

W' MaMkyoVexYa A

FIRST DRAFT

South African Re ienal 8011: before and after Cuito Cuanavale:

Januar 19879December 1988

Robert Davies

. "From now on the history of Africa will have to be written before and after Cuito Cuanavale".

" Fidel Castro, addressing Non9Aligned Movement Ministerial Conference, Havana, May 1988.

1988 witnessed an important change in the balance of forces in the southern Africa region. As a result, fundamentally, of a major setback euffered by the South African Defence Force (SADF) at Cuito Cuanavale in Angola and more minor, but significant, reveree on other fronts of regional deetabilieation, a new regional conjuncture began to emerge in mid-1988. This seems certain to profoundly affect both the terms and forms of struggle on the regional plane. It also has potentially important implications for the domestic struggle inside South Africa. The present chapter seeks to examine just one aspect of this new regional conjuncture e the way in which the shift in the regional balance of ferces has affected the objectives and conduct of Pretoria's regional policy.

What may be described as the post-Cuito Cuanavale regional

'. conjuncture followed a phase of escalating South African aggression and destabilieation against neighbouring states. In , the period between January 1987 and the end of the first quarter of 1988 alone:

i The SADF became involved in probably its largest, and certainly its most costly, conventional military incursion into Angola.

X The SADF continued its covert war through the MNR bandits in Mozambique and, indeed, provided considerable support for a new bandit offensive in the southern provinces of the country. Over 1.000 civilians died between June 1987 and January 1988 in this assault which included such notorious massacres as those at Homoine (where 424 were killed on July 18), Manjacaze (where 92 died on August 10) and Teninga/Maluane (where 349 bus passengers were killed in two separate incidents in October and November 1987) among other atrocities.

X MNR attacks were launched in eastern Zimbabwe with the apparent objective of opening up a new front of destabilieation in that country in addition to that in Matebeleland, where South African-backed "Super Zapu" cuntinued to operate.

X The SADF conducted acknowledged raids against residences in Livingstone in Zambia on April 25 1987, and the Botswana capital, Gaborone, on March 28 1988. There were also unacknowledged attacks on reidences in Gaborone (April 9 1987), Mapute (May 29 1987) and Lusaka (on numerous occasions) as well as

assassinations and attempted assassinations of ANC personnel in Swaziland (July 9 1987), Lesotho (March 1988), Maputo (April 7 1988) and Lusaka (various occasions).

In addition:

K On January 2 1987, a "suspected South African agent" threw a handgrenade at President Masire of Botswana during a visit to the site of an attack on a residence at Ramotsha On the South African border (The Times 3/1/1987).

X A few days before the BADF raid on Livingstone in April 1987, President Haunda of Zambia claimed that a coup plot had been uncovered, involving "South African agents" and Zambian businessmen (International Herald Tribune 16/4/1987).

By February 1988, senior South African officials appeared to be signalling their intention to escalate this assault on the region even further. Speaking at the scene of a rocket attack near Messina on February 19, Foreign Minister R.F.Botha told the press, "We will no longer urge or encourage Eneighbouring statesl to attend regional peace conferences. They can go their own way...the South African government has had enough. We reserve the right to act as we see fit" (Rapport 21/2/1988). Speaking at the same time and place, Defence Minister Magnus Malan said, "Wherever the ANC is, we will eliminate it. If the Zimbabweans find themselves in between, I feel very sorry for them" (The Star 20/2/1988).

Yet within a few months, all this began to change. In the first week of May, South African negotiators sat down in London with those from Angola, Cuba and the United States in the first of several rounds of talks on Angola/Namibia. These talks have resulted to date in an agreement over the withdrawal of South African troops from Angola and acceptance in principle that Namibia should proceed to independence in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 435/1978. A few weeks before the first round of Angola/Namibia negotiations in London, P.W.Botha received an envoy from President Chissano of Mozambique and agreed to initiate a procees aimed at reviving the stalled Nkomati Accord. The Joint Security Cammission, established by the Nkomati Accord but suspended since September 1985 when evidence of continuing South African support for armed banditry in Mozambique was discovered at former MNR headquarters in Borongosa, was reconstituted in July 1988. In September, South Africa, Mozambique and Portugal signed an agreement to act together to repair Cahora Bassa powerlines sabotaged by MNR bandits. In the same month, P.W.Botha paid official visits to Mozambique and Malawi and in the fallowing month travelled to Zaire. Pretoria has now proclaimed its ultimate goal as the convening of a multi-lateral regional security summit invlving itself and neighbouring states.

