

# The Big Gamble

South Africa's 'Lancaster' is not around the corner just yet. But all the facts considered, the *volk* has, in all probability started the *trak* towards it. *Rok Ajulu* looks at Botha's latest offensive.

The release of Govan Mbeki, and now almost certain release of Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and other ANC political prisoners and detainees indicate that President Botha has at last recognised the credentials of the ANC and acknowledged that there can be no meaningful political rapprochement with the ANC behind the bars. For all practical purposes, therefore, he could very well be preparing the road to 'Lancaster'.

A chronic political gambler, last May he gambled his way to elections, wrong-footed the extreme rightwing, and broke the backbone of the liberal party. Now, gambling with his so-called reforms, President Botha is preparing to take on the ANC on a rather shaky political terrain.

After months of prevarications and tongue twisting the Botha regime finally released Govan Mbeki unconditionally. Mbeki, one of the three better known of the generation of the 1940s incarcerated in Robben Island since the Rivonia trial is a stalwart and a giant of the South African struggle in his own right. But probably because he is less of a controversial figure than his comrade, Mandela, he has been chosen to lead what is now generally accepted as the beginning of the release of political prisoners.

President Botha has had to climb down considerably to initiate this first step of his big gamble. After the trio of Mandela, Sisulu and Mbeki turned tables on his conditional offer of freedom, he quickly manouevered a tactical retreat. Announcing that political prisoners would be released if it was in the interest of the state, he prepared a fall back position as early as last year.

## On the Offensive

Confronted with a low intensity civil war which is likely to escalate and what most certainly must now look like the beginning of the end in Angola, Botha could be excused for launching an offensive.

The release of Mbeki has been

rightly claimed by the ANC and the Anti-Apartheid Movement as an important victory for everybody who has fought for and demanded the release of political prisoners. In as much as this is seen as precondition to any form of political rapprochement, then President Botha has been forced to bow down to international pressure, including of course the Commonwealth's Eminent Persons Group (EPG) which he rebuffed a year ago.

Yet another group will soon be staking out its claim. This is the anti-sanction lobby, best represented by Thatcher's Toryism, which has consistently preached continued investments and quiet diplomacy in the mistaken belief that free enterprise was bound to erode apartheid. To this group Botha has given a stick with which to beat the sanction movement. They will most probably present this as a victory for British diplomacy.

One thing, however, is certain. After this, the now discredited argument that sanctions do not work will have to look for fresh ideas. In rewarding the West's intransigence over sanctions with the release of Mbeki, he has exposed his Achilles heel — the potential impact of a comprehensive sanction.

But President Botha is not merely concerned with paying back the West for their intransigence, he hopes to turn his reverses into an advantage, and transform the retreat into an offensive.

Confronted with one wave of violence after another, White South Africa is beginning to come to terms with reality. The endless pilgrimage to Lusaka over the last eighteen months aptly demonstrates White South Africa's desire for some form of political accommodation. In the ultimate analysis only a very small minority of White population still lull themselves with illusion of an Afrikaner laager.

The moving forces of history have also propelled President Botha to come to terms with reality. The search for Black moderates, it is now conceded, has ended in a *cul de sac*. The

fear that the newly proposed multi-racial National Council is bound to go the same way the tricameral did just over four years ago, these and other factors have convinced sections of President Botha's powerful Security Council that there can be no meaningful political initiative without the ANC.

## The Buthelezi Factor

Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi's place in apartheid reform programme has always been the illusion nursed over the years and abated by his virulent anti-ANCism that at some point in the future, he would deliver the six million or so Zulus upon Botha's lap.

After the battle for Natal, in which the Law and Order Minister, Adrian Volk, was persuaded into committing his own troops of vigilantes, has stalemated, things are beginning to look different. What initially appeared to be a simple operation against anti-Inkatha and anti-UWUSA forces has blossomed into a full scale war. In Buthelezi's struggles to hammer a truce in Natal, the Nationalist think-tanks have more or less concluded that the chief cannot even hold his own on his home ground. Not surprisingly, last month Botha chose to ignore his pleas at Durban and did not, even for a moment, refer to the Natal Indaba.

But Buthelezi has many friends in the West and may not be written off as yet, the majority of South Africans, Black and Whites have, however, written him off and Botha is looking elsewhere for a meaningful Indaba.

## Botha and the ANC

To come back to Botha and the ANC, President Botha's kow-towing to the ANC has been carried out in the true traditions of Afrikaner politics. While damning the ANC in public, executing its captured fighters, some of them secretly, he has let his lieutenants probe the possibilities of talks with the ANC. It has now emerged that despite the public bera- tion of the Dakar Talks, several prominent Afrikaners went to Dakar with the approval of his senior advisers.

With the release of Mbeki, and the almost certain release of Mandela and Sisulu sometimes next year, he has somewhat come in the open, but still keeping his cards very close to his

# TREASON TRIAL

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chest. Last month when it was suggested that the release of Mbeki was a trial run, he lashed at the press, promised a few detentions, and left the impression that Mandela would not be released at all.

But denials notwithstanding, President Botha is gambling with the prospects of pinning the ANC against the wall and returning the ball into the Commonwealth's court.

It would seem that President Botha is addressing himself to the EPG without necessarily saying so. He will gradually move towards releasing what he calls criminals (political prisoners), and allowing a limited presence of what might be called internal ANC. This of course is predicated upon the acknowledgement that the released ANC leadership are unlikely to opt for exile nor renounce their membership and traditions, and most importantly, they are unlikely to retire from political activity. Mbeki has already blazed the trail by reaffirming his ANC and South African Communist Party

(SACP) traditions.

It is even possible, so goes the argument, that prominent ANC leadership, given a limited but legal space of operation, are likely to crack the whip of discipline and bring the comrades into line. Furthermore, it is hoped that ANC leadership exposed to the bruising battle of the township will eventually drag the ANC into this quagmire thus deglamourise it, reducing its stature to 'manageable' proportion.

Botha hopes to throw the ball back at the Commonwealth whose pressure, especially of regional fixers like Kaunda, is likely to force the ANC into a deal.

## Crossing the Rubicon

The crucial question, however, remains the content of the proposed changes. President Botha and the class forces arraigned behind him are unlikely to cross the rubicon.

At a time when the debate on post apartheid South Africa has almost

become a growth industry the question is no longer whether President Botha is willing to negotiate but rather what he wants to negotiate. In undiplomatic language, ANC's position seems to be that Botha can only negotiate surrender terms. Apartheid, they have emphasised consistently, cannot be reformed; it can only be destroyed.

## Balance of Forces

Any keen observer of the South African scene will readily recognise that the balance of forces have shifted to the left of the centre.

The ANC has over the years become the political home of true patriots, democrats and progressive forces. The moderates, that is, the narrow nationalists, have been vomited from the movement over the years, and the group of eight in the post Morogoro Conference. Thus the bottom line in the minds of many South Africans is a democratic South Africa, whatever it means, protection of narrow exclusivist minority interests is certainly ruled out.

But perhaps of greater significance is the fact that the battles of the last six to ten years have produced a new alliance of class forces inside the country. The new shock troopers of the ANC, assembled around the Freedom Charter, are significant for the manner in which they interpret that historic document. Witness for example the massive growth of the labour movement, the emergence of COSATU, and the youth, the young lions as they are called, moving into the frontline of the battle.

This indeed is the Achilles heel of Botha's big gamble. It is not pious wishes that rules out a classical Lancaster in South Africa. The Lancaster class might not be allowed to approach the table at all.

Unfortunately for South Africa, the longer it takes to get to the table, the closer it gets to the Vietnam syndrome. In the ultimate analysis, there might be nothing to negotiate at all.

But lest we forget, Angola has evolved its own ways of solving South Africa's political succession. Hot on the trail of the 1976 invasion, it swept the Vorster/van de Berg clique from office and ushered in the Botha/Malan era. After what now appears to be the beginning of the end of South Africa's military superiority in the region, Botha might very well not be around to see his gamble to its logical conclusion. ●

# Moscow and Pretoria: a possible alignment?

Christopher Coker

## Moscow's second thoughts

Since the arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev, Soviet policy in Southern Africa has undergone a major re-evaluation, if not yet a major change of direction. Its new realism towards the so-called front-line states, and its more chastened attitude towards political change in South Africa, may have had something to do with the increasing influence of a new team: Andrei Urnov, the section chief for Southern Africa of the International Department of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee, and Karen Brutents, the leading authority on the so-called national liberation movements and a close associate of the Department's head, the pragmatic former Ambassador to Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin.

