

## CHAPTER 8

# *A Luta Continua: Intervention and Crisis Management, 1974–1980*

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And so it goes in Rhodesia, Americans and many other foreign nationals fighting side by side with the Rhodesians. The Americans firmly believe they are fighting the same war against Communism that America has been waging since World War II. Rhodesia is just a new battle. These men know that if Marxist black leaders are able to capture the Rhodesian government through terrorist tactics, South Africa will go Communist next. . . . if all of South Africa goes Communist, Americans just born will be fighting and dying closer to home, in the Americas.

—ROBIN MOORE, *Rhodesia*

Chile your waters run red through Soweto

If you heard about Chile  
then you heard about Soweto  
There the blood of oppression  
runs deep as the mines

The hands that choked the spirit  
of Allende  
Pulled the trigger on the children  
in a muddy Soweto street

The hands that turned the key  
in ten Wilmington jail cells  
Put young Steve Mitchell  
in a dusty hill grave

Chile your waters run red through Soweto  
The same hands—same waters

—BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON,  
*Sweet Honey in the Rock*

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IN THE MID-SIXTIES, Bernice Johnson was lending her voice to civil-rights demonstrations in Albany, Georgia. Sheraton Hotel heir Robin Moore was seeking adventure by joining the Green Berets in Vietnam as a journalist participant-observer, a venture that paid off in a best-selling book and collaboration on the hit "Ballad of the Green Berets." A decade later, a month after police opened fire on demonstrating students in Johannesburg's black Soweto township, Moore arrived in Rhodesia to write a book about American mercenaries. "Crippled Eagles," he termed them, as he set up an unofficial U.S. embassy to succor these anticommunist heroes, who had been betrayed by a U.S. government that had "stood by and let Angola fall to Marxist terrorists."<sup>1</sup> Bernice Reagon, who had moved to Washington and founded the *a capella* singing group Sweet

Honey in the Rock, placed Soweto in a different framework. Her song recalled the 1973 overthrow of Salvador Allende in Chile and the 1972 persecution of civil-rights activists in Wilmington, North Carolina.

In the second half of the seventies, as students in South Africa echoed the guerrilla slogan "A Luta Continua" ("The Struggle Continues"), the Western response ranged the gamut from Sweet Honey in the Rock's music of solidarity to Robin Moore's public relations for Rhodesia. Each side in the white-dominated subcontinent found kindred spirits in Western society, while foreign-policy managers tried a succession of strategies to find a new equilibrium.

Official Western responses spanned a narrower range than that between Moore and Sweet Honey in the Rock. Anticommunist intervention, in alliance with South Africa, was the instinctive if ultimately unsuccessful response in Washington to collapse of Portuguese rule in strategic Angola. Elsewhere, European and American administrations sought ways to manage the crises: to damp down conflict, project some identification with African aspirations, and outflank radicalization, all without interrupting the most substantive ties with the remaining white regimes. It was a complicated and contradictory assignment. The contrasts between high-profile U.S. initiatives and less conspicuous European involvement, and between pronouncements of U.S. spokespersons such as Henry Kissinger and Andrew Young, were significant.

Equally significant, however, was the continuity. UN Ambassador Young might suggest a rapprochement with Angola, but the Carter administration balked at recognizing the government that had used Cuban troops to defeat U.S. intervention. Criticism of apartheid might escalate after activist Steve Biko's death at the hands of South African police, but even Young still argued against sanctions, contending that U.S. economic involvement should be used to liberalize apartheid. A British Labour government worked with Democrats in the United States to prepare a Rhodesian settlement plan seen by right-wingers as a sellout to Marxist terrorists. But U.S. and British oil companies supplied the Rhodesian army to the end, while a British firm even maintained the planes of the Rhodesian Air Force. The differences among various Western responses were real. But they were not always what they seemed.

In Mozambique, Rhodesia, and even Angola, this new period of conflict revealed that some in the West could adjust to decolonization outside South Africa, while others clung to hopes of ousting or discrediting the guerrilla victors. Western ties with South Africa itself stood largely intact despite a new level of rhetorical condemnation. Reforming apartheid—but not abolishing it—moved high on the agenda in Pretoria and abroad. South Africa must "adapt or die," new Prime Minister P. W. Botha

warned. But how to adapt, how to buy time, when to use military intervention, and when to seek more subtle influence—these were questions with no simple answers in Pretoria, London, or Washington.

The first major test, which ended in humiliating defeat for South Africa and its allies, was Angola.

## The Angolan Cockpit

Visiting Lisbon in December 1973, Henry Kissinger, grateful for use of the Azores in the October airlift to Israel, offered new military equipment to Portugal for use in Africa.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, younger Portuguese officers of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) were already meeting to plan a coup that would end the colonial wars. General António Spínola was completing his book *Portugal and the Future*, which called for a new approach to end the conflict. The guerrillas in Africa had provoked a crisis of confidence in Portugal; those fighting the war were no longer convinced it was worth fighting.

The platform of the coupmakers of April 25, 1974, promised decolonization, although the group reflected a range of political views. General Spínola, who headed the postcoup government at the behest of the younger officers, was hesitant even on this common theme. Spínola and the Portuguese economic magnates who supported him envisaged instead some form of neo-colonial control, while pro-Portuguese political forces in the colonies were built up to counter the radical guerrilla movements. The transition might take as long as a generation, Spínola thought.<sup>3</sup>

In the crucial period of decolonization, political power in Portugal was shared uneasily among disparate forces, from General Spínola and his allies to the Portuguese Communist Party and more radical officers in the MFA, as well as "moderates" in the MFA and the Western European-oriented Portuguese Socialist Party. Events in Portugal and Africa interacted in a complex ricochet pattern, while outside powers sought to figure out who was on top and to decide what kind of intervention might serve their own interests.

Spínola was unable for long to impose his views. By June he had been forced to accept the principle of independence, and MFA leaders were negotiating transition plans with PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde and with FRELIMO in Mozambique.

Guinea-Bissau was far away, but Mozambique was of direct concern to South Africa. On September 7, the day Portugal and FRELIMO signed the

independence agreement, a right-wing settler revolt erupted in Mozambique's capital, Lourenço Marques. In spite of requests from the rebels, the South African government decided not to intervene to prevent FRELIMO coming to power. Having collaborated with Portugal over the ten years of war in Mozambique, Pretoria hesitated to take over counterinsurgency duties with even less credible allies. With Rhodesia under white rule, Malawi a Pretoria ally, and Zambia the next candidate for Vorster's Africa diplomacy, South Africa's leaders calculated that they could contain the Marxist virus without military intervention.

Although hundreds of Africans and a few Portuguese were killed, Portuguese and FRELIMO troops eventually restored order. Tens of thousands of recalcitrant colonists fled to Portugal or South Africa as a joint Portuguese-FRELIMO government prepared for the scheduled June 1975 independence.

The South African nonaction in Mozambique showed that Pretoria's leaders did count costs before using their military power. But in Angola the balance sheet added up differently—for a host of reasons. Angola's oil wealth gave it a potential for economic independence denied to Mozambique. Its economic links with South Africa were minimal, giving the latter little scope for pressure. Guerrilla opposition to Portugal had been militarily weak and politically divided. Holden Roberto's FNLA was a client of Zaire's Mobutu, with established U.S. links. Savimbi's UNITA, which had aided the Portuguese against the MPLA, was known to be open to the most diverse alliances. Neto's MPLA was in internal disarray. And the left wing of the Armed Forces Movement was only weakly represented among the officer corps in Angola.

Angola was a prize worth fighting for, and a pro-Western Angola on the Zaire model seemed a real option. Even so, South Africa hesitated to intervene, holding back until the United States took the initiative. The first stage of the crisis, in 1974, has been less studied than the well-publicized confrontations of 1975 and 1976. It was during this period of groping and jostling, however, that key lines were drawn, to be etched more deeply in blood the following year.

Spínola's first plan for Angola after the coup was based on building alliances with local groups that could guarantee a future for Portuguese economic interests. At first, it seemed that white settlers might carry off a Rhodesia-style UDI. After Spínola was forced to agree to "majority-rule" decolonization, more and more Portuguese settlers began to see advantages in the FNLA, which was seen as a procapitalist alternative to the Marxist MPLA. Unlike UNITA, which was also courting white businessmen, the FNLA had the potential of military backing from Zaire.

The turn toward the FNLA marked the end of a "Portuguese" solution

in Angola and the rise of a Zaire-based option. Preoccupied with Watergate and caught off guard in April, the United States was not yet ready for another major crisis. Even so, President Nixon met with Spínola in the Azores in June and agreed on the need to fight possible Communist takeovers in Portugal and Angola. Without an explicit decision from the White House, the CIA from its Zaire base began supplying Holden Roberto with additional funds. In mid-September, Spínola and Mobutu met secretly in Cape Verde, reportedly plotting an Angolan coalition excluding Agostinho Neto. Spínola lost his post later that month, when a far-right plot to oust his leftist opponents backfired, and the scheme was temporarily checked. But the FNLA, with Zaire's aid, went ahead to strengthen its troops in Angola.

Meanwhile the MPLA regrouped and reconstituted its political and military base. The Soviet Union, which had suspended arms deliveries to the MPLA during its leadership crisis, was persuaded to resume shipments. In October, three months after UNITA, both the MPLA and the FNLA signed formal ceasefire agreements with Portugal. The anticolonial war was officially over; what the MPLA called the "Second War of Independence" was about to begin.

By late 1974, a compromise had emerged among the three nationalist groups recognized by the Organization of African Unity. Meeting with Portuguese representatives in Alvor, Portugal, in January 1975, the MPLA, the FNLA, and UNITA agreed to schedule independence for November 11. In the interim a quadripartite transitional government would administer the country and hold elections for a constituent assembly.

At this stage, with Portuguese authority in Angola increasingly tattered, none of the three contenders for power had a decisive advantage. The MPLA had perhaps six thousand troops, half guerrilla veterans and the rest recent recruits, some demobilized from the Portuguese army. UNITA had almost as many, but less well trained. The FNLA enjoyed military superiority, with some twenty thousand equipped and trained conventional troops and the backing of Zaire. Under Portuguese High Commissioner Admiral Rosa Coutinho, the Portuguese administration had helped bolster the MPLA and maintain a balance. He was replaced in January by a more conservative official who was accused of favoring the FNLA, but was in any case incapable of mediating among the contending forces. In Portugal the struggle for political power increasingly focused on domestic issues. The dominant role of leftists in Lisbon during spring and summer 1975, although it heightened anticommunist panic in Washington as well as Portugal, did not carry over into military capability to influence events in Angola.

Politically, the positions of the Angolan movements roughly followed

the stereotypes attached to them, although these labels oversimplified a highly complex and changing reality. The FNLA built its political base on Kikongo-speaking Angolans, including exiles in Zaire. It offered a program that combined populist rhetoric with an explicit promise of security for free enterprise, asking only that its leadership be accepted into the emerging bourgeoisie along with white Angolans.<sup>4</sup>

The MPLA offered a socialist vision tempered with pragmatism. Its major assets were popular support among the Kimbundu-speaking population of Luanda and its hinterland, along with a policy of nonracialism and nontribalism that gave good prospects of wider national support. It won loyalty among urban workers, students, and middle-level government employees around the country, of all races and linguistic groups. Most whites saw the MPLA as a Marxist nemesis, although the participation of white and mestiço leftists in the movement also exposed it to "black power" critiques from the other two movements. UNITA, characteristically, had a less defined program. It sought to rally eastern and southern ethnic groups who had been less involved in the urban-centered colonial society, while appealing to whites on the basis of opposition to the MPLA's presumed radicalism.

Given the conflicting objectives and mistrust among the parties, and the fact that no outside power held the ring, it seems unlikely that the Alvor agreement could have been implemented under the best of circumstances. If it had, one can speculate, the contest would still have been over the basis of political competition itself, as well as over who would occupy the seats of power. A campaign based on ethnic and regional appeal would have favored UNITA. If everyone voted according to the ethnic stereotypes, UNITA would have had an estimated 40–45 percent, MPLA 35–40 percent, and FNLA the remainder. If a functioning interim administration had permitted the MPLA to mobilize grass-roots activism and carry out development programs, however, it is likely that it would have substantially expanded its support in the presumed territory of the other groups. It had shown that capacity among exiles in Congo in the early sixties and again in the guerrilla campaigns of eastern Angola. In such a context, some speculate, the voices in both MPLA and UNITA advocating an alliance of the two might have gained ground.