The period between the first and second quarters of 1988 can, in short, be identified as a turning point in the regional struggle.

hJ

It inaugurated a new conjuncture in which Pretoria's strategists appeared once again to be placing greater emphasis on diplomacy and economic action in the mix of "incentives" and "disincentives" through which they sought to advance their regional policy objectives. These developments raise a number of questions. What brought about this apparent shift in Pretoria's stance towards its neighbours in the region? What was the real nature and extent of the change in the balance of forces which underlay it? What are the main objectives and instruments of its current policy? Is Pretoria really moving towards an abandonment of destabilisation? What implications do these changes have for the state's domestic strategy, and what potential implications could domestic developments have on Pretoria's regional policy? In approaching these questions it is imperative to recognise at the outset that the decisive factors behind the shift did not operate at the level of the subjective intentions of decision-makers but at the level of the objective conditions within which decisions are made. Pretoria pulled back from the path of escalating regional aggression along which its leading spokespersons and officials showed every intention of planning to continue because setbacks were suffered in the region which made this course too costly in military, political, economic and diplomatic terms. The present chapter will attempt to show that it is this which constitutes the distinctive element of the new regional conjuncture. Pretoria had of course suffered reverses in the region before. In particular, in previous phases, it had confronted situations in which diplomatic and economic action failed to bring it the results intended. It could, nevertheless, in the past generally count on military action advancing at least immediate tactical, if not wider strategic, goals. What distinguishes the new, post-Cunavale, conjuncture is that Pretoria is now facing a situation in which it cannot always expect to get its own way through military action. The present chapter will argue that this has undoubtedly opened up new possibilities for regional states to make certain advances and gains. It also has some potential to affect the domestic balance of forces in South Africa in a way which enhances the position of the oppressed at the expense of the oppressors. At the same time, however, it is important to recognise that Pretoria has suffered setbacks in the region and not decisive defeats. It still possesses a formidable military machine with considerable capacity to inflict damage on regional states thwarting its ambitions. South Africa also remains the dominant economic force in the subcontinent. These factors too have to be taken into account in assessing the limits and possibilities of the emerging regional conjuncture.

#### 1.1987-April 1988: Escalating Militaristic Aggression

The militaristic aggression and destabilisation which characterised 1987 and the first quarter of 1988 was a continuation of the cycle which began to manifest itself in mid-1985. As argued in South African Review 4, pp 341-355, this phase of escalating aggression and destabilisation followed the failure

by Pretoria to capitalise on the 1984 Nkomati Accord and Lusaka Cease Fire Agreement with Angola. Pretoria had hoped that these agreements, and particularly the Nkomati Accord, would spike the guns of the AND and dampen down the struggle inside South Africa; lead to a "power sharing" settlement with the MNR in Mozambique and possibly with Unita in Angola; result in generalised acceptance into the region of South Africa's hegemony as the "regional power" and, predicated on this, reduce Pretoria's international isolation. In the event, however, Pretoria found itself by mid-1985 in a position where it had not only failed to advance these objectives, but where, in many cases, its position in these areas had deteriorated. This was largely due to the advances made by popular struggle inside South Africa which deepened the crisis of the apartheid system and state. In these circumstances Pretoria's strategists appeared to have concluded that they had little to gain by continuing to project an, in fact already severely tarnished image, of having peaceful intentions towards its neighbours in the sub-continent. Instead they saw it as suiting them better to project an image of unassailable strength. The result was that destabilisation and aggression (which were never abandoned, despite the signing of formal non-aggression treaties) once again escalated and became the main feature of South African regional policy. An important exception to this was the case of actual or potential allies - Swaziland, Malawi and post-coup Lesotho - where economic action and diplomacy featured prominently in attempts to build and deepen ties.