Under their prompting, the Soviet Union has become much less enthusiastic in support of policies which are either unattainable or untenable, or both, the fantasy of a generation of politicians who hoped that in the wake of the collapse of Portuguese imperialism a new political order might arise in Southern Africa closely associated with the Soviet bloc.

It has now become clear that even a 374 per cent increase in the sale of arms to the front-line states in the 1975-85 period was not sufficient to change the regional balance in the Soviet Union's favour. Hard-currency losses on arms sales alone to the third world may have been as high as \$9bn between 1980-2,<sup>1</sup> so perhaps it is not surprising that the only significant recipient of arms continues to be oil-rich Angola which has earmarked over half its oil revenues for the purchase of Soviet equipment. In contrast, Soviet sales to Mozambique calculated in their dollar value were considerably smaller in 1983 than in 1978 when relations with South Africa were considerably better and the threat from the Renamo guerrillas much less acute.<sup>2</sup>

Weighed down by its many failures since 1978 (of which the continuing war in Ethiopia is merely another case in point), the Soviet Union has, not surprisingly, been more alive to the limitations rather than the possibilities of military power and, more sensitive still, to the realistic outlook for Marxism-Leninism in an African context. In 1982 the 'total onslaught' by the Soviet bloc was officially downgraded in the Defence White Paper which referred, more obliquely, to a 'revolutionary onslaught' instead. Last year it was downgraded still further to just an 'onslaught', largely internally inspired.

In Moscow itself a growing body of scholars are beginning to question whether their country should be involved in Southern Africa at all, whether Marxism in Angola may not only be 'inauthentic' but also 'premature'. Both the Central Committee's International Department deputies responsible for the third world, Brutents in particular, have dismissed any similarity between Angola and Vietnam where the transition to socialism has been carried out by a 'true' communist party. As Frelimo has been forced to break with some of the old socialist orthodoxies simply to survive it has found itself demoted in the socialist lexicon from a 'natural' to an 'historic' ally, a country whose contribution to world revolution may lie not in the future, but the past.<sup>3</sup>

It must be conceded, of course, that this debate within the communist world has been conducted on a singularly narrow

front. What cannot be challenged, however, is that South Africa's own actions, including eight major invasions of Angola, and its continued support for Renamo in Mozambique have forced the Soviet Union on to the defensive, transforming it in the process into what might be called a counter-revolutionary power. Like the Portuguese, it has begun to be haunted by the spectre of national liberation. In Africa the Soviet Union now finds itself no longer arming guerrilla movements, except for South-West Africa People's Organisation (Swapo) and the African National Congress (ANC), but instead defending pro-Soviet governments from movements that owe political allegiance to no particular creed or country. Some Soviet experts have begun to see their country as a victim of historical circumstances which it can neither shape nor influence. The difference between the Soviet Union and Portugal is that a 'revolutionary power' that has reached such conclusions ought surely to retrace some of its steps.

As for South Africa itself, there appears to have been an apparent change of emphasis, if not direction, in Soviet thinking. In 1984 Moscow may have expected more of the political unrest than it should. Recruitment into the ANC was far greater in this period than it had been in the aftermath of the last spontaneous outburst of black unrest in Soweto in 1976. It did not give the movement the capacity for serious insurgency. More than 500 members of the movement have lost their lives since then, many in the disastrous attempt to disrupt the all-white election earlier this year.

The election itself was a blow to those in the Kremlin who were committed to the Leninist proposition that a split in the ruling class was a necessary pre-requisite for revolutionary success; that struggle from the bottom up against a monolithic opposition could not on its own prevail. The consolidation of the Right in South Africa seems to have proved some of its assumptions in 1985 to have been hopelessly unrealistic, if not naive.

Since then, western observers have tended to treat more seriously a number of Soviet statements that confirm what a few of them had begun to suspect as early as 1982 when Chief Gatsha Buthelezi met Soviet embassy officials in Washington: that Moscow's commitment to a revolutionary struggle in Africa may not be entirely whole-hearted. Special attention, in particular, has been paid to the writings of two of the Africa Institute's principal members, Gleb Starushenko and Leonard Goncharov. Starushenko's proposal for a two-chamber post-apartheid Parliament, in the second of which each race group would have a veto, was a more radical concession to the white minority than the 20 guaranteed seats offered by the British in the post-independence Zimbabwean Parliament at Lancaster House in 1979.<sup>4</sup> Although the Russians were quick to insist that Starushenko was speaking on his own behalf, not that of his Institute, its director, Anatoly Gromyko, tried to drive the same message home during a trip to the Congo a few months ago.

More interestingly, Gromyko's deputy, Leonard Goncharov, dismissed the language of revolution in the townships as an 'infantile disorder', a remark that echoed Lenin's criticism of the 'infantile left'. Does Goncharov's observation (to quote Senator Goldwater's 1964 election challenge) offer 'an alter-

native, not just an echo? When asked whether he expected a socialist South Africa in his lifetime, Goncharov replied 'In not less than 10 years, possibly 100—I'm an optimist.' With optimists such as these, America's pessimists who insist on sanctions seem disconcertingly unaware that the Soviet Union seems to have shifted into a more conservative gear. Any similarities in terms of pressure applied by the Soviet Union and the west have become no more than arresting curiosities, providing a perverse joke at the west's expense.

Like prophecies, political expectations can often be self-fulfilling. If Moscow's expectations of significant change have become more muted than the west's, can this fact be turned to South Africa's advantage; are there serious grounds for a major re-alignment of forces, a change of superpower horses in mid-stream?

Nobody should be under any illusion that such a change is very likely, or that it would last for very long. But then expectations on both sides are not what they once were. The Soviet Union is a superpower in search of a revolution, a revolution that has once again 'disappeared', as it did after the abortive Sharpsville massacre.<sup>6</sup> For its part, South Africa is a society that seems to be marking time, unsure of what pressure it can expect from the west, indeed whether its 'natural' allies can be expected to hold the line against third-world protests, and anti-apartheid movements nearer to home. Could both sides reach a tacit understanding, an agreement based on what Hans Morgenthau once called 'interests restrictively and rationally defined'?

If there has been a persistent theme of Soviet policy statements since the mid-1970s, it is that South Africa was a western proxy, an American client-state in all but name, a 'surrogate', as Uranov wrote in 1983, 'similar to Israel in the Middle East'.<sup>7</sup> More recently, however, such ideological statements by academic political scientists who still argue that the United States is directly responsible for South Africa's actions no longer seem so compelling; indeed since Gorbachev came to office they have come under criticism in the Soviet Union from politicians whose more empirical understanding of events has led them to draw rather different conclusions from the Israeli analogy.

Former Undersecretary in the State Department, Lawrence Eagleburger, has accused the Soviet Union of turning Angola into another Lebanon,<sup>8</sup> but the accusation fits South Africa more convincingly. It seems quite prepared to cross the Cunene river, its own version of the Litani, despite assuring the President's special envoy in 1982, that it would not.

What, then, is the purpose of continued American-Soviet talks on the region, the most recent of which were held in London on 2 July between the State Department's main African specialist, Chester Crocker, and his Soviet counterpart, the Deputy Foreign Minister, Anatoly Adamshin? At a recent security conference in Lusaka, a leading Soviet analyst suggested a joint American-Soviet initiative,<sup>9</sup> but even if Washington wished to involve the Soviet Union in a negotiated regional settlement (for which there is no evidence) the Soviet Union might well ask whether the United States could actually 'deliver' South Africa, the most important regional power of all.

For their part, the South Africans have every reason to preempt any such superpower understanding by talking directly to the Russians themselves, if the Americans are no longer willing to listen. What they have to offer is the exclusion of the United States from a region of the world which Washington has always taken for granted as a western sphere of interest.

As it happens, there are two elements in Gorbachev's own attitude to regional conflicts which offer South Africa some ground for hope that a rapprochement might be negotiated. In a major speech in Vladivostok in July 1986, the Soviet leader insisted that it would be arrogant and illegitimate of the Soviet

Union to seek total security either for itself or its allies at the expense of the security of their adversaries. Since coming to power he has repeatedly called for the political, rather than military, resolution of regional conflicts, however elusive a political settlement might appear at the time.

