

Cuba, Soviet pledge to back African rebels

By HAL PIPER

Moscow—The Soviet Union and Cuba expressed their readiness yesterday to "give assistance and support" to black guerrilla movements in three white-dominated regions of southern Africa.

The statement, in a communique marking the end of a six-day visit by Cuba's foreign minister, Isidoro Malmierca Peoli, came only two days after the United States expressed concern at Soviet-Cuban military intervention in African conflicts during a conversation between the Secretary of State, Cyrus R. Vance, and Soviet President Leonid I. Brezhnev.

Cuba has built up a force of about 38,000 soldiers and advisers in a number of African countries, according to U.S. estimates. The Soviet Union has about 1,000 military advisers. There are also said to be small contingents from other Soviet-bloc countries—East Germany and Czechoslovakia.

The Soviet-Cuban communique, as summarized by the Tass news agency, reflected "the complete identity of views" of the two sides.

It condemned the Rhodesian and South African governments and "voiced solidarity with the struggle of the peoples of Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa and their organizations—the Patriotic Front, the SWAPO [South-West Africa People's Organization], the African National Congress of South Africa for Freedom and Independence—and reaffirmed their readiness further to give assistance and support to this just and legitimate struggle."

The communique promised neither arms nor men in support of the guerrilla organizations, but similar linguistic formulas have covered such aid to Angola and Ethiopia. Cuban intervention was decisive in settling local wars in both countries.

Western diplomats have expressed apprehension that, with two successes behind them, Cuban forces might now be shifted southward, raising the specter of race war in areas where black moderates and minority white regimes have been negotiating under Western auspices in search of a formula for a peaceful transition of power.

Mr. Peoli's visit to Moscow followed earlier talks held here this month by Soviet leaders with Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam, the Ethiopian leader, and Agostinho Neto, president of Angola. Colonel Mengistu also visited Cuba over the week-end.

Mr. Vance's representation of U.S. concern to Mr. Brezhnev last Saturday was not believed to have made much impact. The Soviet line consistently has been that the Cuban troops are a concern only of Cuba and the African governments that have invited them.

Soviet bloc said to boost subsidies to Cuba

Washington (AP)—The Soviet Union and East European Communist countries have agreed to boost their economic subsidies of Cuba's economy as a reward for increased Cuban involvement in Africa, a U.S. intelligence report says.

The economic props include bonus payments for Cuban sugar at four times the world price and cut-rate oil supplies, according to the report.

"In effect, the Soviet Union is paying Cuba for doing its work in Africa," said one analyst, who asked not to be named.

An earlier intelligence appraisal last month said that, "provided the Russians continue to underwrite it, Cuba probably could increase significantly its commitment in Africa without seriously damaging its economy and military capability."

Last week, the State Department estimated that the number of Cuban soldiers and civilians throughout Africa has climbed by 18,000 since November to a total of about 45,000.

All but about 6,000 of them are military personnel, the department said.

U.S. intelligence specialists said Soviet support for Cuba's economy will be 10 per cent greater this year than in 1977 and about triple the level in 1975, the year Cuba started sending troops into Angola.

The report said Russia has agreed to raise its purchases of Cuban sugar to 2.9 million tons, up 200,000 tons from the present level, at four times the world price. Sugar is Cuba's main crop, and depressed world prices have caused some economic difficulties for the island nation.

East European countries allied with Russia will buy Cuban sugar at twice the world price, U.S. intelligence specialists said, in effect giving President Fidel Castro a \$150 million subsidy.

Moscow also was reported to have assured Cuba that the island's oil needs will be met at a fixed price of \$7.25 a barrel, which the analysts said is a little more than half the world price.

Furthermore, it was said, Moscow has promised to increase deliveries of transportation equipment and some other goods.