Some of the features of the escalating assault on the region in 1987 and early 1988 have already been outlined. The three main fronts of regional destabilisation continued to be the conventional war in southern Angola (conducted by the official SADF as well as the South West Africa Territory Forces (SNATF) and Unita surrogate forces); the covert war in Mozambique conducted through MNR surrogate forces; and acknowledged Dr clandestine raids against anti-apartheid activists, particularly AND members, in regional states. There was also lower level destabilisation directed at Zimbabwe, where a new front in the east was opened up following MNR's "declaration of war" on the Mugabe government and the signing of an agreement between the MNR and Sithole's version of Zanu.

Although a more or less permanent SADF presence had been established in parts of southern Angola for years and several "deep incursions" by SADF units were reported in early 1987, the decisive SADF involvement of the period began on July 1 1987 with the launching of "Operation Modular". This was a response to a concerted attempt by Angolan forces to take the town of Mavinga in Cuando Cubango province. In mid-December 1987, "Operation Modular" was followed by "Operation Hooper". The battles and troop movements which finally culminated in several abortive attempts to capture the town of Cuito Cuanavale are dealt with in another contribution to this volume and need not concern us here. It is sufficient to note that the presence of a large Angolan force at Cuito Cuanavale some distance from main supply lines,

was seen by the SADF as an opportunity to inflict a decisive defeat on Angolan government (Fapla) forces in the south east of the country. At least 3.000 official SADF troops were involved, together with larger numbers of SNATF and Unita surrogate forces. These operations saw the SADF deploying the most modern and sophisticated equipment available to it \_ modified Mirage aircraft, 8 - 5 artillery weapons and, for the first time in Angola, Olifant tanks. It has been suggested that Pretoria's strategists had hoped that these operations would enable them to enlarge the SADF "control zone" in southern Angola to embrace the whole of the area bordered by the Benguela railway line in the north and the Cubango river in the west. This area \_ more than a quarter of the country - would then have become a "Savimbistan" administered by Unita with South African support. This would then have served as the basis for the proclamation of Unita as an "alternative government" of Angola - a development which was confidently expected would have led to increased United States involvement and support for Unita (Work In Progress, 55, pp 687). The 1987 MNR assault in southern Mozambique began in about April and was launched in direct response to the setbacks suffered by the bandits in the Frelimo government's offensive in the provinces in the centre-nbrth at the end of 1986 and early 1987. A feature of this assault was that it involved large groups of several hundred, well armed bandite infiltrating directly across the South erican border. The initial objective of this assault appeared to be to occupy a corridor along Gaza and Inhambane provinces from the South African border to the sea and thereby achieve the objective thwarted by the government offensive in the centre-north of cutting the country in two. When this failed they turned to attacks on civilian road and rail traffic t0 and from Maputo city and on inhabitants of small towns. The aim here appeared to be twofold: first, to cut off Maputo city from the rest of the country and, second, to provoke an increased flow of displaced people into the city in order to overstretch its resources.

Although Pretoria repeatedly denied that it was involved in supporting this assault, evidence of continued SADF involvement with the MNR bandits emerged from a number of sources. Several former bandits, either captured or surrendering under the government's amnesty programme, spoke of:

- air and sea drops of supplies (see testimonies by two unnamed youths in Noticias, 22/9/1987; by former MNR sector commander, Modesto Sixpence in Noticiae, 10/2/1988 and 14/5/1988, by Fernando Tepb and Eduardb Manuel in Noticias, 23/3/1988; by Paulo Oliveira in Noticias, 24/3/1988 and by Ian Grey in Noticias, 28/3/1988);
- SADF persbnnel operating with bandits in bases in Mozambique (see testimonies by Abilio Jangane in Noticias, 2/3/1988 and by Luis Tomas in Noticias, 9/4/1988);
- involvement in a special commando unit sent to plant bombs in Maputo and Matbla (see testimony by South African passport holder George Alerson in AIM EMozambican News Agencyl despatch, t\_n

22/6/1987).