Such opinions can be dismissed, of course, as propaganda exercises designed to reassure western public opinion and play upon the renowned disingenuousness of certain western politicians. But the continuing escalation of the war in Angola is probably viewed with concern in the Kremlin. By 1989, the South African Defence Force (SADF) may have available cruise missile technology capable of taking out SAM-8 sites which have so far confined the South African Air Force (SAAF) to the extreme south-east of Angola, just sufficient to provide the rebel Unita forces under Jonas Savimbi with air cover in defence of its headquarters in Jamba. What would be the Soviet Union's response to a strategy which is now openly discussed among South Africa's commanders: a massive missile strike against a city such as Cahama, which might substantially escalate the military conflict?

If Pretoria could be prevailed upon instead to limit Savimbi's operations, talks could continue to find a *modus vivendi* between the Angolan government and Unita, similar to the agreement reached between the government and its oldest opponent, the FNLA, in 1986. In principle, the South Africans would have nothing to lose by abiding by the original terms of the 1984 Lusaka disengagement agreement, under which an Angolan-South African Joint Commission was established to monitor the withdrawal of South African troops from Angola. Nor would the Soviet Union lose by allowing Savimbi to remain in Jamba under constraints which were this time not of its own making. Indeed, this might be the only form of 'mutual security' on offer.

## The South African dimension

Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, there has been much discussion among the Afrikaners in South Africa about 'playing the Soviet card'. This has taken place right across the political spectrum but particularly among the *verligtes*, the more liberal circles who are enlightened in their political thinking but are at the same time as outraged as the Right by what they see as western fecklessness, weakness or, in the case of the American Congress, simple betrayal.

The case for the option as it is debated at the moment seems to reflect an internal debate within the Afrikaner community about the country's future identity. Those in favour tend to be more cynical about western motives and, indeed, more ambivalent about their country's own 'western' identity. This is true of men like the Defence Minister, Magnus Malan, or the former army Chief of Staff, General Viljoen, who were the last generals to receive a western military training. The attraction of 're-alignment' accurately mirrors their interest in a realignment of political forces at home, the need to coopt, or work with, the black majority in some form of power-sharing.

The *verligtes* are equally worried about the increase in military influence. Fears of a 'creeping coup' are not new, but they have been magnified in recent months by the moves by the government to restrict the free flow of information. There is undoubtedly truth in the claim that the army does have an unusual degree of influence. This is bound to be so as long as the present situation in southern Africa lasts. But despite their qualms about the army's methods, even the *verligtes* do not doubt that time must be bought, even if this means carrying the conflict in South Africa to neighbouring countries. Yet if an agreement to contain the ANC's operations could be reached with the Soviet Union, the more liberal elements in the cabinet would no longer feel themselves helpless instruments in the soldiers' hands.

Given the enduring geostrategic competition between the superpowers, South Africa could make a contribution to the Soviet position in southern Africa simply by suspending all further contacts with the west. This arrangement would not threaten its security if the Soviet Union agreed in return not to upgrade its military support to the front-line states.

The most obvious of those links is Silvermine, a computerised three-storey maritime communications centre, fully equipped with teleprinters, radarscopes, crypto machines and other communications equipment which can monitor shipping movements in the south Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Since 1978, information from Silvermine has been supplied exclusively to Israel. The Israelis presumably relayed it on to the United States which removed its last electronic intelligence monitoring ship from the south Atlantic in 1976. Britain allegedly still receives information from Silvermine, passing it on to West Germany, free of charge.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, South Africa could undertake never again to make available the use of the Simonstown naval base. Its most recent offer was made during the Falklands war in 1982. That offer was tied to the supply of arms, a price Britain refused to pay. South Africa could also insist on the immediate removal of all the fuel stocks and spare parts that have been stocked in South Africa since the 1950s for use in the event of war. The Soviet Union had been thoroughly appraised about the equipment by the Simonstown commander, Commander Gerhardt, before his arrest for spying in 1983.

South Africa would lose little by such transactions; the Soviet Union would gain a great deal. In arguing otherwise the west would deceive only itself. Closer accommodation with the Soviet Union, requiring no more than a strict observance of its 'neutrality', might yield a higher return than South Africa's present policy of 'semi-alignment', which offers it nothing more than the status of a refugee on the margins of history. Some thought has also been given by some South African Sovietologists to the economic incentives the Republic might be able to offer to sweeten the bitter pill of a Soviet-South African rapprochement.

In its concern to limit technology transfer, particularly of computers to the Soviet Union through stricter Cocom arrangements, the Americans have never taken account of the fact that their own computer companies have until recently traded extensively with South Africa. If they expected security to stem from the absence of overt trading links between South Africa and the Soviet Union, they have been disappointed. In 1982 the Soviet Union managed to secure the VAX 11-782 from South Africa illegally. What if Pretoria were illicitly to make such technology available in the future?

As part of the economic price for 'constructive engagement', the United States rather unwisely provided export licences to South Africa for a whole series of computers in the early 1980s including the Cyber 170/750 as well as Data General's MV/8000. The sale of the former proved particularly controversial since it gave rise in some circles to the fear that, in time, South Africa might be able to break America's own cryptographic codes. That concern was voiced so widely that no agreement could be reached between Crocker, who supported the sale, and Undersecretary of State Richard Kennedy, who opposed it. In the end, the case had to be personally referred to the Secretary of State who gave it his personal approval.<sup>11</sup>

Since IBM's disinvestment, South Africa's public as opposed to private sector corporations have managed to secure control of even more sophisticated systems. IBM had already supplied some to the Atomic Energy Board and provided technical data to Infoplan, a Johannesburg-based data-processing company serving the SADF directly. The Simonstown naval installation certainly used the IBM 360 before 1978, and probably by now

has the new version, the 370. Under a licensing agreement which was concluded before the company 'pulled out' of the Republic, its successor ISM is not only free to service such systems, but also update them.

Clandestine commercial transactions could easily be negotiated not through the government, or any of its agencies, but through the business community which has dealt with Moscow for many years. In the minerals market, Soviet representatives regularly meet officials from De Beers, usually in London, to discuss diamond pricing. De Beers' payments to the Soviet Union for marketing its diamond production currently represent the largest source of hard currency after petroleum and gold sales. This highly lucrative connection was once referred to in a report by the South African Chamber of Mines as 'collusive price leadership', a connection so strong that rumours continually persist that the South African Reserve Bank actually handles Soviet accounts.<sup>12</sup>

In so far as such contacts are long standing, South African businessmen could be used to explore the possibilities of more extensive cooperation in the future. In 1975, a senior Anglo-American executive, Zac de Beer, played a major role in Zambia's détente initiative by acting as an intermediary between John Vorster, the then South African Prime Minister, and Zambia's President Kenneth Kaunda. Presumably someone of the same stamp could be employed to act as a go-between with the Soviet government, without committing either party to a relationship that would, of necessity, have to be conducted in secrecy and in complete confidence by both sides.

The larger South African corporations, having faced far greater challenges in the past, may encourage rather than discourage such initiatives. Indeed, to judge from Anglo-American's major scenario study, *The World and South Africa in the 1990s*, which took two years to complete, the company's view of the Soviet Union represents almost a mirror image of its own view of South Africa, even if as a society the latter may lack the former's enduring strengths. The study argues what the Soviet Union needs, in order to remain a major power in the next century, is to push through reforms on three fronts simultaneously: to decentralise decision-making, to broaden the base of political support beyond the Communist Party and to rely on a vast untapped consumer market for fundamental economic change. All that is needed on the external front is détente with the United States, in particular an end to the ruinous arms race of the past 40 years.<sup>13</sup>

The regional service councils may not represent much by way of an attempt to decentralise power in South Africa, but they are arguably, a beginning; through the National Council the government is clearly trying to broaden its political base of support beyond the crude tricameral constitution of 1983; the black consumer market (the fastest growing market in the republic) offers some hope of stimulating domestic demand, and generating faster economic growth. What South Africa needs, too, is détente, if not with the west, than with the only other power that could threaten economic and political reform at home by denying the government time in which to introduce it.