The year 1975 instead saw a step-by-step escalation of violence in which internal conflict merged with external intervention, in a sequence that is still the subject of bitter dispute. John Stockwell, who headed the CIA task force in the Angolan intervention from the end of July 1975, later noted that each major escalation was initiated by the United States and its allies.<sup>5</sup> Since history has no starting point and the significance of each move in the spiral of violence is open to debate, no judgement is likely to prove

definitive. But a survey of events before significant Cuban or South African involvement (March–August 1975) and in the second phase of the war (September 1975–March 1976) largely confirms Stockwell's insider assessment.

In round one, before August 1975, external involvement was limited. The major conflict was the bitter fighting between FNLA and MPLA in and around the capital Luanda, particularly in March, April, and July. The FNLA relied on its superior conventional military force and on control of many of Luanda's high-rise buildings, platforms for artillery targeting MPLA supporters in the city's African townships. The MPLA concentrated on mobilizing and arming its supporters in the city, scrambling to get arms in by sea or air despite official Portuguese prohibitions. The FNLA had open access to the Zaire border. By all accounts the major external involvement in this period was that of Zaire. Mobutu's regime served as patron of the FNLA, supplying funds, arms, and even troops.

Mobutu's intentions were both clear and relatively constant: to deprive the MPLA of any role in an independent Angola and install a regime that would be no threat to him, by example or by harboring his opponents. His protégé, Holden Roberto, had no hope of majority political support, but perhaps he could follow Mobutu's military road to power. In late 1974 the FNLA, with Zaire's help, had established control over portions of northern Angola, but the crucial prize would be the capital. The FNLA's attempt to impose its military dominance in Luanda cast the die irrevocably for war.<sup>6</sup>

United States President Nixon had evidently shared Mobutu's vision of an Angola free of the suspect MPLA. By 1975, however, Nixon, like Spínola, had succumbed to political misfortune, the Watergate scandal finally forcing his resignation in August 1974. The new Ford administration, like Lisbon, had no clear plan. Mobutu and the FNLA had, however, won the support of China, which provided over one hundred military instructors as well as arms shipments in 1974. The CIA, for its part, had resumed active support for the FNLA in mid-1974. In January 1975, only days after the Alvor agreement, Kissinger's 40 Committee provided its high-level blessing with a \$300,000 grant to the FNLA. The decision, in part a gesture of support for Mobutu,<sup>7</sup> was taken despite skepticism among State Department officials.

The debate in the U.S. government concerned policy both toward Angola and toward Portugal. The common objective of blocking advances by the Soviet Union in both countries was not in question, but there was significant disagreement on strategies.

In Portugal, Communist participation in the cabinet conjured up an ominous specter, not least for Henry Kissinger, who was inclined to respond with a Chile-model destabilization campaign. In November Kis-

singer sacked U.S. Ambassador to Portugal Stuart Nash Scott, who counseled restraint and confidence in the noncommunist political parties, including the socialists. But Scott's successor, Frank Carlucci, a veteran diplomat with experience both in Africa and Latin America, also favored the more subtle approach. Under his leadership, the United States edged away from collaboration in ultraright plots with Spínola and other exiles. Instead it bolstered conservative and "moderate" forces in the electoral arena and in the military, and joined Western European social democrats like Willy Brandt in funneling funds to Mário Soares's Socialist Party. The strategy, recalling the CIA subsidies for anticommunists in France and Italy after World War II, proved successful. By the end of 1975, the Portuguese Communist Party and left-wing officers of the MFA were largely excluded from effective power.

In the case of Angola, Assistant Secretary of State Donald Easum visited Africa in October and November, talking with leaders including Tanzania's Nyerere and Mozambique's Machel. Easum agreed with most experts that the United States could live with a pragmatic MPLA, expected to seek Western trade and investment and to deal with companies such as Gulf Oil in Cabinda. Kissinger ordered him replaced soon after he returned from Africa.

The January nomination for the Africa post of Nathaniel Davis, Ambassador to Chile when Salvador Allende was overthrown, aroused fears of more active U.S. intervention and provoked an unprecedented public protest from the Organization of African Unity. Davis was confirmed by the Senate in mid-March, the same day pro-Spínola officers in Portugal unsuccessfully attempted a coup, and just as the FNLA launched its bid to take over Luanda. Right-wing mercenaries of the Portuguese Liberation Army joined the FNLA forces in Angola.

The protagonists of intervention claimed it was necessary to show the United States was still determined to counter Soviet advances, as they characterized the MPLA's success in winning Luanda. New arms supplies from the Soviet Union, which arrived indirectly from Dar es Salaam and Brazzaville in April to June, did contribute to that victory. A few hundred Cuban advisers apparently arrived in late May and June, as the MPLA was expanding its zone of control to the north and south of Luanda. But it is highly doubtful that these assets exceeded the comparable resources available through Zaire to the FNLA. The margin of victory came from the MPLA's superior political mobilization and organizational capacity.

At this point South Africa, like European powers such as France and Britain, was biding its time, evaluating the risks and prospects of greater involvement. The French secret services were dabbling in support for Cabindan separatists as well as for FNLA, and the British were taking



advantage of their presence in Zambia to shore up ties with Jonas Savimbi. South Africa, which in October 1974 had launched a *détente* exercise with Zambia over Rhodesia (see the *Détente Gambit*, pp. 271–77), was also sending out discreet feelers for local allies. A solo South African intervention of any major scale, Pretoria was aware, would have carried heavy risks. One with Western backing and the cover of Zairian and even Zambian involvement would be another matter.

The signal for round two in Angola was the July decision by Kissinger's 40 Committee to allocate an additional \$14 million for CIA assistance to FNLA and UNITA, explicitly including arms and explicitly adding Savimbi to the list of U.S. clients. The \$14 million was Kissinger's move "to avoid a cheap Neto victory."<sup>8</sup> The quantity would clearly be insufficient to achieve a victory against the MPLA, but it would serve to commit the United States and could be used to solicit greater involvement from allies—Zaire, Zambia, France, Britain, and South Africa.

The South Africans moved across the southern border in August, linking up with forces of MPLA dissident Daniel Chipenda, who had joined the FNLA, and with UNITA. They were encouraged not only by the United States and Zaire, but by the fact that President Kaunda of Zambia, whose intelligence services fed his anti-Soviet suspicions, had given support to UNITA. In October, South Africans, mercenaries, and troops from FNLA and UNITA joined in a well-equipped mechanized column of more than three thousand troops to launch a lightning strike aimed at reaching Luanda before the scheduled November 11 independence day.<sup>9</sup> Like the United States, the South African government hoped to keep its involvement secret, suppressing all reports in the South African press even while the strike force rolled toward Luanda, hundreds of miles inside Angola.

The decision to escalate and involve the South Africans lost Kissinger another assistant secretary of state. Nathaniel Davis resigned in August, arguing for a diplomatic approach instead, expressing doubts that the operation could be kept secret, and noting that U.S. clients in Angola were "losers" and that South African intervention would backfire. Indeed, the operation did unravel with amazing rapidity. By independence day, thousands of Cuban troops were arriving in response to Neto's plea for help in countering the South Africans. The Soviet Union provided arms sufficient to equip the MPLA and the Cubans, although until January 1976 Moscow hesitated to lend its airlift capacity to Cuban troops. The CIA estimated Soviet expenditures to total \$225 million by late November. By mid-December the anti-MPLA coalition had lost the military initiative.

As the CIA scrambled to revive the flagging fortunes of its allies with infusions of mercenaries and additional arms, the political cover for intervention was collapsing. Revelations of South African involvement tipped

African opinion decisively in favor of the MPLA. Key African states such as Nigeria and Tanzania recognized the MPLA's People's Republic of Angola. In the United States a series of leaks catalyzed congressional opposition to the intervention, culminating in the December amendment introduced by Senator Tunney to bar further U.S. covert aid in Angola (later confirmed as the Clark amendment, named after the chairman of the Africa Subcommittee). United States aid actually continued for several months at least, but new escalation was blocked. Pretoria, feeling betrayed, withdrew its armored columns in March 1976.

The contrast between the Angolan debacle and U.S. intervention in Zaire (Congo) in the sixties is instructive. Each time, the United States stepped in to mold the political outcome as a European colonial power gave up control. Each time, the objective was defined as excluding leftists who might ally with the Soviet Union. In Angola, however, the MPLA proved a more formidable opponent than the Congo's divided leftists. As CIA analysts themselves concluded, it would have taken massive intervention to block the MPLA. Kissinger, it seems, opted for just enough intervention to provoke the MPLA into new appeals for Cuban and Soviet support. Soviet military power helped determine the outcome of an African conflict for the first time, noted Angola expert John Marcum, "albeit as an unexpected successful improvisation in response to unanticipated opportunity."<sup>10</sup>

For the far right, the MPLA's victory in Angola was one more sign of the implacable Soviet advance against the "Free World." Coming hard on the heels of the humiliating U.S. retreat from Saigon, it became a symbol of the need for a revived cold war. The United States had been weakened and betrayed by radicals, by liberals in Congress and the media, and by the duplicitous Kissinger himself with his pursuit of détente, they said. Africanist experts might protest that Western intervention only drove the independent-minded MPLA into closer alliance with Cuba and the Soviet Union. But this argument had little effect with those who still assumed the West should dominate rather than compete peacefully for influence in Third World countries.

If such was the definition of Free World strength, then the far right was correct. The doubts about U.S. strength raised by the Vietnam defeat, together with limits to U.S. economic power visible in relations with Europe, Japan, and OPEC, had indeed made it more difficult to pull off a successful intervention. The mood of questioning was visible in reactions by the U.S. public and in Congress, and it had profound effects within elite foreign policy circles.

In the early 1970s the U.S. establishment was deeply divided over what "lessons" to draw from Vietnam and the changing world environment.

One alternative to traditional interventionism, expressed in the Trilateral Commission and in the 1980s study project of the Council on Foreign Relations, stressed building cooperation with the leaders of Western Europe and Japan, forming a powerful bloc of industrial democracies that could find institutional solutions to world problems. For the turbulent Third World, political and military intervention would take second place to influence by multinational institutions—the IMF, the World Bank, and other more specialized bodies. If the First World got its act together, then the Soviet Union would be far outclassed in the competition for influence and might itself be drawn more closely into the world-capitalist orbit.

The Trilateralist perspective on intervention, at least in theory, echoed that of the Belgian industrialists who in 1964 held back from U.S. counterinsurgency schemes on the grounds that they could work with the Congo rebels, who would need their economic expertise. In Angola in 1975, Gulf Oil Company, which had provided oil revenues to the Portuguese colonial regime, showed similar adaptability. Their contacts convinced them that the supposedly Marxist MPLA was the most administratively competent and least corrupt of the movements, and that it was well aware of Angola's need for Western technology. Gulf was ready to make royalty payments to the MPLA-led Angolan government, but was blocked from doing so by the U.S. State Department. The money was paid into an escrow account and turned over to the MPLA in March 1976.<sup>11</sup>

What, then, was Kissinger up to? Overruling the approach favored by most State Department professionals and by the largest U.S. investor in Angola, he opted for a classic CIA plot. Yet that plot was virtually certain to fail unless the Soviets meekly abandoned the MPLA to annihilation or the United States was prepared for substantial escalation.

One of the more interesting if farfetched theories comes from José Pinheiro de Azevedo, who was serving as a compromise prime minister in Portugal at Angola's independence. He alleges that the Americans aimed at pushing the Soviet Union into involvements that would become Moscow's "Vietnam," a debilitating burden of client states under attack from insurgents and in desperate economic straits.<sup>12</sup> Such a scenario is probably too Machiavellian even for Kissinger, but it hides a grain of truth.

If the intervention succeeded, he might have reasoned, so much the better. The United States, drawn in gradually, might be obliged to escalate, using the well-worn argument against "abandoning our allies." But even if this failed, the victors would be punished. The ensuing destruction would be an object lesson for others tempted to defy Washington, and the United States would have demonstrated that Vietnam had not destroyed its "will to fight."