Mozambican government communiquee reported:

X infiltration of bandits across the South African border shortly before ,

- the time of the Homoine massacre (see Guardian, 15/6/1987 and 22/7/1987);

- the Manjacaze massacre (see Guardian, 13/8/1987; AIM despatch, 18/8/1987 );

\_ and the Taninga/Maluane massacres (see Domingo, 1/11/1987);

1X violations of Mozambican airspace (see Noticias, 15/11/1987 and 24/11/1987).

3 and operations conducted by unite with specialist skills and/or hit and run teams returning to South Africa striking against railway bridges and powerlinee (see Noticias, 17/10/1987).

The remains of parachutes used to drop supplies to the bandits was also discovered in the vicinity of Homoine shortly before the massacre there (AIM despatch 29/6/1987). Numerous observers pointed out, that only South Africa had the motivation and capability to carry out air and sea drops to bandits in Mozambique.

As far as the raids and assassinations directed at AND members and other opponente of apartheid are concerned, the period saw a change in the pattern "from random slaughter to a sustained campaign; from individual covert hits to generalised policy" (Glen Mose, Work In Progress, 53, p 25). By the first quarter of 1988, this campaign had, of course, reached beyond the southern African region with such incidents as the assassination of Dulcie September in Paris and an attempt on the life of Godfrey Moteepe, the ANC'e representative in Brussels. What continued to distinguish such attacks in southern Africa, however, was the apparent indifference to casualties among innocent bystanders. Most of the victims in the incidents described above were not in fact South African exiles but nationals of the countries concerned, suggesting that at least part of the motivation behind each attacks might have been to deliberately engender fears and insecurities among people living amidst exiles.

2. Factors behind the transition to the new regional conjuncture  
What brought about the change in Pretoriale stance in the region were reverses not just on one but on all of the above described main fronts of regional deetabilisation. The most important and decisive of these reverses was of course that suffered by the SADF at Cuito Cuanevale. The detaile of this are again covered in another contribution. A Cuban publication has aptly described Cuito Cuanavale as "South Africa's Waterloo" (Prisma, 191, I August 1988). Cuito Cuanavale smashed the myth of SADF invincibility and revealed important windows of vulnerability. The first and most immediately apparent set of vulnerabilities were related to

weapons and equipment. The South African Air Force found itself unable to penetrate Angolan and Cuban radar/misile defences in Cuito Cuanavale. Its equipment was technologically inadequate (partly due to the effects of the arms embargo) and, faced with modern Soviet equipment brought into the frontline by the Cubans, the SADF rapidly lost the air superiority it had previously counted on. In addition, the Angolan/Cuban air strike on the Calueque dam in June 1988 showed up important deficiencies in SADF air defences. Secondly, Cuito Cuanavale revealed a major vulnerability in relation to personnel. A plan put forward to take the town by infantry invasion was rejected because it was estimated that it would have cost 306 white conscript lives. A loss of this magnitude in these circumstances was deemed unacceptable, thus highlighting a previously untested political constraint on the SADF. Thirdly, Cuito Cuanavale pointed to economic vulnerabilities. It has been estimated that the war in Angola was already costing R 4 billion a year by mid-1988 and any escalation would have put "an intolerable burden...on an economy, already running out of steam" (Sunday Star 4/7/1988). Most directly, an intensification of the conflict in southern Angola could have pushed Pretoria closer to the "major fiscal crisis" some observers see "looming in 1989" (Howard Preece in Southern Africa Report 15/7/1988).

But while Cuito Cuanavale represented the decisive setback which produced the new conjuncture, reverses were also being suffered on the other main fronts of destabilisation. In the case of the bandit assault on Mozambique, government forces, supported by their Tanzanian and Zimbabwean allies, began in late 1987 and early 1988 to achieve some military victories. Although the overall security situation in the country remains far from satisfactory, the bandits were prevented from definitively cutting transport links to Maputo and isolating the capital. By mid-1988, the security situation on main road and rail links to the capital had greatly improved and a new government offensive in the centre north had succeeded in driving bandits from a number of bases they had occupied since 1986. In addition, in December 1987 the Mozambican government passed a law offering an amnesty to bandits surrendering to the authorities. By mid-1988, it had become evident that the military successes and the amnesty law had together provoked considerable disarray within the ranks of MNR - both externally and on the ground in Mozambique. By August 1988, 1,600 former bandits had surrendered under the amnesty; a former senior MNR official (Paulo Oliveira) had defected; others had been murdered (Mateus Lopes and Joan Ataíde in Malawi in December 1987 and former Secretary General, Eno Fernandes, in Lisbon in April 1988); -and clashes were reported between different bandit groups in Mozambique (see weekly Mail 8-14/7/1988).

