confrontation with the West, and would probably also provoke a negative reaction from many African countries at this time.

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4. Both public and private Soviet statements indicate that the Soviet Union's policy in the Rhodesian situation, will be to give the appearance of supporting the Africans, and will largely be determined by the policies the Africans adopt, particularly those agreed upon by the OAU. On the whole, Soviet statements so far seem to have been aimed at enhancing Moscow's image as an Afro-Asian leader. Despite Moscow's private assurances that it would render assistance to a potential African military force, there is no hard evidence of any specific commitment. Moreover, Moscow probably calculates that it is unlikely any such force will ever be formed. Soviet propaganda statements have focussed on Moscow's intention to continue its general policy of support for African countries on the Rhodesian question.

6. Moscow probably would back up an African military effort with some limited and indirect arms assistance. However, whether the Soviets will

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be called upon to do so appears doubtful at this juncture. The Africans independently or within the the OAU have not yet proved willing to undertake such an action, but have sought a more forthright British response. Moreover, they lack sufficient capabilities, even collectively, to defeat the Rhodesian security forces without intolerable costs. In addition, Zambia is presently unwilling to allow foreign troops upon its soil--with the exception of the British, because of the risk of provoking Rhodesian economic reprisals against Zambia.

7. It is more likely that the Soviets possibly through third parties would supply arms and training nationalist organizations such as the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) in operations against Rhodesia. Such efforts would have only limited impact, however, for several reasons including the factionalism of these groups. ZAPU's inability seriously to threaten Rhodesia's security force has been demonstrated. Although some influential militants in the Zambian government are known to favor providing material support for Rhodesian nationalist paramilitary action, President Kaunda's determination to continue withholding any attributable support for Rhodesian freedom fighters.

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8. The Chinese Communists will have considerable difficulty capitalizing upon the present situation. Their ability to render tangible aid to any future Rhodesian rebels remains limited. Present Chinese assets in the area are an Embassy in Zambia, a large representation in Dar-es-Salaam, and a training camp for Mozambique rebels on Zanzibar. However, even if Tanzania and other countries agree to cooperate with them in establishing bases for guerilla activities against Rhodesia, the Chinese could do little more than support a small scale sabotage effort. As expected, Chinese propoganda has been particularly heavy and anti-Western in tone.

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