## Internal constraints

Yet even if the Soviet Union were alive to the possibilities just sketched, the banner carriers of the Soviet option may have caught sight of nothing more than their own dreams. The Soviet Union's response to the unrest of 1984-6 does not suggest that it has reduced its commitment to the ANC, far from it. It has actually moved closer to the South African Communist Party and its Secretary-General, Joe Slovo, who was unequivocal in his criticism of the young Comrades in Soweto and Alexandria who believed the state could be brought down simply by making the townships ungovernable.

The experience of the unrest, profoundly shaped the Soviet Union's commitment to the ANC by reminding it that there were no short-cut solutions and that a genuine 'class struggle' from within is the only way through which majority rule will be introduced. If Moscow were to reassess its relationship with the movement, it would undermine, indeed render meaningless, the very political categories it has used to distinguish what it sees as genuine 'national liberation movements' from false ones. In this respect, the Soviet leadership is necessarily the prisoner of the very terms by which it has tried to make sense in the past of South Africa's complex political map.

In turn, wherever one discusses the 'Soviet option' with those South Africans in favour of it, those who really believe it to be within the Republic's grasp, one is immediately struck by how far they are still confined within the premises of their earlier political thinking, how inescapably they still hope for an international role much as they may wish to transcend it. The option would offer a half-way house between the past and a genuine transition to the future—the true non-aligned status of a third-world state.

South Africa's logically flawless arguments against continued alignment with the west (from which it now derives very little, and can expect even less) sum up trenchantly the declining influence of the pro-western lobby, but offer no relief from the country's pariah status. In short, the Soviet 'party' is likely to be disappointed. Possibly, 15 years ago the card could have been played, at a time when the Soviet Union like the United States, convinced that the Portuguese were in Southern Africa to stay, suspended all military aid to the Angolan MPLA guerrillas in 1972 and sent out the ubiquitous Viktor Louis the following year to Lourenço Marques to sound out the Portuguese government on the possibility of importing certain minerals.

Today one cannot help but feel this option is destined for the void where all discussions about South Africa's external security have ended since 1948—its original hopes of joining NATO (1950–1); of extending the Simonstown agreement with Britain to cover the whole of Africa (1954–5); of the 'outward' policy that promised to reconcile black Africa to the existing regime (1974–6), and make all the other external relationships largely unnecessary. It is now far too late.

<sup>1</sup> Joan Zoetler, 'USSR hard currency trade and payments', in *Soviet Economy in the 1980's: problems and prospects* (Washington D.C.: US Congress Joint Economic Committee, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> Winrich Kuhne, 'What does the case of Mozambique tell us about Soviet ambivalence towards Africa?', *Africa Notes (CSIS)*, 30 August 1985, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> For some of the recent literature see Philip Nel, 'South Africa and the Soviet Union', *Soviet Review* (Stellenbosch: Institute of Soviet Studies), March–April 1987.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> 'Soviet policy in Southern Africa: Interview with Dr Leonid Goncharov', *Work in Progress*, No. 48, July 1987, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> The phrase is that of Cornelius de Kiewiet in 'The revolution that disappeared', *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Spring 1970.

<sup>7</sup> A. Uranov, 'The Washington-Pretoria Alliance in Africa', *MEMO* (Moscow), No. 3, 1983.

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence Eagleburger, 'Southern Africa: America's responsibility for peace and change', address before the National Conference of Editorial Writers, 23 June 1983, Department of State Bulletin 83/2077, August 1983.

<sup>9</sup> 'Regional security in Southern Africa' (International Institute for Strategic Studies, Lusaka, June 1987—unpublished papers).

<sup>10</sup> Abdul Minty, 'Implementing the arms embargo against South Africa', excerpt from a statement before the UN Special Committee on Apartheid, 12 December 1977, *Objective Justice*, Winter 1978.

<sup>11</sup> See my *The United States and South Africa 1968–86: constructive engagement and its critics* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1986), p. 207.

<sup>12</sup> Kurt Campbell, *Soviet policy towards South Africa* (Macmillan, 1986), p. 104.

<sup>13</sup> Clem Sunter, *The World and South Africa in the 1990s* (Tatlerberg: Human and Rousseau, 1987), pp. 69–73.

## From 'The World Today' 40 years ago . . .

### Devaluation of the rouble

The recent currency reform in the Soviet Union, in force since 16 December, throws a significant light on the claim that Soviet 'Socialist planned economy' is governed by economic laws different from those of capitalist countries. The reform shows that the problem of 'too much money chasing too few goods' exists also in the Soviet Union. Moreover, Soviet economists have not developed any original methods of checking inflation, though the decree claims that a currency reform in the Soviet Union 'is radically different' from similar reforms in capitalist countries.

The official aim of the decree is 'to strengthen the exchange rate of the rouble' and to reduce drastically the amount of money in circulation. Coupled with the decree on de-ratoning and a new price policy it has, in addition, aims of a socio-political nature, such as the elimination of 'speculative elements', and others not specifically stated. The chief sufferer from the re-valuation of the rouble is the cash-holder, who loses nine-tenths of his money. One can safely assume that this group consists principally of farmers (collective or private) who had the right to sell their surplus produce on 'kolkhoz markets' at free prices, usually lying somewhere between the low prices for ration goods and the excessively high prices ruling in the so-called commercial stores, controlled by the state. . .

. . . The question remains, will the new price policy enable the average worker to raise his standard of life, and will the 'certain sacrifices' he is asked to make really be 'short term and insignificant'? Prices for bread, cereals, and macaroni, 'the goods most widely consumed', will fall 10–12 per cent below the former ration prices; the price of beer will be reduced by 10 per cent; all other foodstuffs, as well as tobacco and vodka, are to be kept at or raised to a level commensurate with the former ration prices for staple food. It must be remembered that all ration prices suffered a considerable increase in September 1946. . . It is a question whether the saving on bread and cereals will now be sufficient to make up for the rise of prices of all manufactured goods, which are now to be sold at new unified state prices, about 66 per cent below the commercial prices, but higher than the former ration prices. (For example, a man's suit will cost 430 roubles, a pair of shoes 260 roubles, a woollen dress 510 roubles. In rural districts prices will be slightly higher.) . . . The government in the Soviet Union is undoubtedly in a strong position to enforce price control, without which the inflationary tendency would rapidly again gain the upper hand. But production remains the key problem in the Soviet Union as elsewhere.

(*The World Today*, January 1948)

## The River Song

**A**lways and everywhere there is a gap between the clear, brave words of politicians and the messy, intractable facts of real life; but in southern Africa today the gap is extraordinarily wide. And while it is easy to see how the rhetoric suits politicians at a safe distance, it is hard to see how it does any good to anyone in southern Africa itself.

The rhetoric/reality gap arises from four myths: **first**, that it is the "international community" who will "end apartheid"; **second**, that this is one of the world's top priorities; **third**, that comprehensive mandatory sanctions will achieve the aim; **fourth**, that when the neighbouring states endorse calls for such sanctions, they mean what they say.

The harsh facts, on the other hand, are **first**, that unless other countries are prepared actually to invade South Africa, which they aren't, the only people ultimately who are going to liberate black South Africans from white oppression are the black majority themselves; **second**, that while "ending apartheid" (which means overthrowing white political power) does indeed have a unique priority for Foreign Ministers making speeches, it has a very low priority for Finance Ministers allocating resources; **third**, that on all the evidence available, even comprehensive mandatory sanctions will have only a modest effect on South Africa, because in practice business will bust them and governments will not enforce them; **fourth**, that all SADCC members except Tanzania and Angola are now more dependent on South Africa than they were in 1980, are not prepared to initiate sanctions themselves, and are privately relieved that Thatcher's and Reagan's UN vetoes prevent any global sanctions campaign actually happening. •



The ANC are decent men, tackling a gigantic task with weak tools. They rightly command sympathy. But they bear some responsibility for the creation of all these myths, to which they too have fallen prisoner. When they went into exile in the early 1960s, after the party's structure was crushed, they concentrated on building international solidarity for the struggle. This was understandable and up to a point, useful – black Rhodesian and Lusophone leaders were doing the same thing. But it must be admitted that it was also easier, and even more pleasant, to travel the world cajoling foreigners, than to slog away organising in the townships, endlessly dodging informers and risking torture. The exiled leaders and their friends were remarkably successful in educating the world about the evils of apartheid; but they remained as unsuccessful as ever in organising a disciplined mass base in South Africa. Their very success in creating a world in which opposition to apartheid became a moral imperative, universally accepted, led them greatly to exaggerate the significance of all this foreign support.