In these terms, the intervention did succeed. It left Angola with

an enormous burden of physical destruction and with an ongoing South African-linked insurgency. And it served as another goad to the grudge mentality that again and again drove U.S. response to social revolutions around the world.

As long ago as the Russian Revolution, the United States, smarting from defeat of its troops in Siberia, refused to recognize the nascent Soviet Union until 1933, thirteen years later. When the United States “lost” China to communist revolutionaries, it took more than twenty years before Nixon dared an opening to Beijing. United States opposition to the Cuban revolution has been implacable for a quarter of a century. The U.S. adventure in Angola, not least because of the Cuban connection, meant it too would be slotted into the same pattern, a cold-war symbol rather than an African reality.

The “Vietnam syndrome,” as a lesson of the wisdom of nonintervention, aided the military victory of the MPLA in Angola. But there was another Vietnam-linked syndrome at work in the U.S. political psyche: the desire for vengeance against those who dared to defy the United States, the will to punish by maximizing the difficulties of reconstruction after the war. An “Angola syndrome” on this model was used by conservatives over the next decade, linking the themes of resurgent cold war and the need for more sympathy for South Africa as a valuable local ally.

In the immediate aftermath of Angola, however, the southern African political spotlight shifted to Kissinger’s jetsetting diplomacy over Rhodesia and to the epoch-making Soweto revolt in South Africa.

### The Détente Gambit

Little more than a month after South African troops withdrew across the Angolan border, Henry Kissinger made his dramatic debut in African diplomacy. Speaking in Lusaka, Zambia, in April 1976, he reaffirmed “the unequivocal commitment of the US to . . . self-determination, majority rule, equal rights and human dignity for all the peoples of southern Africa.”<sup>13</sup> Shocked into fear of escalating conflict in the region, the secretary announced his willingness to work with African leaders to achieve negotiated settlements in Rhodesia and Namibia.

Ironically, Kissinger’s campaign followed the lead of South African Premier John Vorster’s efforts of the previous eighteen months. And it failed for similar reasons. Vorster, and then Kissinger, along with the exhausted British, who still held formal sovereignty, concluded that the Smith regime

was doomed. It therefore should be replaced by a compromise regime involving blacks, that would head off further radicalization and escalating guerrilla warfare. None of them, however, was willing to use the instruments available to them to further isolate white Rhodesia.

The Portuguese coup of April 1974 had profound implications for Rhodesia. Already exposed to mounting guerrilla attack, it faced the new prospect that Mozambique would cut off its best routes to the sea and step up support for the ZANU liberation forces. The "Triple Alliance" of Lisbon, Salisbury, and Pretoria was dead. Prime Minister Vorster, alerted even before the coup to the fact that the Portuguese were about to "throw in the towel" in Mozambique, was eager to dampen the Rhodesian tinderbox.<sup>14</sup>

President Kaunda of Zambia had long indicated his preference for a negotiated solution over escalating warfare. The cost to Zambia had already been immense: some £112 million after closing the Rhodesia border in January 1973, as much as £400 million since UDI.<sup>15</sup> Only £60 million in support had arrived from Britain and other sources. Zambia's growing business class was restive at the economic disruption. Kaunda and other Zambian leaders feared radicalization in the region. Britain had failed to bring Smith to heel, Kaunda realized, but perhaps South Africa, the real power behind white Rhodesia, could be coaxed into a deal.

Secret contacts between the Zambian and South African leaders produced a scenario for détente. The plan included guarantees that Rhodesia would release political prisoners, lift the ban on ZANU and ZAPU, and accept a constitutional conference under British chairmanship. In Namibia, South Africa would declare a commitment to self-determination and permit SWAPO to function freely. In return, Zambia "and friends" would ensure that the movements in Rhodesia, Namibia, and South Africa desist from armed struggle.

Only a portion of the scheme was implemented. South Africa pressured Smith into releasing key nationalist leaders from prison and agreeing to a constitutional conference. Kaunda imposed a cease-fire on Zimbabwean guerrillas, and indeed helped to cripple the military wing of ZANU, which bitterly criticized the agreement to stop the war. Kaunda gained the support of other Frontline States—Tanzania, Botswana, and Mozambique—for his diplomatic initiative. In August 1975 Smith and the umbrella African National Council of Zimbabwean nationalists met on the bridge over Victoria Falls, under the watchful eyes of the South African and Frontline leaders. But Smith had no intention of accepting majority rule, even with compromises on transitional arrangements. The Zimbabweans, and Kaunda as well, could accept no less. Vorster and Kaunda proved no more

successful midwives than had the British, and diplomacy once more proved abortive.

The 1974–75 *détente* episode had several features distinct from earlier rounds of diplomacy. First, the diplomatic initiative had shifted to southern Africa. While the Western powers took a background role, freewheeling British entrepreneur Roland “Tiny” Rowland, head of the Lonrho corporation, played matchmaker between Kaunda and Vorster. Rowland had built his economic empire on political contacts on both sides of the Zambezi; from beer in Zambia to gold in Rhodesia and platinum in South Africa.<sup>16</sup> Lonrho South Africa director Marquard de Villiers served as a link to Vorster and his intelligence chief, Hendrik van den Bergh. In taking up the task of trying to negotiate a settlement, South Africa was in effect assuming Britain’s role as colonial power.

Secondly, the prospect of a settlement came from a change in the South African rather than the African position. Again and again the African states had declared their preference for a peaceful settlement. African states had affirmed armed struggle more strongly in the Mogadishu Declaration of 1971 than in the conciliatory Lusaka Declaration of 1969, but had never rejected negotiations in principle. The ZANU guerrilla leadership was profoundly skeptical of negotiation until Smith was further weakened, but there were many Zimbabwean nationalists who were willing to give it yet another try. Vorster, influenced by intelligence reports of the growing strength of Zimbabwean guerrillas, decided to give diplomacy a chance.

Finally, if Vorster was willing to accept compromises on white-minority rule in Rhodesia, his commitment was not unconditional. His own supporters would not take kindly to pressure that would down a white regime, nor could he risk setting a precedent for sanctions against South Africa. Pretoria could unobtrusively reduce support for Salisbury, but its own situation barred more decisive arm twisting. And if South Africa’s means were thus limited, so was its commitment to a settlement. It was the guerrilla threat that made a settlement urgent. But if *détente* or other events weakened the military challenge, then both Smith and Vorster could postpone the day of reckoning.

This was the trap in which Salisbury’s opponents were ensnared. Zimbabwean nationalists were in organizational disarray. The cease-fire imposed greater military disadvantages on the guerrillas than on the regime’s security forces, who moved to reestablish control in disputed areas. In March 1975 an assassination team from Rhodesia’s Central Intelligence Organization killed Dr. Herbert Chitepo, one of ZANU’s top leaders, with a car bomb at his home in Lusaka, Zambia. The assassination, calculated

for maximum political effect, was an outstanding success; within ZANU as well as without, many blamed Chitepo's presumed rivals in the party. The Zambian government arrested fifty-seven ZANU guerrillas, including several top leaders, and eventually extracted confessions. Meanwhile, the two assassins, a white farmer in Zambia and a Rhodesian operative of British origin, were rewarded with bonus payments.<sup>17</sup>

If Zambia had stood alone, vulnerable by geography and ideology to the intrigues of its southern neighbors, détente might have proved an even more substantial setback for the Zimbabwean cause. But the Zambian leader's long-standing close ties to Tanzania's Nyerere, and the formation of an extraordinarily resilient alliance of "Frontline Presidents" with Machel of Mozambique, Khama of Botswana, and eventually Neto of Angola, provided the framework for both a renewed diplomatic offensive and a greatly expanded guerrilla war.

Meeting in Dar es Salaam in April 1975, the Organization of African Unity endorsed negotiations by the Frontline States, but also declared, in a statement drafted by Nyerere, that if talks failed the armed struggle would have to be intensified. Exasperated with divisions among Zimbabwe's nationalists, Nyerere and Machel sought to foster a joint guerrilla force from ZANU and ZAPU cadre. In the last months of 1975, guerrilla units moved again into Zimbabwe from Mozambique, the majority loyal to ZANU and to Robert Mugabe, who had fled to Mozambique and was emerging as the most trusted leader. In February 1976 the four presidents, meeting at Quelimane in Mozambique, decided unanimously that, once again, the peaceful route had failed. They offered support to a Joint Military Command of ZANU and ZAPU forces. The following month Mozambique closed the border with Rhodesia, a decision that cost the newborn nation some \$550 million in losses over the next four years, equivalent to two years' exports.

These African initiatives prodded London and Washington into another settlement effort. In March, British Foreign Secretary James Callaghan set out a new British proposal: acceptance by Smith of the principle of majority rule, elections within two years, constitutional negotiations, and no independence before majority rule. The Foreign Office said the only alternative to a "peaceful transition to majority rule in the very near future is an all-out war which the white Rhodesians cannot win."<sup>18</sup> Reaching the same conclusion, Kissinger turned from Angola to seek the mantle of peacemaker in Rhodesia.

The U.S. diplomat's whirlwind tours of southern Africa in April and September 1976 led to Smith's dramatic announcement that he accepted "majority rule within two years," on terms that Kissinger said were acceptable to the Frontline presidents. The apparent agreement fell apart within

days, however, as it emerged that Smith was thinking of "responsible government" with a qualified franchise and that Kissinger had agreed that whites would control the transitional government, including the key security ministries. In the meantime, with sanctions lifted, the Rhodesian government could recoup its forces. The Frontline presidents denounced Smith's version of the agreement as "tantamount to legalizing the colonialist and racist structures of power."<sup>19</sup> A British-sponsored conference in Geneva only confirmed the impasse. Agreement would come only after three more bitter years of war.

The U.S.-initiated settlement effort of 1976 bore more than an accidental resemblance to Pretoria's *détente* scheme the year before. It was based on cooperation with South Africa, seen as sharing the Western desire to defuse the Rhodesian conflict and as having leverage over Smith. This premise lay behind Kissinger's refusal to give priority to Namibia, as urged by President Nyerere of Tanzania. In Namibia, Nyerere argued, Vorster had direct power to implement change if he decided to do so. Kissinger, however, was interested in cooperating with Vorster, not in pressuring him. Moreover, guerrilla war was not as active a threat in Namibia as in Rhodesia. There was no pressing reason to strain U.S.-South African relations, already tense over the abortive Angolan intervention.

Kissinger's plans also presumed a "friendly" approach to Smith himself, who was to be persuaded to join in promoting a moderate successor and isolating the radicals of the guerrilla movements. As Kissinger later explained, "My plan was to co-opt the program of moderate evolutionary reform. . . . We never thought we could co-opt the ideological radicals; our goal was to isolate them."<sup>20</sup>

When Kissinger met with Smith in South Africa in September, shortly after police killed six students protesting his visit, he argued that the war was unwinnable and that it was necessary to compromise. Still, he expressed admiration for the dignity of white Rhodesians. Revealingly, one session was interrupted by Nancy Kissinger, who wanted to meet Ian Smith, one of her "heroes."

The cumulative effect of UN sanctions, the rising price of oil, and Mozambique's border closure were weakening Salisbury, as was the war itself. The Western powers advised Smith to adjust. When he stalled, however, they did nothing to hasten his downfall.

Although Kissinger spoke in Lusaka of repealing the Byrd Amendment, which since 1971 had placed the United States in violation of international sanctions, the Ford administration did not follow up the pledge. In 1975 congressional liberals in the House of Representatives won only 187 votes for repeal against 209. As President Ford campaigned for reelection, even Kissinger's speech was seen by some of his advisers as having gone too far,



giving ultraright candidate Ronald Reagan ammunition in the primary campaigns. Republicans and southern Democrats in Congress argued against even existing sanctions. In October, the State Department hosted a seminar for potential U.S. investors in Rhodesia, with the prominent participation of chrome importer E. F. Andrews of Allegheny Ludlum, a central figure in the antisanktions lobby. Smith might have to fear the guerrillas, but he had no need to worry about the West closing the sanctions gap.