At the same time, Pretoria's known involvement with MNR began to threaten to increase its international isolation. The extreme brutality of MNR actions, highlighted by the well publicised massacres at Homoine, Manjacaze and Tanninga/Maluane, greatly undercut whatever international support the bandit assault might

otherwise have mobilised. Despite the fact that the basic technique of covert war was undoubtedly partly modeled on the "Reagan doctrine" of supporting "anti-communist" insurgencies against "left wing" governments, the brutality of the MNR assault, in the context of active diplomacy by the Mozambican government, led even the US administration to distance itself from it. At an emergency aid donors conference held in Maputo in April 1988, a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Roy Stacy, accused the MNR of "one of the most brutal holocausts against ordinary human beings since World War Two" (quoted in Weekly Mail, 5812/5/1988). A report commissioned by the US State Department (1) estimated that MNR had been responsible for the deaths of at least 100.000 civilians. This report, written by Robert Bersony, was based on interviews with 200 informants in Mozambique and neighbouring countries. Gersony's informants reported that they themselves had witnessed 600 murders 1 by shooting, knife/axe/bayonet killings, burning alive, beating to death, asphyxiation, starvation and drowning (p 21). 912 of those interviewed had "very negative" and a further 5% "somewhat negative" perceptions of the MNR, compared to 7% "very negative" and 10% "somewhat negative" perceptions of Frelimo government trmops (p 23).

While most official US and other western public statements refrained from directly accusations against Pretoria, denunciations of armed banditry in Mozambique were accompanied by a less public diplomatic process in which, among other things, South African officials were informed that continued involvement in such atrocities would result in increasing international isolation and even pressure for sanctions (see Noticias 11/4/1988 (interview with Chester Cracker); 12/5/1988 (interview with Crocker's deputy, Charles Freeman), Weekly Mail 5-12/5/1988). At the level of hit and run raids, too, Pretoria suffered a number of setbacks. A network of suspected South African agents was uncovered after a bomb blast outside an alleged AND residence in Bulawayo in January 1988. 17 were detained and 6 now face murder charges in Zimbabwe (Work In Progress, 53, p 26). An SADF corporal, Johannes Basson, was put on trial for murder after being captured during a bungled raid in Botswana in June 1988 and another alleged agent (Charles Dennis Beahan) was handed over by Botswana to Zimbabwe when he attempted to flee at about the same time. An article in the July 8-14 edition of the Weekly Mail described the latter incidents as "two minor SADF disasters which compounded the major one at Cuito Cuanavale". Among other things, the bungled raid in Botswana (in which a policeman was killed) reinforced calls in the United States for South Africa to be declared a "terrorist state" (Weekly Mail 24e30/6/1988). At the same as these reverses were being suffered, the stagnating economy, increased international aid to the region and threat of sanctions began to strengthen the hand of those forces within the dominant classes arguing that South African capital needed greater access to the region. This was, for example, the theme of a paper presented by one influential figure, the Chairman of the