The brutal fact is that, whether there are 100 or 100,000 anti-apartheid rallies in foreign universities, or resolutions in the OAU or the UN General Assembly, the realities of power in South Africa do not change perceptibly at all. The law of diminishing returns has long since applied. On my own last visit to South Africa last year, just after the emergency was declared, I was struck by the way in which all the blacks and whites I met had two things in common: they were all deeply depressed, and they were all overwhelmingly preoccupied with the internal situation. But when I raised the question of foreign pressures, the differences were revealing. The extreme right-wing Conservative Party man brightened: "We would welcome sanctions – they will re-unite the Afrikaner Volk".

The blacks tended to say wistfully: "Yes, perhaps sanctions will help..." It seemed that the main effect of external pressure was to foster, if only slightly, two unhelpful myths – among whites, that their problems came from outside, and among the blacks, that their salvation might come from outside.

Four Zimbabwean ex-guerrilla leaders have said to me, in different words, "Sanctions set back our struggle. We wasted five years after UDI, believing, hoping, that Wilson and the UN were going to solve our problems for us. It took us that long to realise it was all just words, and that we had to liberate ourselves. Then we applied ourselves to the struggle, and won."

Of course, the ANC have also applied themselves to the armed struggle, but for many years on a doomed strategy based on a false analogy with Zimbabwe and the Lusophones – the externally-based guerrilla

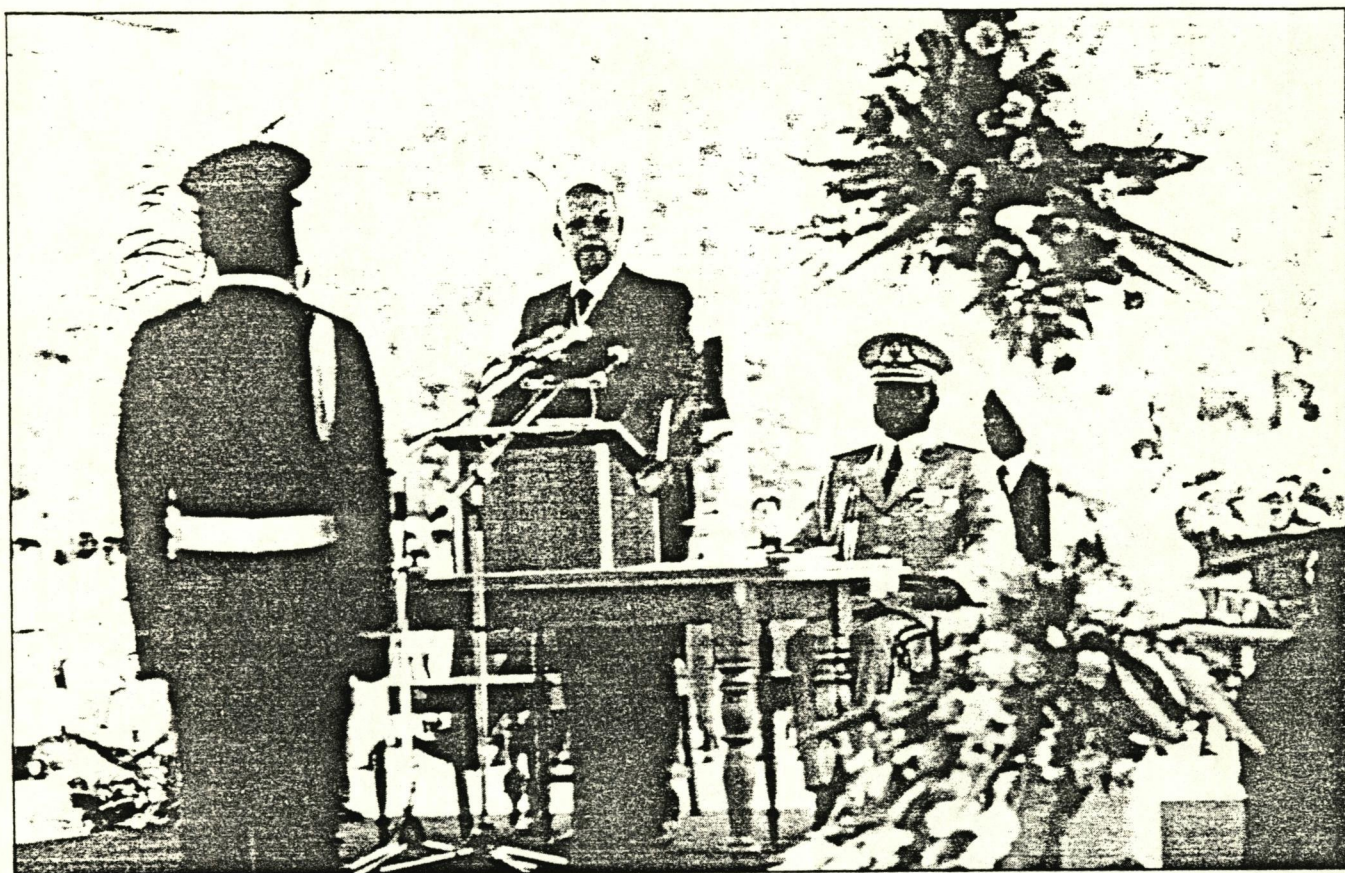
model. As a result, they now have virtually a fully-equipped infantry brigade scattered through various camps in Angola, Tanzania, etc. The old dream was that these men would one day start to operate into South Africa at night from forward bases on the Limpopo. But the Mozambique/South Africa Nkomati Accord in 1984 shattered that dream forever. South African power and ruthlessness are so much greater than Rhodesian or Portuguese, that no neighbouring country (except Angola, a special case paying a terrible price) can afford to allow ANC military operations from its soil. So the main problems of armed struggle remain how to get men and weapons across the borders into the townships, and how to organise to use them. They will have to cross the neighbouring states almost as covertly as South Africa itself; and smuggle arms in normal trade by land, air or sea.

They are slowly realising the implications for their stance on sanctions. Two senior members have told me that the last thing they want is for South Africa's borders to be closed. One said, "If Mugabe or Kaunda start a sanctions war, the Boers will hit them so hard we will be driven right back to Addis Ababa". The other echoed a ZANU friend of mine, who had sent arms into Rhodesia from Zambia in consignments of other goods, until the border closed: "It is really much easier to get weapons across an open frontier than a closed one". The diametrical conflict with the quarter-century-old slogan of the Anti-Apartheid Movement – "Total isolation of racist South Africa" – is obvious.

### The uses of Apartheid

Of course all decent people, and there are many, loathe racism. But there are always plenty of other more or less disgusting tyrannies in the world too, and the sheer volume of anti-apartheid rhetoric suggests it has other functions as well. For people who have to make speeches about international affairs, apartheid has unique advantages. In a complex world, apartheid is a simple issue; in a pragmatic world apartheid is a moral issue; in a world where other states and systems have their admirers, apartheid has none; in a world where other problems have no clear solutions, apartheid seems to have one – sanctions; and in a world where most solutions cost money and effort, calling for sanctions costs none. Leaders under pressure for failing to deal with intractable reality at home, can always look good dealing with intractable reality in South Africa. (Actually applying sanctions is a different matter, of course; a matter of life and death for the eight southern African countries dependent on South Africa; a matter of money and inconvenience for any trading partner who intends to try actually to enforce sanctions.

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*Nkomati Accord shattered the dream*

But of the 158 UN members who support sanctions of one kind or another, well over 130 are neither of these, and have no real interests at stake).

Furthermore, once the rhetoric has been ratcheted up to its maximum point – calling for comprehensive mandatory sanctions until “apartheid ends” and there is a black government in Pretoria – any public questioning of the holy writ can be exploited by political opponents, domestic or international, as going “soft on apartheid”. So it takes enormous courage. For instance, when the (black) President of the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries said in late 1985 that, since 90% of Zimbabwe’s trade had to go through South Africa, frontier closure would seriously damage Zimbabwe’s economy, he merely stated an obvious fact. Indeed, the Economy Minister himself said exactly the same thing far more forcefully (he said a “devastating, massive” effect), in a confidential briefing, inadvertently leaked to the press, two months later. But the industrialist was savaged as a “traitor” by several ministers so harshly, that his entire Confederation felt compelled to call for sanctions the next year, even though every one present knew a sanctions war would be a disaster for them. If even those with their own vital interests at

stake dare not speak up in public to defend themselves, why should anyone else do so? The rhetoric/reality gap is total. Everyone is trapped in it.