If white Rhodesian strategists needed any further assurances, they could point to the lack of reaction when journalists began to reveal details of sanctions violations by Western oil companies. When documents were released in June 1976 implicating Mobil Oil, for example, they were virtually ignored by the major media. Testifying that September to Senator Dick Clark's Africa Subcommittee, Mobil executives claimed they could not verify the charges because their subsidiary was subject to South Africa's Official Secrets Act. Their overseas subsidiaries, they added, were not subject to U.S. sanctions laws.

Even more revealing was the blind eye turned to Salisbury's mercenary connection. In 1976 the war took on an increasingly brutal character, attracting more Western media attention. But the stories most often reflected the point of view of white Rhodesia. In August 1976 a Rhodesian commando unit attacked a Zimbabwean refugee camp at Nyadzonia in Mozambique, killing at least 675 people. Though the camp was certainly a source of recruits for ZANU's army, it was a civilian rather than a military installation, accredited with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Yet in Western public opinion, when the event was noticed at all, Rhodesia's claim to be retaliating against "terrorists" enjoyed greater credibility than protests on behalf of the victims.

By 1976, between one thousand and two thousand foreigners had joined Rhodesia's military, as much as a third of the regular professional army.<sup>21</sup> In the wake of Angola and Vietnam, several hundred Americans were among their number. Publisher Robert K. Brown, with informal ties to U.S. intelligence and paramilitary agencies, was distributing recruitment materials for Rhodesia even before beginning his *Soldier of Fortune* magazine in 1975. In 1976 the glossy newsstand publication offered a Rhodesian recruitment poster as a subscription gimmick, and featured an interview with Rhodesian commander-in-chief Peter Walls.

A less glamorous but probably more important recruitment effort was spearheaded by Airwork Services Ltd., a British company with close ties to the United Kingdom Ministry of Defense. Airwork subsidiaries in Rhodesia and South Africa recruited airforce maintenance workers from Britain

and other European countries, and Airwork even trained Rhodesian pilots in Oman.<sup>22</sup>

This military complicity did not necessarily reflect specific decisions by Western governments. Yet the failure to stop such ties was itself significant, as can be verified by a simple thought experiment. If a black group in the United States or Britain had been actively recruiting for an African government that had just massacred over five hundred white civilians, a similar lack of reaction would have been unimaginable.

South Africa's student-initiated revolt, in 1976 and 1977, attracted far more attention in Western countries, as the toll of demonstrators killed by police mounted into the hundreds. But the impact was not sufficient to provoke a substantial break in ties with South Africa, either for conservatives like Kissinger or the more liberally inclined Carter administration and Western European social-democratic governments. Albeit less easily than after Sharpeville, the apartheid regime weathered the crisis and retained the Western shield of opposition to economic sanctions.

### The Soweto Shock

The beginning was obscure, apparently a limited protest by African students against being forced to take half their subjects in the Afrikaans language. On June 16, 1976, some fifteen thousand schoolchildren gathered for a protest march in the township of Soweto, a dormitory town for as many as one million Africans in the Johannesburg area. A police bullet killed thirteen-year-old Hector Petersen and ignited a virtual uprising—unarmed students pitted against paramilitary police units. By the end of the second day the official death toll had reached fifty-eight, including two whites; unofficial counts already exceeded one hundred.

In striking contrast to the aftermath of Sharpeville fifteen years earlier, the revolt sparked in Soweto continued to blaze, spreading around the country. A mid-September stay-at-home strike brought out more than six hundred thousand workers from Johannesburg to Cape Town. By the end of December the estimated deaths passed one thousand, while autopsies later showed as many as 50 percent had been shot in the back. The drama focused on police-youth confrontations, but the youth both reflected and stimulated a growing spirit of resistance among their elders.

Coming on the heels of the ignominious retreat from Angola, this unrest that refused to stop was a profound shock to white South Africa. It was not

an imminent threat to government control: the mechanisms of repression eventually proved effective, culminating in the prison murder in September 1977 of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko and the subsequent banning of opposition groups. But the combined external and internal shocks of 1975–76 spurred a quantum leap in military expenditures and prompted the National Party to add talk of reform to its unchanging pledge to maintain white control.

### HELPING HANDS

As in 1961–63, so in 1976–77 the rulers of South Africa turned successfully to greater force. So also in both periods of crisis they relied on their reserve of support in the West. Western ties with Pretoria were accompanied by more insistent talk of the need for reform. Behind the international clamor, however, there lurked the persistent catch-22: few Western opinion leaders contested the assumption that change should come in cooperation with the South African ruling class.

Like Sharpeville, the Soweto uprising can be seen not only as a beginning, but as a symbol of trends that preceded it. In addition to the collapse of the Portuguese buffer, the economy had taken a sharp turn downwards. Rising imports in 1975 provoked a balance-of-payments crisis, as oil prices rose (the oil-import bill soared from R190 million in 1973 to R1100 million two years later) and the gold price declined (from \$200/ounce in later 1974 to \$110/ounce by mid-1976).<sup>23</sup> Government spending went into deeper deficit, caused almost entirely by military allocations. The defense budget, which had climbed slowly from R210 million in 1964 to R335 million in 1972, jumped to R707 million in 1974 and R1,408 million by 1976.<sup>24</sup> Internal profit margins declined, and the proportion of new investment from internal sources dropped from 74 percent in 1973 to 30 percent in 1975.<sup>25</sup>

Blacks were especially hard hit by inflation. In April 1976 price increases of up to 18 percent were announced for maize, cooking oil, and other subsistence goods. Meanwhile blacks, unlike whites, were still obliged to pay school fees, which could easily come to a month's income to send two children to school for a year.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, black high-school enrollment had mushroomed from 123,000 in 1970 to over 300,000 in 1975.<sup>27</sup> The student protest crystallized the rising expectations as well as the grievances of the wider black community.

Instead of reform, Pretoria took a new step along the "separate development" route, declaring the Transkei homeland independent in October 1976. Talk of concessions for urban blacks remained speculative. The Vorster government succeeded in restoring stability and the confidence of

foreign investors. In 1976-77 as in 1961-62, moreover, foreign capital played a vital role in helping South Africa through the crisis.

Throughout the second half of 1976 and much of 1977, there was an outflow of capital of some R100 million a month.<sup>28</sup> The deficit would have been worse, but recorded bank loans to South Africa went from \$543 million in 1972 to \$946 million in 1975 and \$1,499 million in 1976, before dropping to \$300 million the following year amidst reports that more and more loans were being made without public notice. Strategic loans included \$350 million by Citibank-led U.S.-European consortia in February and March 1976, for electricity and mining projects, as well as another \$150 million credit to the South African government in October, again headed by Citibank.<sup>29</sup>

The Soweto shock did block an expected expansion in U.S. government financing for South Africa. In January 1976, twenty-one prominent conservative senators had urged closer U.S. ties with the Pretoria regime. In June the Export-Import Bank was set to provide at least \$225 million to the South African coal gasification scheme, to back the California-based principal contractor, Fluor Corporation. Meeting on June 17, the day after Soweto erupted, the bank's directors decided to reject the application; Fluor's contract was not affected. Testifying before Congress the same day, Secretary of State Kissinger said he was not planning any concessions at his scheduled late-June meeting with Prime Minister Vorster in Bavaria. Still, symbolically, a South African navy frigate participated in the July 4 bicentennial review, the first visit by a South African warship to the United States.

The United States continued to support International Monetary Fund credits to South Africa. In January, at the height of the Angolan conflict, but also in November, following Kissinger's African shuttles, the IMF board voted, with U.S. urging, to approve standby credits of \$180 million and \$186 million, respectively, in spite of criticism from African and some European delegates. A \$56 million credit followed the next year with the approval of the incoming Carter administration. In 1976-77 the IMF's assistance to South Africa was more than it provided to all other African countries combined, and third only to credits to Britain and Mexico.<sup>30</sup>

The power of well-established links to insulate Pretoria against possible Western action, even with the growing political sensitivity of the issue, is well illustrated by the case of export credit guarantees from the German Federal Republic. In 1976 and early 1977 South Africa received \$1.4 billion in credit guarantees from the state-owned Hermes Kredit-Versicherungs AG, almost four times the 1975 figure.<sup>31</sup> When anti-apartheid activists revealed the statistics in mid-1977, the Bonn government of Social Democratic Chancellor Helmut Schmidt explained civil servants had taken the

decisions without the knowledge of top officials. Still, Hermes credits continued. And private West German banks managed loans in excess of \$400 million to South Africa in 1977 and 1978.

### SPEAKING UP FOR REFORM

In 1977, with the incoming Carter administration expressing a special interest in human rights, and with similarly inclined social-democratic governments in London and Bonn, the climate was ripe for a different approach to South Africa. The three countries together accounted for some 40 percent of the trade and as much as 70 percent of the total foreign investment in South Africa. In the period 1972–1978, of a total of over \$5.5 billion in bank loans to South Africa, banks from the Federal Republic of Germany were involved in at least \$2.436 billion, banks from the United States and Britain in at least \$2.39 billion each.<sup>32</sup> Together, the three countries had substantial potential influence.

The reform impulse on both sides of the Atlantic, however, avoided economic sanctions. Instead the new Western policy, in which Washington took the lead, incorporated strands from previous Democratic and Republican administrations. The symbolic dissociation from South Africa of the early sixties returned, at a higher decibel level. Simultaneously, as in Nixon's "communication" strategy, it was presumed that reform would come as U.S. and South African business, together with the Pretoria regime, were eventually persuaded it was in their own best interest.

Several factors inclined the Carter administration to a visibly more pro-African position. A black American constituency showing increased interest in African liberation had played a supportive role in Carter's election. In September 1976 a Black Leadership Conference on South Africa had endorsed support for southern African liberation movements, backed comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa, and decided to found a lobbying organization, TransAfrica. The 1975 revelation of Kissinger's NSSM39 tilt had exposed Republican hypocrisy on African issues. The Angolan intervention, followed by the Soweto uprising, had raised specters of U.S. involvement in another Vietnam-like fiasco. For large numbers of Americans, liberal human-rights sentiment or anti-interventionist caution raised doubts about the Washington-Pretoria connection, while academic and diplomatic specialists deplored the globalism that pervaded U.S. policies toward Third World areas.

Symbolically, the Democratic Study Group on Africa, which prepared the 1976 platform planks, was co-chaired by Wayne Fredericks, the key Africa Bureau liberal of the Kennedy-Johnson era, and Goler Butcher, the black lawyer who had headed the House Africa Subcommittee's staff and

was to be appointed by Carter as Africa chief for AID. The platform called for increased economic aid to independent Africa, enforcement of Rhodesia sanctions, and a tightened arms embargo against South Africa. It also requested normalization of relations with Angola, withdrawal of tax credits for U.S. companies in Namibia, and tax penalties for U.S. companies in South Africa that supported apartheid—three more daring measures, none of which was to be implemented.

Not only were the policy constraints of administration narrower than those of a campaign platform, but also the ideological perspective of the Carter team was far less liberal than the public impression often given. Carter's ascent into public life had been fostered and his international perspective molded in large part by contacts with Atlanta-based companies such as Coca-Cola and by participation in the Rockefeller-initiated Trilateral Commission. Commission director Zbigniew Brzezinski became Carter's National Security Adviser; Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was a member of the Trilateral Commission, as were Defense Secretary Harold Brown and Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal. So was controversial Ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young, who had built a comfortable relationship with the Atlanta business establishment in his two terms as the deep South's first black congressman since 1898.

As later policy disputes would reveal, the Trilateral Commissioners held a range of views on southern African issues. So did new lower-level staffers such as Donald McHenry, Anthony Lake, and Richard Moose. But that range did not extend to support of coercive sanctions. A policy review begun early in 1977 reportedly considered a number of steps that could be taken to reduce U.S. ties with Pretoria. A similar unofficial list, prepared by African American Institute head William Cotter and former Ambassador to Uganda Clyde Ferguson, later appeared in *Foreign Affairs* in January 1978. These possible measures included discouraging new investment, ending exchange of intelligence information, ending Export-Import Bank guarantees, and other measures that could signal disapproval without affecting the bulk of Western economic interests in South Africa.