### **The Front-Line States’ Trap**

But it only actually matters to South Africa’s neighbours. I spent much of my last year in Zimbabwe asking black Zimbabweans why they demanded sanctions when they knew they would destroy the Front-Line States; and got many interesting replies:

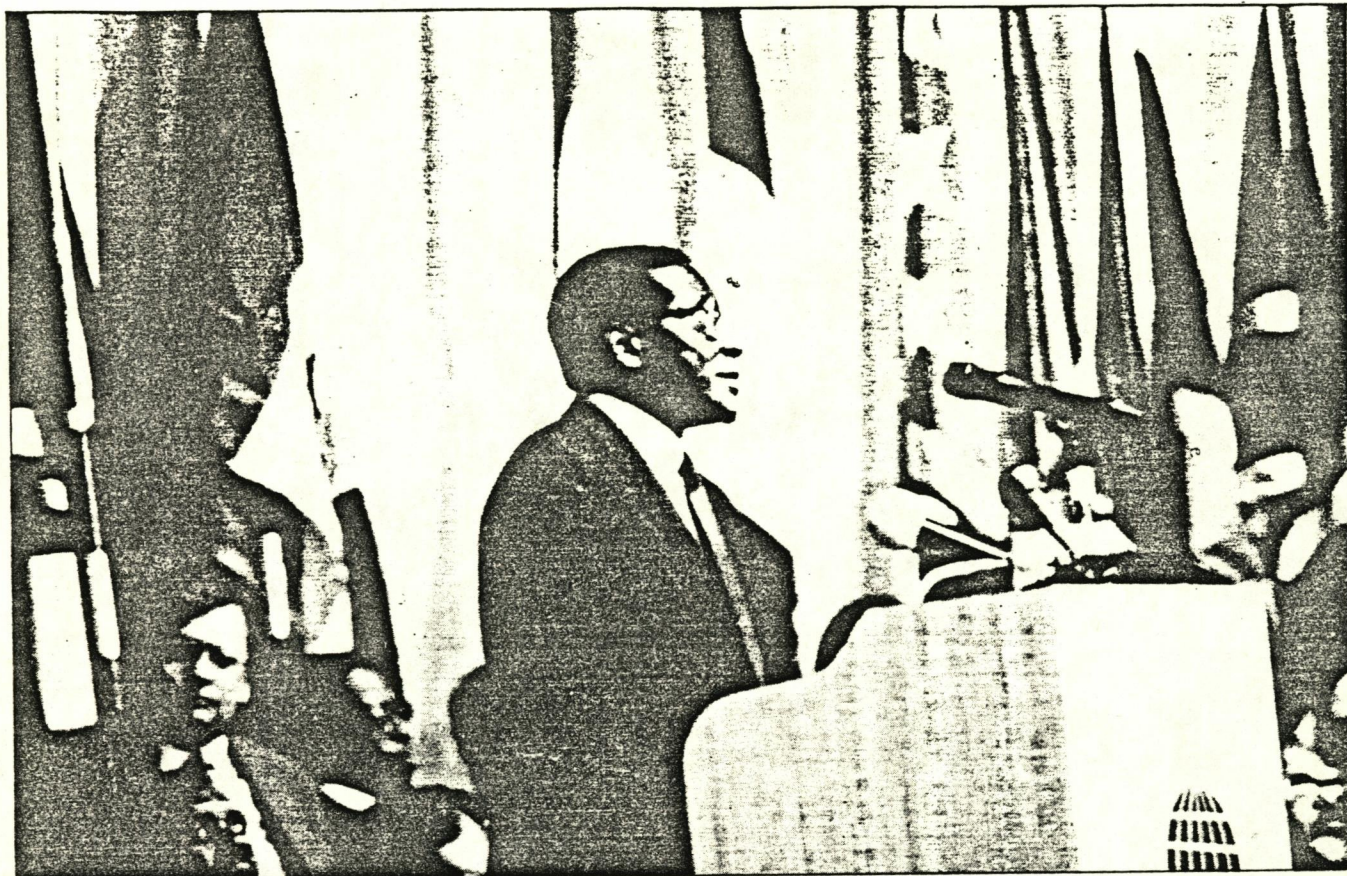
**Senior MFA official (1985):** “We are not demanding sanctions; the international community are, and who are we to stand in their way?”

**Senior African High Commissioner (next day):** “We are not demanding sanctions; the Front-Line States are, and who are we to stand in their way?”

**Politburo Member:** “I am surprised that the British, who taught us hypocrisy, should find our attitude surprising.”

**Another Politburo Member:** “We are not crazy. Of course we are not going to commit suicide by starting anything ourselves.”

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Actually applying sanctions is a different matter, of course; a matter of life and death for the eight southern African countries dependent on South Africa

*Mugabe: promised to initiate sanctions*

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All the dependent  
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Zambia have  
formal security  
liaison  
arrangements  
with South Africa  
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**Another Politburo Member:** “Of course, I know that if the South Africans closed our frontiers we would collapse within a fortnight. But why should I say it?”

**Another Politburo Member:** “This sanctions business is madness. Of course we will do nothing. It is far too early. The blacks in South Africa are nowhere near ready yet to confront the Boers.”

**Cabinet Minister:** “Don’t worry. Sanctions are just words – they’re just politics.”

**Another Cabinet Minister:** “Even if we stop government trade, we’ll do the same trade through private channels. Don’t worry.”

**Junior Minister:** “Of course you’re right, but you’ve forgotten the importance of rhetoric in African politics.”

**Senior Political Editor (angrily):** “Alright, our attitude is hypocritical, but we are closer to the problem, so we are allowed to be more hypocritical than you.”

**Unanimous view of many dozens of ordinary hitch-hikers, in various forms:** “We can’t fight South Africa; they’re much too strong; it’s all very well for the big shots; for us, heaven

knows, life is difficult enough already, just with our own problems; after 15 years of our own struggle, we can’t go through all that again for someone else...”

**Senior Party Member (on the Commonwealth):** “It’s all become absurdly personalised. For lots of those guys (other Commonwealth leaders) it’s got nothing to do with southern Africa any more – it’s just a matter of making Maggie Thatcher prove she’s not a racist. But what does that really matter to them? How does it help?”

**Journalist (on Canadian High Commissioner’s speech, urging total sanctions), bitterly:** “I love all those brave, devoted foreigners who tell us: ‘Go on, you Front-Liners, confront South Africa; we’re right behind you – 10,000 miles behind...!’”

**Senior mining executive (on Canadian and Australian support for sanctions), bitterly:** “Of course, they would love it if the world would help them transfer jobs from black Zimbabwean, Zambian, Zairean, Botswanan and South African miners to white Canadian and Australian miners.”

**Businessman (on Tanzania):** “I suppose Tanzania is the only country in the world



Ian Smith: signing the UDI

guaranteed to benefit from sanctions – the Tazara would become a virtual monopoly for six new customer-countries. 'Front-Line States' indeed! They haven't been one since the Portuguese left."

**Permanent Secretary:** "You are right of course – (pause) – it is indeed a truly pathetic situation."

But while the public postures are perhaps dangerously absurd, the actual policies followed are pragmatic. Within SADCC, the members try – slowly, and without spending too much of their own money – to reduce their dependence on South Africa; and meanwhile they accommodate to South African power. This means normal economic relations, for maximum national advantage. Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland remain in the Customs Union with South Africa, which supplies respectively 16%, 70% and 63% of their total government revenue. The week before Mugabe promised to initiate sanctions at Marlborough House in 1986, his government had renewed the preferential trade agreement with South Africa, in the same week of his bitter denunciations of Thatcher at Vancouver, his government signed a new leasing agreement for South African locomotives. South Africa remains Zimbabwe's biggest bilateral trading partner, and 80% of its

trade still goes through South Africa, though the Beira line slowly improves. Zambia has successfully re-directed all its copper exports to Tazara, but the mining industry still depends overwhelmingly on South African inputs. Zaire is about 40% transport-dependent on South Africa, Malawi about 70%. Mozambique's remittances from its migrant workers in South Africa still total about half its exports, and it resists South African pressure to reduce the number.

None of this inter-dependency will be easy to reduce without cost, though the combination of current rehabilitation plans for the Tazara and the four rail routes through Mozambique could virtually eliminate forced transport-dependency for all except Lesotho by about 1993 if the lines can be secured.

Accommodation also means accepting South African rules about military activity by liberation movements. All the dependent neighbours except Zambia have formal security liaison arrangements with South Africa; and liberation movement personnel and weapons attempting to transit are liable to arrest and confiscation respectively. Zimbabwe is increasing its defence budget to secure the Beira corridor and deter direct South African aggression; the others are not because of cost, though all are vulnerable.

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Guarding the Benguela line against RENAMO

### The transport weapon

Transport-dependency for the land-locked is South Africa's best guarantee of "good-neighbourly" behaviour across its frontiers, and the Boer generals have put much ruthless effort through the 1980s into creating and maintaining their transport weapon. It has been possible so far by relying only on Renamo in Mozambique and UNITA in Angola. The Benguela line will remain out for the foreseeable future, notwithstanding hopeful talk. But now that the Zimbabwe army are organised on the Beira corridor, the Malawians on the Nacala line, work starting on the Limpopo line to Maputo, and Frelimo slowly improving, it may be possible to secure all three lines over the next few years against Renamo alone.

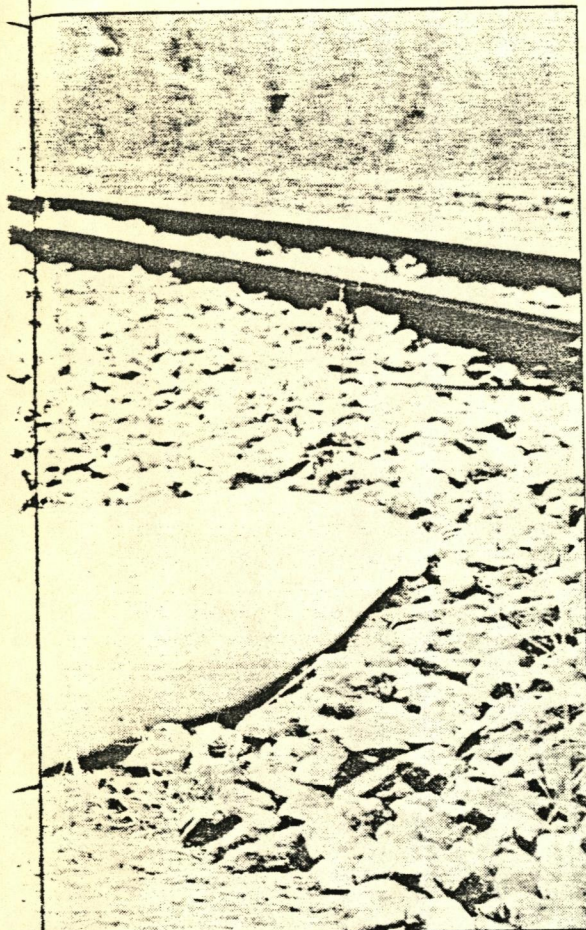
What then would the Boer generals do? Would they, as it were, allow their hostages to saw through the bars and walk away to freedom? Or would they commit their own forces to keep the ports and railways of Mozambique closed, and their transport weapon intact? The latter would lead to a serious escalation of the regional war. Without outside help, however, the Front-Line States would not be able to cope. The

Limpopo line, potentially by far the most important of the three, will always be wide open to South African commando attack — the border is only 100kms away. The commandos have already struck at Zimbabwe's oil facilities in Beira port in 1982, and could doubtless repeat it. In addition, the South African navy can strike at most African ports with submarine attack, mines, or (at least for Maputo, Beira and Dar es Salaam) block ships in the approach channels. The South African Air Force has recently acquired a mid-air refuelling capability, bringing the whole of Africa south of Kenya within range of their Mirage bombers. None of the regional armed forces (except to some extent Angola), are equipped to stop any of this.

But there are two obvious risks to deter Pretoria. One is the danger of fresh foreign troops in the region — more Cuban enemies, more Angolan quagmires, costly and unpopular to fight. The other, of course, would be the risk of mandatory sanctions — **provided**, of course, that these were not already in force.

The most extraordinary thing about the sanctions debate is the fact that no-one — not Thatcher nor Reagan nor Gandhi nor Rampal nor any of the others — shows any interest at all in the actual evidence of what, in practice,

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Angola's dos Santos: facing UNITA

they do and do not achieve, and how and why. But although, when "comprehensive mandatory sanctions" were first adopted as policy by the Anti-Apartheid Movement in 1960, they had never been tried so there was no evidence, the fact is that they have since, once, for 14 years against Rhodesia. Modern Zimbabwe therefore contains all the real world evidence there is. Harare houses far more expertise on real world sanctions than all the rest of the world put together. And if the sanctions debate were serious, foreign governments would be interested to learn from it. But when, at the height of the July 1986 sanctions fever, I asked the Commonwealth High Commissioners in Harare at their monthly lunch how many of their governments had even bothered to ask them for a report of the effects of the Rhodesian sanctions, I was not surprised to learn that not one had done so. For me, it was the final proof that the sanctions debate is **not** in fact serious. The truth is that sanctions are urged, not because of their effect, but because they are the only gesture of disapproval available which is more than words but less than war.

But for the very few who bother to look at the effects, what does the Rhodesian evidence show? All Zimbabweans are proud of the fact that their country is one of the most

prosperous and developed in black Africa. I have heard two senior ministers say in public forum (at the same CZI meeting that adopted the resolution urging sanctions), that "We all know the Rhodesian economy **prospered** under sanctions". It was summed up neatly by a West African visitor from Geneva, who said to me at a party: "I have just made my first visit to Tanzania, the country which has had more aid per capita than any other country in Africa for the last 20 years; and this is my first visit to Zimbabwe, a country which, for 15 of those 20 years, had comprehensive mandatory sanctions. But the funny thing is — you'd think it was the other way round".

So when Mugabe himself said, on return from the Commonwealth meeting at Nassau, that Zimbabwe's experience had taught him that sanctions had only a limited effect, he knew what he was talking about. It is obvious that the Rhodesian sanctions were widely bust. To find out how and why, you only have to talk to some of the thousands of sanctions-busters, all freely accessible. They are quite clear that sanctions-busting took effort, and cost money — the "sanctions premium" meant that they got less for their exports, and paid more for their imports. But the premium never rose very high, most guess about 10%. For that extra profit margin,

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ANC's Tambo: tackling a gigantic task

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there was no lack of trading partners. And in practice, no government (except Britain, the US, Canada, some northern Europeans) made any real effort at all to stop their own businessmen making money (jobs, foreign exchange), when they all knew that the only effect of doing so would be to give those jobs, that foreign exchange, to competitors in less scrupulous countries. In short, there is more money for businessmen in busting sanctions than there are votes for governments in enforcing them.

So the threat to impose sanctions is in reality a threat to impose a fine of, say, 10% on a country's foreign exchange earnings. It would be painful, but bearable. Many African countries have suffered worse in a bad week on the commodity markets. It would be ridiculous to think of any government, let alone any nation (as the Afrikaners see themselves) surrendering power, ceasing to exist, rather than pay such a fine. But they would still much rather not pay it; and there are several things they would do, or refrain from doing, to avoid paying it. The threat is a modest, but real lever of influence that the international community has over South Africa; it is also the only significant lever; and if it were linked to a modest but realistic goal, it could have a real effect; as long, that is, as the sanctions were not actually applied — once a deterrent has been used, it can no longer deter.

## Storm clouds

So how might it realistically be used? One of the things it might really deter is the unprovoked use of South Africa's transport weapon to smash its land-locked neighbours into more Nkomati Accords. Another is the direct commitment of South African troops to block the Mozambique corridors. One senior ANC member I know believes it should be used selectively, sector by sector, to erode the migrant labour system inside South Africa. There are doubtless other possible targets.

But it will not have any effect at all as long as the world's rhetoric remain divorced from reality, stuck in the groove of a quarter-century old pop-song record called "Sanctions to end apartheid". If the world's leaders cared enough about southern Africa to re-think their comfortable old postures, they could do some real good for the victims of the South African tragedy, current and threatened, round the region. But do any of them really care that much? There is no sign of it. And the storm clouds darken over the sub-continent. •

Roger Martin

*Roger Martin was British Deputy High Commissioner in Harare for three years until he resigned, on a principle, in December 1986.*

AFRICA EVENTS DECEMBER 1987

Mr Hofmann  
Mr Woods L  
Steenwijk

THE NATAL WITNESS

6 JAN. 1928

## SA Police deny siding with Inkatha

### Witness Reporter

POLICE yesterday denied that they were siding with Inkatha in township conflict and stressed they were there merely to maintain law and order.