As an initial stance, the Carter administration rejected even such gradually escalated pressure. Instead, in a presidential directive in March, "visible steps" to downgrade relations with South Africa were reserved for the future, if Pretoria did not move toward power sharing. In the meantime the United States would speak out strongly on apartheid, as well as on Rhodesia and Namibia, arguing, in Vice President Walter Mondale's words, that "progress in all three areas is strongly in the interest of the South African government."<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to the early Nixon years, when talk of reform only thinly veiled closer ties with Pretoria, the Carter administration did launch a

serious reform initiative. The president paid close attention to the issue, and State Department officials logged countless miles on diplomatic missions. Heightened rhetoric hinted at stronger future action. But the Carter administration and its European partners shared an essential premise of the Nixon strategy: the major force for achieving racial justice, Carter told South Africa's *Financial Mail* in a preelection interview, could be increased foreign investment. With the option of drastically cutting economic ties ruled out by this premise, or deferred indefinitely, Pretoria could be confident that Western actions would continue to be largely symbolic, the price of defiance low enough to be bearable.

Visiting South Africa in May 1977, UN Ambassador Young preached a similar message to businessmen gathered at the house of magnate Harry Oppenheimer. In Atlanta, he recalled, progress in civil rights had come when key businessmen decided that racism was bad for business.<sup>34</sup> The business community, he remarked on another occasion, is "in many respects the key to hope . . . for South Africans to live together as brothers."<sup>35</sup> Thirty years after Alan Paton had penned his hopeful plea to Oppenheimer's father in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, the American preacher-diplomat echoed the same idealistic faith in capitalism.

Africans, for their part, were advised to resort to civil-rights-movement tactics of nonviolent resistance and boycotts, abjuring armed struggle and international economic sanctions. By attending a United Nations conference on southern African liberation in Mozambique just before visiting South Africa, Young signaled an unprecedented degree of official Western sympathy for African struggles. Yet his advice was seen by African leaders at the conference as naïvely ignoring their own experience and underestimating the determination of the white regimes in Pretoria and Salisbury.

While Young was touring southern Africa, Vice-President Mondale opened the diplomatic offensive with a high-profile meeting with Prime Minister John Vorster in Vienna. Mondale reportedly warned Vorster that the United States would not come to Pretoria's aid in the case of anti-apartheid violence, even if outside communist powers were involved, a threat visibly emphasized by the African tours of Cuban leader Castro and Soviet President Podgorny only two months earlier. The best defense, Mondale stressed, was for South Africa to abandon its intransigent opposition to "full political participation." This term, he explained in response to a reporter's question, was equivalent to "one man, one vote"—the first time a U.S. official had openly advocated this goal for South Africa. And, he warned, the press of international events might require the United States to "take actions" if there was no evident progress toward this goal.<sup>36</sup>

The South African government response was to launch a vigorous public attack on Carter's policy. White opinion was mobilized against "foreign

interference." In November elections, the National Party increased its already large majority of 117 seats to 135. Simultaneously, Pretoria took a harder line on negotiations over Rhodesia and Namibia, banned eighteen organizations and the black newspaper *The World*, and denied any wrongdoing in the death of activist Steve Biko. In a gesture toward reform, Vorster also announced plans for a new constitution, with separate parliaments for whites, Coloureds, and Indians. The scheme, which would be implemented six years later, maintained the apartheid plan for African rights to be confined to participation in their "homelands."

Vorster had good grounds for calling Carter's bluff. The United States was pledged to cooperate on southern African issues with Britain and other Western European countries, more cautious even than the United States about actions that might damage their economies, as well as South Africa's. The efforts at reform by foreign business were welcomed rather than seen as a threat by many in Pretoria, since they posed no challenge to the basic premises of white control. And even possible new restrictions on arms imports were manageable, if access to advanced Western technology remained available to build up South Africa's internal industry.

British policy toward South Africa paralleled the Carter thrust, with less melodrama. David Owen, who took office as foreign minister in February 1977, not only played an active role in regional diplomacy, but also talked of reducing British economic involvement in South Africa. Even within the Labour Party this was an innovation; Owen's predecessor, Anthony Crosland, had advocated greater investment. Owen reflected a rising consciousness of the economic importance of black Africa, especially Nigeria, and the possibility that there might be reprisals for British ties with Pretoria. In 1976, for the first time, British exports to Nigeria exceeded those to South Africa.

Owen's initiatives, however, were only the hint of willingness to accept selective sanctions; the weight of past connections—diplomatic as well as economic—was formidable. British ambassador to South Africa for the crucial period from 1976 to 1979 was David Scott, a career diplomat whose sympathies lay more with the South African establishment than with rising black resistance. In an early 1977 speech in Cape Town, Scott echoed the perennial Western plea:

We now find ourselves with very little ammunition to defend ourselves against intense international criticism that we are leaning over backwards to defend South African internal policies. Unless you can give us more ammunition, we may not be able to go on doing so. . . . I have spoken frankly, but I hope you will accept that I have spoken as a friend.<sup>37</sup>

Scott's speech was favorably received by the South African press. When



a few Labour members of parliament raised questions about the Ambassador's self-portrayal as a friend of the South African government, Owen replied that Scott's remarks should be seen as a call for reform. In this context, with police-student confrontations continuing in the townships, Scott was "relieved to be conscious that 1977 was also the year of the Queen's Silver Jubilee."<sup>38</sup> Celebrating the Queen's birthday in Cape Town, where as princess she had celebrated her twenty-first birthday in 1947, the ambassador emphasized the continuity of British-South African ties. Reform found symbolic reflection in the fact that the invitation list to the garden party was multiracial.

The changes in apartheid over the next few years in part reflected an effort to provide public relations ammunition for South Africa's Western friends. But they were also an effort to build a more viable system without abandoning the advantages of the old. More than window dressing, but far short of structural rehabilitation, these measures might most appropriately be compared to rearranging the furniture on the *Titanic*.

### "Total Strategy" and Neo-Apartheid

The conjoined crises of Angola and Soweto accelerated a search for new strategies by South Africa's rulers, in which the military leadership took on an increasingly important role. Symbolically, in January 1976 the government introduced a bill redefining military service to include service against "terrorism," and redefining "South Africa," where troops could be sent without their written consent, as "Africa south of the Sahara."<sup>39</sup> As troops withdrew from Angola in March, as many as forty thousand were installed in new permanent bases dotting northern Namibia.

Top military strategists, who had studied counterinsurgency experiences in Malaya, Algeria, and Vietnam, formalized a theory of "Total National Strategy," first officially presented in the *Defence White Paper* of 1977. Military actions must be coordinated with psychological, political, and economic policies to defend "the system of free enterprise," they argued. And this implied reforms. As Chief of Staff General Magnus Malan put it in 1979, "The South African Defence Force is ready to beat off any attack. . . . but we must take account of the aspirations of our different population groups. We must gain and keep their trust."<sup>40</sup>

The military reformists gained ascendancy as Defence Minister P. W. Botha assumed the premiership in September 1978. Botha was not only close to the military leaders, but he was the well-established leader of the

Cape National Party and reflected the *verligte* (reformist) perspective of the Afrikaner business establishment. Influential long before he took the top office, Botha symbolized the military-business alliance that would stake its future on "neo-apartheid." The National Party, increasingly based in the prosperous Afrikaner business sector it had fostered, moved away from classic apartheid rhetoric toward advocacy of a more "flexible" system, which had long been the theme of the English-speaking business establishment. The construction of "neo-apartheid" served to encourage foreign advocates of reform. It was, moreover, as the "progressive force" theory contended, an outgrowth of the expansion and shifting needs of South African capitalism.

The planned changes, however, were intended to restructure and entrench the basic power relations in society, not abolish them. And, strikingly, the new reform themes were intimately coupled with growing militarization. The "total strategy" encompassed both an outstretched hand to the pragmatic "reformers" of big business and a mailed fist raised against even moderate black opponents who might dare to advocate nonracial democracy. To back such a goal was to be counted a communist dupe, part of a global Soviet conspiracy against Western civilization.

#### SHAPING NEO-APARTHEID

By the end of 1977, repression had been successful enough to buy time for more talk of reform. The killing of Steve Biko, bannings, and detentions seemed to have their expected effect. Both business and government, at a pace that seemed leisurely or precipitous depending on one's perspective, proceeded to draft a reform agenda.

Business organizations preached the need to defend the "free enterprise" system. Restrictions on the mobility of African labor should be reduced, both to avoid growing discontent and to allow business more flexibility to alleviate skill shortages. The industrial-relations system should be expanded to include African unions, in the hope of regulating and controlling the workers who had flexed their legally unrecognized muscles in the 1973 strikes. State ownership should be reduced, even Afrikaner entrepreneurs who had profited from government patronage agreed.

Groups such as the Urban Foundation, formed by major companies in 1977, argued that it was necessary to foster a black middle class with "western-type materialistic needs and ambitions [because] only by having this most responsible section of the urban black population on our side can the whites of South Africa be assured of containing on a long term basis the irresponsible economic and political ambitions of those blacks who are

influenced against their own real interests from within and without our borders."<sup>41</sup> The Urban Foundation proposed improvement in housing and education, elimination of petty apartheid, and loosening of the pass laws for blacks with urban residence rights.

The reform agenda was reflected in the political arena by the new Progressive Federal Party. Initiated in October 1976, the new party drew from the collapsing United Party as well as the old Progressive Reform Party. In the 1977 elections, it became the official opposition, winning 17 seats against the National Party's 134.

Verligte politicians within the National Party, meanwhile, pushed a similar agenda. Commissions were appointed to consider changes in labor regulations (Wiehahn), in the pass laws (Riekert), and in other areas. Vorster, after Soweto, sided more and more with the party's right wing. But after the "Muldergate" scandal over corruption in secret Information Department projects, the deck was cleared for a centralized "reform" strategy under P. W. Botha.

The scandal revealed numerous secret projects, including financing for an unsuccessful attempt by U.S. newspaperman John McGoff to buy the *Washington Star*; contacts with U.S. politicians, including a Mulder visit with then Vice-President Ford in 1974; and creation of front groups to attack the World Council of Churches and other critics of South Africa. In Norway, South African agents had even stimulated the formation of a right-wing political party. Focusing on diversion of funds and alleged high living rather than the objectives of the projects, the official investigations kept continuing operations secret. The results included ouster of Vorster from the premiership in September and his removal even from the ceremonial presidency eight months later. Right-wing former Information Minister Connie Mulder was forced out of the cabinet and eventually from the party.

With more unfettered control of the party machinery, P. W. Botha moved to "rationalize" state structures, creating a series of cabinet committees headed by a new State Security Council. Described as the "primary decision making body," the SSC stood atop a "national security management system" aimed at coordinating all aspects of government policy.

He also aimed to coordinate policy more closely with the business establishment. One link was the state-owned ARMSCOR corporation, which by 1980 was the largest industrial group in South Africa, in addition contracting out some 60 percent of its production to the private sector. In 1979, at Botha's request, Johan Maree, a top executive of the Barlow Rand mining group, was seconded to ARMSCOR to serve as executive vice-chairman. Already in late 1977, a secret meeting had brought together senior military officials and business executives "to understand the other's

needs.”<sup>42</sup> Later a thirteen-man Defence Advisory Council was formed, including Afrikaner and English-speaking business leaders. In a well-publicized meeting at Carlton Center in November 1979, Botha pledged cooperation with business on economic and political issues. Leading Afrikaner political commentator Herman Giliomee noted that mining magnate Oppenheimer had become “overseas, the most credible spokesman for Mr. Botha’s new initiatives.”<sup>43</sup>

The pace of reform was slowed by opposition within the National Party and by the large apartheid bureaucracy. More significantly, even the plan sketched out held to the essentials of the apartheid system. Blacks were assumed to gain political rights, if at all, in the homelands; Bophuthatswana was granted “independence” in 1977, Venda in 1979, and Ciskei scheduled for the same status in 1981. Tswana and Xhosa-speaking Africans were forced to take up homeland citizenship. Pass laws, supposedly loosened for those with urban residence rights, were intensified for the majority of Africans. The government continued with resettlement and removals of Africans from areas zoned “white.”

The white power structure was changing internally; white workers would begin to lose some of their privileges. An increasingly bourgeois National Party had virtually adopted the program of its English-speaking opponents of 1948. But for the majority of blacks, and even for the growing middle class and skilled workers among Indians, Coloureds, and urban Africans, talk of reform was at best a cruel joke.

## RECODING APARTHEID

Many in the West were galvanized by Soweto into greater efforts to isolate South Africa economically. In the spring of 1977 more than seven hundred students on campuses around the United States were arrested in divestment protests. Church stockholder resolutions on South Africa began to feature withdrawal as their principal demand. A few universities, such as the University of Wisconsin and Hampshire College, divested stocks of companies involved in South Africa. A far more common response was to appoint new committees to study the problem.

As the debate went on, many gave credence to the hope for change fostered by increasingly sophisticated South African government propaganda. And one of the most effective arguments used by the companies and other proponents of continued economic ties was supplied by civil-rights leader and General Motors board director Leon Sullivan.

Following the 1973 revelation of appallingly bad working conditions at British-owned companies in South Africa, the British government had issued a voluntary code of conduct intended to promote reform in such

companies. Sullivan, who earlier advocated withdrawal of U.S. investment, had by 1976 been persuaded to try an organized effort to work with the companies themselves in promoting reform. In March 1977, after more than a year of talks with large U.S. companies, Carter officials, and the South African government itself, Sullivan won public support from twelve companies for six principles: desegregation of company facilities, fair employment, equal pay for equal work, training programs, moving blacks into management positions, and support for improvement of quality of life in employees' communities. References to modification of South African "law and custom" that might block implementation were reportedly removed at the request of South African Ambassador to the United States Roelof Botha. The South African government subsequently welcomed the companies' pledged assistance in improving black working conditions.

The Sullivan Code, even if fully implemented, would apply to less than 1 percent of the black work force, almost all among the relatively settled urban population employed in manufacturing. Even in the United States, the impact of such fair employment practices was limited by other disabilities faced by blacks, such as unequal education. In South Africa such other disabilities were the essence of the system; the vast majority were disqualified by law even from opportunities to seek employment in the urban areas.

A similar code adopted by the European Economic Community in September 1977 at British initiative added stronger provisions, calling for recognition of black trade unions. Unlike the Sullivan principles, the European Code was government-sponsored. Both, however, were voluntary. Even more significantly, both fitted within parameters judged acceptable to the South African government, and diverted attention from the issue of apartheid's survival as a system to the narrower question of conditions within specific companies.<sup>44</sup>

For those who subscribed to the Oppenheimer thesis that economic development would erode apartheid, the Sullivan principles provided a corollary on speeding up the process. For those who were beginning to doubt how automatically that process could work, here was a fall-back substitute. Foreign companies, by example, would demonstrate to their South African counterparts and eventually to the government itself that nondiscrimination was the wave of the future. In a kind of trickle-down social morality, the liberating effect of capitalist development would be released. The need for disruptive violent unrest and the inconvenience of economic measures that might cut off profits could be bypassed. Companies quickly saw the public-relations advantages of signing the principles. The original signatories, which included oil companies Caltex and Mobil, computer firms IBM and Burroughs, as well as Ford, General Motors, and

Citibank, were soon joined by others—more than fifty by the end of 1977, over one hundred a year later.

This new version of the “progressive force” theory would have ample opportunity to prove its worth, for Western determination to block economic sanctions held firm, even in the crisis atmosphere after Biko’s death and the October bannings. In March 1977 the United Nations Security Council had been convinced by Ambassador Young to postpone resolutions on South Africa. In late October three resolutions calling for an arms embargo and economic sanctions met with a triple veto from Britain, the United States, and France, with Canada and the German Federal Republic also casting negative votes.

The next week, a compromise resolution imposing a mandatory arms embargo was approved. While invoking Chapter VII provisions on mandatory sanctions, it carefully skirted making apartheid itself a threat that justified wider sanctions. It called for “review” but did not bar existing contracts licensing manufacture of heavy weapons such as Mirage jets in South Africa. Nor was there any mention of technology or investment that might be used by South Africa for military purposes.

The photograph of the arm lifted in veto in October by Ambassador Andrew Young, the most prominent symbol of official Western anti-apartheid activism, was graphic evidence that Pretoria’s sanctions shield was still intact. Although Carter and the arms embargo were convenient scapegoats in Vorster’s election campaign, analysts in Pretoria could also note that the administration firmly opposed new anti-apartheid measures introduced by congressional liberals. In the regional diplomacy that was largely to replace additional international anti-apartheid pressures over the next three years, South Africa could be confident that Western negotiators would not resort to a “big stick” to reinforce their suggestions.

## THE APARTHEID SURCHARGE

Just as in the early sixties, Western attention to the South African crisis was deflected to concern about the threat of Soviet penetration in the West’s sphere of influence. The brief dip in confidence in South Africa in 1976 and 1977 was followed by new interest in an economy fueled by rising gold prices and seemingly over the worst of black protest. Publicly announced international bank loans rose from \$297.5 million in 1977 to an average of over \$700 million a year over the next three years. South African trade with five major Western countries (including Japan) grew from \$8.2 billion in 1977 to \$16.4 billion in 1980. United States exports to South Africa, at \$1.1 billion in 1977, jumped to almost \$2.5 billion in 1980, with aircraft and computers the leading export categories. Direct invest-

ment by companies from the United States, Britain, and Germany expanded significantly in 1979 and 1980, particularly in the chemical, electronics, and machinery industries. It seemed that the Soweto shock had passed, leaving barely a trace on the West's South Africa connection.

That was not quite the whole story. Moves taken to isolate South Africa did impose some costs. The price South Africa's rulers paid for their intransigence was bearable, but it continued to rise. In the financial sector and among other large companies, the "hassle factor" of protest was increasing. Lending institutions were more reluctant to assume longer-term debt. In the strategic sectors of oil and military imports, evading sanctions required more money to pay off intermediaries and conceal the transactions. The international isolation of Pretoria was beginning to impose a material toll, an "apartheid surcharge."

In Europe and the United States, the campaign against bank loans to South Africa had taken on new life in 1973 with exposés of the involvement of a coalition of European banks with smaller regional banks in the United States. Several banks responded to protest by pledging to make no further loans to the South African government. After Soweto, a wider bank campaign targeted larger U.S. banks as well. In March 1978 key lenders Citibank and Chemical Bank agreed to refrain from new loans to the South African government. Later that year, despite opposition from the Carter White House, both houses of Congress passed a provision barring virtually all Export-Import Bank financing for South African trade.

Few companies with direct investment agreed to demands to withdraw, although the "Polaroid experiment" in reform came to an abrupt end in 1977 when it was revealed that the local distributor was violating a pledge not to provide film for the pass-law system. Several companies, such as General Electric and ITT, lessened their exposure by selling some assets to South African buyers. Most company action, however, stopped with a more or less consistent implementation of the Sullivan code or its European or Canadian counterparts. Code compliance was very limited, even according to voluntary company reports. More important, however, and very reassuring for Pretoria, was the fact that no major investor broke ranks with the assumption that continued economic growth and whatever reform proved possible should take place under the security umbrella of the South African authorities.

More troubling was the oil embargo, a UN General Assembly resolution since 1963, which took on substance in 1973 when Arab oil-producing states pledged to block exports. The gap in supplies was filled by Iran, which provided some 90 percent of South Africa's needs between 1974 and 1979. The fall of the Shah that year forced South Africa to buy at a

premium on the international spot market, and to arrange shady round-about deals for supertanker transport. The extra cost, it was estimated, came to as much as R2 billion annually. Western companies such as Fluor, Hoechst, and Imperial Chemical Industries helped out with technology to reduce the need for oil imports, while five oil companies (Shell, Mobil, British Petroleum, and Caltex) maintained their 85 percent share of the South African oil market.

After the 1977 mandatory arms embargo, South Africa continued efforts to achieve military self-sufficiency. Still, it was a gross exaggeration to claim that Pretoria could do without supplies from the West. It still depended on overseas purchases for the largest and most technologically advanced equipment, such as fighter aircraft, tanks, naval vessels, and surveillance systems. Even for items manufactured in South Africa, the local arms industry relied on civilian production. Although ARMSCOR concentrated its supply orders among South African-owned companies, the flow of technology and semimanufactured components from the West remained an indispensable and substantial input. A Carter administration ruling in 1978 barred sales of goods to the South African military or police. As critics on both left and right contended, however, enforcement was an impossible task as long as sales were still open to the private sector and other South African government agencies.

Even to enforce the embargo on major weapons systems, it would have been necessary to set up improved procedures. But the purpose of the embargo was not to weaken South Africa's military capacity, but to create a foreign-policy image. The distinction was highlighted by the far tougher "national security" regulations that applied to Soviet-bloc countries, regulations enforced by an elaborate system of cooperation among Western countries. In contrast, the ban on South Africa was blatantly porous, as the case of the Space Research Corporation (SRC) illustrates.

In 1975, South African troops in Angola had faced a major problem in superior Soviet heavy artillery. Seeking a counterweight, Pretoria's arms procurers were referred by CIA-linked arms dealer Jack Frost to SRC, a Canadian-U.S. company that had a new 155mm shell extending artillery range to over twenty-five miles. From 1976 through 1978, SRC exported at least six thousand shells to South Africa, as well as supplying prototype guns and technical assistance. Shipments approved with minimal checking even included equipment from U.S. government arsenals. The story surfaced in October 1977, at the initiative of Antigua dock workers involved in transshipment, but still no U.S. agency blocked further shipments in 1978. A criminal case against SRC eventually tried in 1980–81 resulted in sentences of less than six months each for SRC's top officials, while much



evidence was excluded from court proceedings on national-security grounds.

According to one of the *Burlington Free Press* reporters who investigated the story, a sale of this dimension "could not have come to pass if it had not been approved in some form by U.S. government officials."<sup>45</sup> More cautiously, a House Subcommittee on Africa study completed in 1982 suggested that at the least there was "serious negligence on the part of the agency [CIA] . . . [and] a 'non-system' of enforcing the arms embargo in the U.S. government."<sup>46</sup> Adding to the irony, until the government investigation began in 1978, SRC was 50 percent owned by Arthur D. Little, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, the company chosen by Leon Sullivan to monitor compliance with his code.

The SRC deal also revealed another strand in South Africa's schemes for bypassing formal embargoes, namely, closer ties with Israel. SRC's first sales of the howitzer shells, in 1975, were made to Israel. In its export application submitted to the Pentagon in 1976, SRC indicated that the new shipment as well was intended for Israel. It is unclear whether there was any direct Israeli participation, but it is well documented that Israel and South Africa were in the 1970s developing closer military and nuclear ties, with exchanges of technology, personnel, and strategic planning. This not only provided its own military advantages, but also gave an added sensitivity to U.S. investigation of the South African connection. Given the strong pro-Israeli lobby in the United States, any politician or bureaucrat would think twice before pursuing too deeply a probe that might embarrass Tel Aviv as well as Pretoria.

Some intelligence analysts think that a mysterious flash over the South Atlantic in September 1979 was a joint Israeli-South African nuclear test. An inconclusive Carter White House investigation, alone among government agencies, declined to accept evidence that the distinctive double flash observed by the U.S. Vela satellite was a nuclear explosion. James Adams, in his study of the Israeli-South African alliance, cites top Israeli intelligence officials as denying direct involvement. The same officials, however, confirmed the fact of a test, as well as close cooperation and sharing of nuclear technology between the two countries.<sup>47</sup>

Overall, a South Africa flush with revenues from gold, which went from under two hundred dollars an ounce in 1977 to over seven hundred dollars an ounce by the end of 1979, could afford to evade actions against it. And with simultaneous appeals for "time to reform" and for cooperation in countering the Soviet Union, Pretoria was well placed to exploit policy divisions in the West and to profit from the growing resurgence of cold-war spirit.

## "Total Strategy" and Southern Africa in Cold War Context

On the external front, as well as internally, Pretoria after Soweto combined offers of reform and negotiation with strong military action. The result was direct involvement in escalated warfare in Angola and Namibia, and a more active role in backing Rhodesian counterinsurgency and attacks on neighboring states. The two war fronts displayed strikingly different balances of political and military forces, not least because of the different roles played by Western powers. In Rhodesia the conflict with Pretoria was indirect, and South Africa even shared the Western perspective of seeing some advantages to ending the conflict by abandoning Smith. In Namibia, on the other hand, it was South Africa's own direct control at stake. And the Namibian war was intricately intertwined with the ongoing effort to destabilize Angola, a goal South Africa shared with powerful political forces in the United States and with U.S. regional ally Zaire.