Acting police liaison officer, Major C. du Plessis was reacting to Monday's statement by UDF president, Mr Archie Gumede, that the police reinforcements being sent into the city's townships were "for Inkatha".

Major du Plessis said he wanted to "put the record straight from the police point of view". The police's task was to investigate crime and this was done "impartially", he said.

The Chief Minister of KwaZulu and president of Inkatha, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, declined to comment on Mr Gumede's statement.

According to yesterday's official unrest report released by the police, five more people died in political violence around the city.

This brings the death toll since the start of the New Year weekend to 23.

Three men were killed at Mbuhu when they were attacked by a group wielding sharp instruments. A fourth man was slightly injured and one man arrested.

In Elandskop police found the body of a man with stab wounds, and in Deda the body of a youth was found with several stab wounds.

In other incidents of unrest around the country police arrested six people in Botshabelo near Bloemfontein after a crowd stoned several buses.

Police said that a possible motive for the attacks could be commuter dissatisfaction with the increased bus fares.

## Pietermaritzburg townships could be scene of a fight to the death between UDF and Inkatha

Jon Qwelane

PERHAPS the immediate casualty of the furiously escalating war in Maritzburg's black townships — besides truth — is Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's dream of a jointly governed Natal incorporating kwaZulu.

He has convinced many whites and all his followers in Inkatha of the ideal of a kwaZulu-Natal area, governed by a common legislature. Most of the white population — and the provincial administration — back the idea.

Superficially, the struggle in Maritzburg townships is one for ideological supremacy which the stronger of the two combatants — either the United Democratic Front or Inkatha — must win to assert its political authority over hundreds of thousands of township residents.

But a closer look indicates it will be a war with no winner: the political implications for victor and vanquished alike would be tremendous. It could well be a fight to the death.

Says a resident who has closely followed and documented the fighting: "Victory for either Inkatha or the UDF in Maritzburg will be a great psychological boost for the supporters of the organisation and may open the way for similar showdowns elsewhere in the country where the

# Buthelezi's dream dies in Natal war

victor would want to stamp out the adversary once and for all.

"On the other hand defeat might not be interpreted as such by the vanquished. The organisation might see it as a major setback requiring adequate correction before resuming hostilities."

The man speaking is himself not involved, but has changed cars at least nine times in the past few months because "I have strong reason to believe members of the one side are convinced I take sides, simply because I have refused to be on *their* side. That does not mean I have agreed to side with the other group, for I am neutral in the whole business."

He answers his telephone to say he is not there and only when he is convinced of the caller's bona fides does he confide his identity.

He explains: "It is what a number

of other people do as well. How do you know the caller is not telephoning from a call-box opposite your office, only to be lying in ambush when you step out into the street?"

Ambushes are a feature of township life, a fact attested to by those brave enough to be interviewed.

People are now fearful of attending friends' funerals because "too many people have been ambushed at the gates of the cemeteries and killed", says one man.

Another says it has happened "several times", and is becoming a pattern, that people are removed from buses and taxis and butchered.

The origins of the fighting are shrouded in the ideologies of the two organisations.

Both claim to be fighting white domination and apartheid, in the struggle for liberation. But the differ-

ences between Inkatha and the UDF are almost irreconcilable.

The UDF strongly supports international sanctions against South Africa; Inkatha has campaigned against all punitive economic measures.

The UDF is opposed to racial, ethnic and cultural divisions and to the homelands policy. Inkatha has its roots in the kwaZulu homeland where it is the only political organisation and its president is also the homeland's political leader.

But perhaps most glaring of the differences — and least mentioned — is the question of legitimacy as successor to the ideals and principles of the outlawed African National Congress.

Chief Buthelezi often recalls his ANC membership and has said Inkatha is continuing on the non-violent path and other ideals of the early ANC movement. There is no love lost

between Inkatha and the ANC.

But there is no evidence of hostility between the ANC and the UDF. Indeed, though the UDF has gone to great pains to explain it is an independent organisation with no links to any outside body, there appear to be similarities in their approaches: the adoption of the Freedom Charter and the opening of membership to blacks and whites.

In Natal's urban areas, particularly Durban and Maritzburg, Inkatha is not the dominant force it is elsewhere in Natal.

Before the advent of the UDF there had been a level of resistance in Natal townships. Matters gradually deteriorated with the cooling of relations between the Inkatha leadership and the exiled ANC. Inkatha refused to support protests mounted in the townships and lost the support of the politicised youth.

Shortly after the murder in kwa-Mashu township of Victoria Mxenge, a prominent lawyer and UDF supporter, things got bad.

A week after the slaying, houses and business belonging to Inkatha members went up in flames, and about 20 people were killed as Natal's black community turned on itself.

● See Page 17

20 cups

# Confusion and fear reign in Maritzburg

Jon Qwelane

THERE is musical beauty and rustic tranquility about the daytime atmosphere of townships around Pietermaritzburg which belie the horrors said to take place there with almost clockwork regularity.

The tranquil daytime atmosphere is a thin veneer hiding a visibly scared people.

No one knows what his neighbour may be up to: are the boys sauntering up the street merely enjoying the last of the school holidays, or is something sinister brewing in their teen minds?

The quietude may in a large part be due to the fact that hundreds of youngsters have fled their homes, and are the ones said by residents to be involved in the nocturnal warfare.

The confused state of the city's black areas is further demonstrated by the fact that, as residents say, sometimes groups affiliated to the same organisation clash violently in the mistaken belief they are attacking members of the rival outfit.

In the confusion the average resident who belongs to neither side finds himself caught in the middle of things: up to only a few night ago, people say, there were knocks on the door and members of one organisation would order people to wake up and stand watch in neighbourhoods to repel the "enemy".

The next night, or even a few hours after the watch had been called, members of the other organisation would arrive, wake residents up and order them to stand guard and be on the lookout for the "enemy".

The confusion takes an unbelievable turn with disclosures that in another Pietermaritzburg township — Sobantu — the fighting and the killings are not so much between Inkatha and the UDF but, say residents, between adherents of the Black Consciousness ideology and members of UDF-affiliated organisations.

Night time in the townships is either all right or all bad, depending on where you are at a particular moment.

In Edendale, the various sections of Imbali, Ashdown and Mpumalanga to the east the nights were eerie — perhaps because of the horrifying tales told of how the deceptively placid locations transform into unbelievable hell-holes at night. But nothing untoward happened.

## Wanton violence

Yet residents tell a different tale, and the grim statistics bear them out: in the first eight days of the new year 32 people — or four people a day — were butchered in the wanton violence.

Decapitation with an axe or panga is now stock in trade for the executioners, and stabbing with a knife is par for the course.

It is common for bodies to be found with more than 30 stab wounds; recently a 67-year-old man was found dead, his body perforated 129 times with a knife. Another man, middle-aged, was stabbed 51 times.

A "factory" manufacturing home-made guns and other weapons was recently discovered and closed down, but residents say there are many gunmen doing the rounds.

The residents' evident fear makes it clear the horrifying tales of savagery they tell are true. But there is also a kind of sadistic humiliation which has crept in.

For example, no one wants to be a candidate for "nude modelling". Nude it is, they say, but modelling it certainly isn't. Humiliating is more like it.

Anyone found doing something "wrong" by youngsters who have taken it upon themselves to "police" the streets lives to regret it.

Explains a man who says he saw it happen: "If they catch you doing something wrong they note your address and come to your home the next day. You had better not run away, because then things might be worse. When they arrive at your home they strip you naked, and you are made to walk the streets in that state. It is your punishment, and people dread it."

Unbelievable as the story sounded to me, several people questioned at random confirmed "nude modelling" was how some people were punished.

Among the "wrong" things people are not supposed to do is for young lovers to be seen together at night; whether they are merely chatting is of no relevance.

Township residents say the only thing for the warring sides to do is sit down and talk to each other.

Many say they are tired of the fighting and want no part in it, but refusal to identify with one side may mean the difference between life and death.

20 Coms