### WAR IN THE WEST

The interaction of reform, military strategy, and Western initiatives can be seen clearly on South Africa's Atlantic flank, where Pretoria blended negotiations with repression in Namibia and an ongoing war of destabilization against Angola.

The first step toward reform in Namibia came in September 1974. Just as Portugal's decolonization track was being confirmed by the Lusaka agreement with Mozambique and Spínola's fall from power, the leader of the National Party in South West Africa announced plans for a multiracial constitutional conference. A year later, even as South African troops poured into Angola, a conference based on the apartheid principle of ethnic division opened at the Turnhalle meeting hall in Windhoek. It brought together delegations from eleven different "population groups," excluding political organizations such as SWAPO that advocated a unitary, independent Namibia with a universal franchise.

SWAPO, meanwhile, was winning new support both internally and internationally. The decline of Portuguese control in Angola allowed as many as six thousand refugees to escape from Namibia in late 1974, many to join SWAPO's reinvigorated guerrilla force. The United Nations General Assembly, having recognized SWAPO as the "sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people" in December 1973, granted the group observer status in 1976. Support for SWAPO refugee and educa-

tional programs increased, with the UN, Scandinavian countries, and Lutheran churches playing leading roles. Several key political groups from central and southern Namibia threw in their lot with SWAPO, countering South Africa's portrayal of the group as an exclusively Ovambo organization. After the defeat of South Africa's invasion of Angola, guerrilla attacks increased sharply in northern Namibia.

The scale of insurgency, nevertheless, did not approach that in Zimbabwe, and efforts at diplomacy and reform seemed to have little urgency. In January 1976 the UN Security Council, in Resolution 385, called for free UN-supervised elections and South African withdrawal. The United States voted in favor. South Africa proceeded with a plan projecting independence after installation of an interim government on the Turnhalle model, with eleven ethnic bodies joined in a complicated federal arrangement. The next month, Kissinger gained Vorster's approval for a conference to negotiate an independence constitution, involving SWAPO as well as South Africa and the internal parties it had fostered. The proposal was short on detail, with the UN limited to an observer role. SWAPO rejected the plan, and South Africa continued with its own unilateral scheme.

The incoming Carter administration made Namibia one of its priorities. Persuading African countries to postpone new Security Council resolutions, the United States organized a coalition with the four other Western members of the UN body (Britain, France, the German Federal Republic, and Canada) to broker new talks. Although the Contact Group was resented for usurping UN authority, many in the African bloc hoped the new leverage might have an impact on Pretoria. Under the low-key but persistent leadership of Ambassador Young's deputy, Don McHenry, the Contact Group had some effect. In April 1977 the five threatened to "no longer prevent sanctions unless [South Africa] began seriously negotiating for Namibian independence under international supervision."<sup>48</sup> Vorster backed down, postponing plans for a government headed by the recently formed Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA). In September a South African-appointed Administrator-General took office in Windhoek, and—after twenty-eight years in place—the provision for white representation from South West Africa in South Africa's parliament was abolished.

As negotiations continued, the most contentious points centered on control during the election and "transition" period, with South Africa holding out for measures that would give it the authority to ensure its protégés' victory. SWAPO and the Frontline States, meanwhile, insisted on withdrawal of the bulk of South African troops and a substantive oversight role for the United Nations. The Western plan was repeatedly adjusted to meet South African objections, only to have a new point emerge to block final agreement. And while the West had used the threat

of sanctions to force the beginning of talks, all parties quickly realized that similar means would not be used to bring them to a successful conclusion.

The limits were exposed in the Western veto in October of sanctions beyond the narrowest interpretation of the arms embargo, as well as in a seemingly unrelated incident in August, when Western countries did bring effective leverage to bear on South Africa.

In late July 1977 a Soviet reconnaissance satellite detected installations in the Kalahari desert—reports do not indicate whether inside South Africa or in Namibia—apparently designed for a nuclear test. When U.S. satellite photographs led to the same conclusion, the United States quickly mobilized France, Britain, and the German Federal Republic. Intense pressure was brought to bear, reportedly including a French threat to cease cooperation on nuclear-power plants for Cape Town contracted in 1976. In a letter to President Carter, Vorster pledged that “South Africa does not have nor does it intend to develop a nuclear explosive device. . . . there will not be nuclear testing of any kind in South Africa.”<sup>49</sup> The test did not take place. While some observers argued that the scare was a false alarm, the lesson was in any case clear. The West would not tolerate a public demonstration of South African nuclear capacity.

Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, who discusses Namibia negotiations at length in his memoirs, does not mention the Kalahari incident. But it is relevant: two times in 1977 the West flexed its muscles against Pretoria, once to get South African participation in negotiations, and then to block a presumed nuclear test. But would it take similar action to ensure that South Africa actually relinquished control in Namibia, going beyond the arms embargo of November? Pretoria’s strategists evidently concluded that the answer would be no as long as they played along with talks.

From August 1977, as the Contact Group maneuvered to get approval for the plan that was to be agreed by all parties in New York in late April 1978, South Africa also pursued the military track. In August a new military command was set up for South West Africa. SWAPO reported troop movements indicating a forthcoming major attack on Angola, and their intelligence sources even reported a debate at top levels in South Africa over the advisability of such a provocative move. Western intelligence apparently disregarded the evidence; in any case, there was no warning to South Africa comparable to those earlier in 1977. On May 4, 1978, only days after agreeing in principle to a UN-monitored independence, South Africa sent airborne commandoes 150 miles into Angola to kill more than six hundred Namibians, almost all civilians and almost half of them children, at the Cassinga refugee camp.

The attack failed to provoke SWAPO into totally backing out of talks and taking the blame for the end of negotiations. But, together with the

lack of Western reaction, it enraged African opinion, reinforcing mistrust of South African and Western intentions. Although negotiations continued, the momentum of pressure on South Africa that was building in 1977 was broken. And the simultaneous U.S. response to events in Angola's neighbor, Zaire, confirmed the dominance of the cold-war emphasis on the "Cuban threat" over further isolation of South Africa.

In March 1977 a rebellion broke out in Zaire's Shaba province (formerly Katanga), spearheaded by the Congo National Liberation Front (FLNC), a force that had emerged from Katangan gendarmes in Angola. The action was tolerated by Angola's government, which had been aided by the gendarme force in 1975 and which was still being harassed by Mobutu-backed incursions. The FLNC, denying any secessionist intent, called for a general revolt against Mobutu. Confined to Kasai and Shaba, however, they were repulsed as Mobutu brought in French-airlifted Moroccan troops. The United States remained in the background, supplying "non-lethal" aid and encouraging new efforts to resolve Zaire's mounting international-debt crisis. Secretary of State Vance postponed scheduled talks to explore normalization of U.S.-Angolan relations, but downplayed blaming Angola or Cuba.

National Security Advisor Brzezinski, however, had long argued for giving priority to opposing Soviet-Cuban activities in Africa and regarded Angola primarily as a case of Soviet "use of proxy military forces."<sup>50</sup> Brzezinski's position was strengthened in 1977 by the shifting alliances in the Horn of Africa. Former U.S. military ally Ethiopia was turning toward the Soviet Union; Soviet ally Somalia was seeking Western military aid. In July Somali troops joined anti-Ethiopian Somali-speaking rebels in Ethiopia's Ogaden province. Cuba, which had unsuccessfully sought to mediate the dispute, sent troops to aid Ethiopia in late 1977. Since Somalia was legally in the wrong and lacked African support, the State Department insisted that the United States hold back from military involvement. But Brzezinski argued for holding détente hostage to Soviet "restraint" in Africa. If greater intervention was not possible in the Horn, then the United States should at least take a stronger stand against Angola.

Already in 1977, the United States was backing efforts to bolster Mobutu. By March 1978 a \$215 million bank-syndicate loan was due to be signed. Raids against Angola from Zaire had been stepped up. UNITA gained new publicity with the first public African tour of Jonas Savimbi in October, and an unprecedented seven-part series in the *Washington Post* portrayed the movement in a favorable light. Brzezinski and his allies began to talk of repealing the Clark Amendment and offering new assistance to UNITA. On May 1 a *New Yorker* article brought Brzezinski's views

to public attention. Even after the Cassinga raid, three days later, it was only strong congressional reaction that punctured this trial balloon.

In May 1978 FLNC guerrillas launched an even more threatening offensive, capturing the key mining center of Kolwezi. A high-profile Western reaction, involving French and Belgian paratroops and U.S. military transport, was accompanied by hysterical coverage of whites killed in the fighting. On May 19 CBS's Walter Cronkite reported that "the worst fears . . . have been realized. Rebels being routed from Kolwezi are reported to have killed a number of Europeans."<sup>51</sup> Washington mounted a major propaganda blitz charging Cuban complicity, although Vance was to admit later that the Cubans had denied any involvement and that U.S. evidence for the contrary was "not very good."<sup>52</sup> A few whites and hundreds of blacks died in the battle of Kolwezi, the majority after the paratroop attack. While it was unclear how many casualties came from FLNC action and how many from undisciplined Zaire troops or from the French legionnaires, the combined images of presumed rebel savagery and communist adventurism made an impact in the West beside which the slaughter at Cassinga only weeks earlier virtually disappeared from sight. Neto and Mobutu temporarily patched up relations later in 1978, but the incident had heightened anti-Angola sentiment in Washington.

Vance and Young might well argue that the way to get the Cubans out of Angola was first to get South Africa out of Namibia. But their views "were never to be accepted by the president and Brzezinski."<sup>53</sup> Vance himself, moreover, rejected further sanctions against South Africa. When, in September 1978, a South African government in transition from Vorster to Botha decided to defy the Contact Group plan and hold its own internal elections, the Western reaction was a meek plea to keep negotiations going. Instead of threatening sanctions, President Carter offered Botha the incentive of a state visit to the United States if he would cooperate in regional diplomacy. The carrot had little effect.

The December 1978 elections marked a new escalation in South African repression in northern Namibia. Church reports cited massive intimidation, torture, and systematic abuse of civilians both by the military and by a newly formed police-security squad named *Koevoet* (crowbar). Although most observers, including South Africa's own intelligence services, judged that SWAPO would win a reasonably free election, the poll, in which SWAPO did not participate, produced a majority for the South African-backed DTA. Over the next two years, while negotiations continued to dominate what international news coverage there was of Namibia, South Africa's heavily censored and little reported war in Namibia and southern Angola took a devastating toll.

## RHODESIA'S DEADLY ENDGAME

After Vorster and then Kissinger had balked at pushing Smith into an agreement to hand over power, the war escalated with a vengeance. According to official Rhodesian statistics, the number of Rhodesian soldiers killed rose to 197 in 1977 and the number of "terrorists" killed to 1,794, almost the same as the totals from 1972 to 1976.<sup>54</sup> The defense budget increased 44 percent in 1977-78; compulsory military service for whites was increased to two years; the number of draftees rose to some thirty-five thousand. By mid-1977 ZANU had some three thousand guerrillas operating in most of the Rhodesian countryside; ZAPU had a much smaller number concentrated in the Ndebele-speaking western areas.

The toll from the war mounted steadily. In 1979, the Rhodesians claimed 4,290 guerrillas killed, as against the deaths of 408 Rhodesian soldiers.<sup>55</sup> Semiliberated areas spread over much of the eastern part of the country. The government responded by regrouping the population in protected villages and making indiscriminate reprisals against civilians, producing tens of thousands of refugees who fled to neighboring countries or to shantytowns around the capital. But such measures did not stop the war.

Nor did the dramatic raids by Rhodesian special forces on camps of refugees and guerrillas across the borders. November 1977 raids on ZANU camps near Chimoio and Tembwe in Mozambique killed more than one thousand, including some guerrillas, but also hundreds of children, hospital patients, and other civilians. In October 1978, after ZAPU guerrillas shot down a civilian Rhodesian jet, the Rhodesians bombed a refugee camp near Lusaka, Zambia. In 1979, air attacks targeted camps as well as economic targets in Mozambique, Zambia, and Angola. Rhodesia had the military hardware to mock the defense efforts of its neighbors, including the loan of South African Mirage jets, and the raids momentarily boosted white morale. But the devastation wrought across the borders did not check the tide engulfing Rhodesia. The realization of defeat gradually sank in; net emigration figures mounted well over one thousand a month, not counting those who wrote "holiday" on their exit forms.

As the contest for Rhodesia-Zimbabwe thus entered the endgame, Smith's propagandists increasingly portrayed their struggle as the defense of "moderate civilized" standards against "communist terrorism." Arranging an "internal settlement" with African leaders Muzorewa, Sithole, and Chirau in March 1978, Smith attempted to retain effective power while giving token authority to selected blacks. Although this effort was to collapse after showing no capacity to win the war or bring about substantive changes for the majority population, it paid substantial dividends in sup-

port in the West. Building on pro-Rhodesian war coverage and on the rising cold-war spirit, Salisbury came close to winning an official end to sanctions from London and Washington.

If that had happened, the war for Zimbabwe might have continued into the 1980s. Instead, the faltering negotiations kept alive by Carter-administration regionalists were bolstered in 1979 by the incoming British Conservatives under Margaret Thatcher who, under Commonwealth pressure, opted for a realistic effort to draw the guerrillas into an international settlement. The complicated final phase of decolonization in Zimbabwe—with escalating war, increasing division in Western opinion, and finally a successful settlement—reveals a number of different strands in Western policy toward southern Africa.

The ever-present backdrop was an increasingly brutal war, appearing on Western television screens as well as in the press. Guerrilla attacks on white civilians or alleged government collaborators in rural areas provided a core of fact on which an image was built attributing the most bestial characteristics to the “Commie terrorists.” Salisbury’s control of communications, journalists’ distance from rural Africans, and editorial bias back home combined to conjure up images reminiscent of Mau Mau and of the Congo rebellions.\*

It is unlikely that anyone can ever reconstruct a “balanced” assessment of the violence, but it is virtually certain the regime’s claimed ten-to-one kill ratio against guerrillas was far exceeded in the civilian toll. International coverage, however, conveyed the opposite impression—that the responsibility for the violence lay primarily with the guerrillas.

In this context, British Foreign Secretary Owen and U.S. Ambassador Young continued Kissinger’s search for an agreement. A vigorous effort by the White House resulted in the repeal of the Byrd amendment and official U.S. adherence to UN sanctions. London and Washington fashioned a plan involving British responsibility for a transition government, universal-suffrage elections before independence, an internationally financed development fund, and arrangements to be worked out for incorporation of opposing military forces into a new national army. Although skeptical especially over issues of control in the transitional period, the Patriotic Front of ZANU and ZAPU and the Frontline States agreed in 1977 to explore the proposals as a “basis for negotiations.” As in the parallel Namibia talks, the African side made a series of concessions. Smith

\* One study, of direct quotes in five major U.S. papers over a three-year period, showed that more than 80 percent came from the Rhodesian government side, less than 20 percent from ZAPU, ZANU, or black civilians. A BBC study of British press coverage in 1978 rated 49 percent of the stories pro-Rhodesian, 30 percent “neutral,” and only 20 percent negative toward the Rhodesian regime.<sup>56</sup>



termed the plan "totally unacceptable" and proceeded with his own scheme to coopt African leaders who were not in the Patriotic Front guerrilla alliance.

Smith's settlement, announced in February 1978, set up a four-man council including Smith and three Africans. Bishop Abel Muzorewa, the only one with presumed popular support, had gained prominence for heading the campaign against the 1971 settlement, but later opted to pursue a deal with Smith rather than supporting the guerrilla movements. After the new executive council was inaugurated, it rapidly became apparent within Rhodesia that the blacks were playing figurehead roles. But plans went ahead for an election that would provide seventy-two seats for blacks and twenty-eight for whites, with constitutional provisions giving whites veto power over major changes for at least ten years. Entrenched constitutional provisions guaranteed security of tenure and freedom from "political interference" to the white-controlled civil service, police, defense force, and judiciary.

Designed largely for international consumption, the settlement gained support in the growing conservative climate in Britain and the United States. In the U.S. Congress in particular, backers of white southern Africa had gained new confidence. Liberal Senator John Tunney of California, who had proposed the ban on U.S. intervention in Angola in December 1975, went down to defeat in the November 1976 elections. His opponent, S. I. Hayakawa, it was later revealed, had been aided by \$200,000 in campaign contributions provided by the South African government through the New York public-relations firm of Sydney Baron. Hayakawa became one of the key advocates in Congress of the refurbished Smith regime. In 1978 active Africa Subcommittee head Senator Dick Clark of Iowa lost to ultraright Republican Roger Jepsen, who reportedly benefited from \$250,000 in South African government contributions.<sup>57</sup> In the House, Representative Charles Diggs, beset by charges of financial irregularities in his office, was forced to give up the Africa Subcommittee chairmanship. Those peddling the Smith position were able to profit from disarray among their opponents, as well as the appeal to centrists of a package promising reform, elections, and opposition to communism.

In late July 1978 Bishop Muzorewa arrived in Washington, hosted by Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina. Helms and Hayakawa lobbied intensively for a vote unconditionally lifting U.S. participation in UN sanctions against Rhodesia. The measure lost forty-two to fifty-four, but a compromise proposal mandated the end of sanctions if the president should determine that Rhodesia had held "free and fair" elections and demonstrated good faith in negotiations. In October Ian Smith himself

came to Washington. He met with former President Ford, ex-Treasury Secretary John Connally, and ex-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who said the internal settlement should be "given a chance." While Smith was in Washington, Rhodesian aircraft bombed two refugee camps in Zambia, killing several hundred people.

As whites went to the polls in Rhodesia in January 1979 to approve the internal settlement plan, and preparations moved ahead for the April elections, the campaign to sell the scheme in Washington intensified. Critics noted that no election could be fair under the war conditions that prevailed, but Salisbury's backers could count on the U.S. tendency to pay attention to form rather than substance in such matters. If the charade were properly acted out without overt ballot stuffing, they reasoned, Washington and London could easily overlook the absence of Patriotic Front candidates, the role of the Rhodesian security forces, and the fact that more than 80 percent of the country was under martial law.

The British Conservative Party, only two weeks away from its own election victory, did send a team of observers, as did a number of private U.S. groups. Salisbury claimed a 64 percent voter turnout, and Bishop Muzorewa won fifty-one of the seventy-eight seats reserved for Africans. Most observers, who were committed to the internal settlement, presented positive reports. A British parliamentary human-rights delegation termed the elections "a gigantic confidence trick" in which the electorate was "cajoled by false and dishonest promises of peace, and intimidated in the most callous fashion to vote" by employers and security forces.<sup>58</sup> That view was, however, drowned out by reports such as that of the right-wing U.S. Freedom House delegation, which pronounced the poll "free and fair." A seventy-five-to-nineteen U.S. Senate vote in May, declaring it the "sense of the Senate" that the vote was fair, made it clear that Smith and his backers had won a major public-relations victory.

Faced with such political winds, the Carter administration was also wavering. President Carter and Security Adviser Brzezinski leaned toward favoring the internal settlement in any case. Vance was somewhat more critical, but UN Ambassador Young was overruled when he proposed actively condemning the scheme. Instead of pointing out how the settlement disguised continued white-minority rule, the United States cited the need for modifications to bring in the "external nationalists."

Africa Bureau officials and congressional liberals acquainted with Africa realized that the settlement had no chance of gaining African diplomatic approval or ending the war in Zimbabwe. But they virtually conceded the argument on substantive questions, labeling the election a "significant step forward" and citing the need for executive flexibility in arguing against a

premature end to sanctions. The administration was embarrassed internationally in early 1979 by revelations that Rhodesia had received U.S. military aircraft, including eleven Huey helicopters transferred in August 1978 from Israel. But it was in no position to tighten such loopholes when barely fending off the conservative clamor to lift sanctions entirely.

In the U.S. political mainstream, the intensified war waged by Rhodesia and South Africa against the Frontline States and rural Zimbabwe counted for little, nor did the fact that Bishop Muzorewa's appeal to guerrillas to accept amnesty aroused almost no response. Consciousness was rising that Nigeria had become a major oil supplier to the United States, but by and large the impact of potential diplomatic or economic reprisals from African states was discounted. Sophisticated diplomats might realize that the strongest guerrilla movement, Robert Mugabe's ZANU, had strained relations at best with the Soviet Union. But more commonly "guerrillas," "radicals," and the "Soviet threat" were assimilated into one image contrasted with the "democratic" and "reformist" Zimbabwe-Rhodesia regime. The overthrow of the Shah in Iran in January 1979, following a Marxist coup in Afghanistan the previous April, heightened the atmosphere of threat from the unruly Third World.

The Iranian hostage crisis came in November, and the Soviet Union intervened to boost the Afghan regime the following month. By that time any semblance of sympathy to Third World interests had virtually disappeared from Washington. Ambassador Andrew Young had been dismissed in August after an informal meeting with a Palestinian Liberation Organization representative. It is unlikely that beleaguered Africa regionalists or congressional liberals could have held out for much longer against a U.S. endorsement of the Smith-Muzorewa regime.

The fact that a successful settlement was reached in December 1979, ensuring internationally monitored elections with Patriotic Front participation, was due to the unexpected stance taken by the incoming British administration of Margaret Thatcher. In spite of preelection sympathy for the internal settlement, Thatcher's foreign secretary, Lord Carrington, had a sense of African political realities and of the economic weight of black Africa for Britain. A director of the Rio Tinto Zinc mining company, with interests in Namibia, Rhodesia, and South Africa, Carrington was persuaded by Commonwealth officials and African heads of state that without an international settlement the war could only escalate. Nigeria applied economic pressure by refusing contracts to British firms. And Thatcher came under strong pressure at the August 1979 Commonwealth meeting in Lusaka. The strategy Britain eventually adopted aimed at bringing the guerrilla leaders into elections, but winning guarantees

against radical change in the future Zimbabwe. A secondary goal was to promote an electoral coalition isolating Mugabe's ZANU, perceived to be the most radical of the movements.

Such an agenda had at least a point of contact with the African point of view as represented by the Frontline States and the Patriotic Front. Key Frontline States Mozambique and Zambia were bearing a very heavy burden. By 1979 Mozambique housed some 150,000 Zimbabwean refugees, Zambia over 50,000. The cost of sanctions alone to Mozambique was more than one-third of normal foreign-exchange earnings, and Zambia had to cope not only with sanctions but with devastatingly low prices of copper, its major export. In 1979 direct Rhodesian attacks were dealing crippling blows to both countries' economies. The Frontline States held to the position that any settlement must guarantee fair elections, without interference from the Rhodesian security forces. If the question of political power was resolved, however, then issues of social transformation and policy could be dealt with later by the Zimbabweans themselves.

The Zimbabwean nationalists, for their part, were fearful that a compromise settlement might block their capacity to solve such problems as the demand by peasants for land. Most crucial, however, were guarantees that their military forces would have a substantive role in the future country—that a free election would not be blocked by the Rhodesian army, or later upset by a coup. They were confident of popular support, trusting that African candidates seen as pawns of the whites would soon be discredited.

In the Lancaster House negotiations and the British-run transition, the British succeeded in their primary objective, a settlement that both incorporated the guerrillas and posed restraints on land reform, nationalization, and changes in the state bureaucracy. But the results of the Commonwealth-monitored election on which the Frontline States had insisted disappointed the hopes of Western conservatives. In spite of discrimination against guerrilla forces during the election, the overwhelming popularity of Mugabe and ZANU ensured a landslide victory for his slate. Startled Western observers, even many who had labeled Mugabe an "external nationalist" or a "terrorist," suddenly found themselves obliged to praise his moderate statesmanship. Not only the British, but even the Reagan administration a year later, would try to woo the newborn Zimbabwe, hoping that pragmatism and a working capitalist economy would soon banish the radical rhetoric of the war years to a realm of safely pious mythology.

The lessons of Zimbabwe for the remaining white-ruled states were far

from unambiguous. Although some hoped and others feared its example, no further settlements were soon to come. South Africa refrained from last-minute military intervention to block Mugabe's takeover. But taking heart from the election of a right-wing administration in Washington, the "total strategists" opted for an aggressive effort to postpone any similar outcome closer to home.