Development Bank, Simon Brand, in July 1988. Brand argued that a "siege economy" response to economic stagnation, sanctions and disinvestment, involving the direction of large resources to capital intensive, high technology strategic investments, could impair South Africa's long term economic development. Instead, Brand gave strong support to what has become known as the "inward industrialisation" strategy. This would involve placing emphasis on expanding production of manufactured consumer goods aimed at the "middle and lower income markets". Such a pattern of industrialisation, argued Brand, would also be "the optimum strategy in terms of South Africa's relations with its neighbours". It would provide a solid base for South Africa to expand its exports of manufactured commodities to southern Africa. It would also probably lead to increased imports of raw materials from neighbouring countries and result in cooperation on infrastructural projects (Weekly Mail 15-21/7/1988). A number of corporations also began to formulate growth strategies predicated on gaining greater access to the region. Eskom, for example, is reported to have drawn up plans for a regional electricity grid. This aims to enlarge the corporation's links with all SADC member states and Zaire and eventually to embrace all the 15 East and Southern African Preferential Trade Area members as well. It would directly challenge and compete with a number of SADC projects aimed at reducing energy dependence on South Africa (Financial Mail 29/4/1988). In addition, the view that greater involvement in the region might provide a more effective shield against sanctions than "counter sanctions" also began to gain ground. Among other things it seems that gaining access to potential sanctions busting conduits in neighbouring states has now been accorded a much higher priority by strategic planners than in the past. It was the combined effect of all these factors which congealed to produce the new regional conjuncture which began to emerge in 1988. By the end of the first quarter of the year it had become clear that the military option in Angola had become extremely costly in military, political and economic terms. Pretoria's known involvement with MNR banditry in Mozambique was threatening to become costly diplomatically and ideologically. Raids against neighbouring states were going wrong. Agents and even official SADF members were being captured and all of this was threatening to increase South Africa's international isolation. At the same time, certain objectives which seemed possible to advance through economic and diplomatic action began to be seen to be increasingly important. In short, a new situation began to be created by the change in the regional balance of forces in which even those elements within the state most committed to continuing along the path of escalating aggression and destabilisation were compelled to consider alternatives.

'4-

a. Pretoria's Regional Policy after Cuito Cuanavale

In assessing the current regional balance of forces and the

likely content of Pretoria's regional policy in the new conjuncture, it is necessary to recognise that while the main factors precipitating Pretoria's apparent change of course in the region have been setbacks, it has not suffered decisive defeats. As the chief Cuban negotiator, Jorge Risquet, has repeatedly pointed out, both sides in Angola could have continued fighting, albeit at an increasingly high cost in human and material terms (see Southcan 3,5, 28/9/1988). On the other fronts too, the impediments to continuing to escalate regional destabilisation were far from overwhelming. It is not therefore a question of Pretoria simply surrendering, but rather of making certain concessions while struggling to extract others on new terrains of regional struggle. This new regional conjuncture, does, in fact, open up a number of possibilities for Pretoria to advance certain regional policy goals. There is considerable sympathy among western powers with many of Pretoria's long standing economic and diplomatic regional ambitions. A number of the Frontline States are, for reasons which will be discussed below, adopting a pragmatic approach willing to trade off certain economic and diplomatic openings to Pretoria in return for security guarantees. Thus, while the new conjuncture implies some losses for Pretoria - notably, a withdrawal of the SADF from Angola; probable independence for Namibia; and a scaling down, if not cessation, of certain forms of destabilisation against Mozambique and other Frontline states - it has also opened up opportunities for it to advance certain goals through economic and diplomatic action. From indications that have already emerged it is clear that, ideally, Pretoria's strategists would like to see the current phase resulting in the following:

X A controlled or manipulated transition to independence in Namibia which would ensure that an independent Namibia did not represent any serious challenge to South Africa's regional interests;

1 Retention by South Africa of Walvis Bay;

X A non-aggression pact with an independent Namibia;

X A non-aggression pact with Angola which would make binding the 14 point plan adopted in New York in July;

\$ The exclusion of the ANC from Namibia, the closing of ANC camps in Angola, and the severe reduction, if not total elimination, of the ANC "presence" elsewhere in the region;

X A negotiated settlement resulting in power sharing between the Angolan government and Unita, and possibly some form of negotiation between the Mozambican government and the MNR.

X Greater access to regional markets for South African commodities, participation by South African capital in selected projects in the region, and the opening up of more facilities for sanctions busting;

X An endorsement by regional states of the Botha regime's "reform" programme;

X A reduction of international isolation based on acceptance of South Africa's "constructive role" in the region.

An examination of these goals of current South African regional policy shows that they do not envisage only economic and diplomatic gains, there are also clear security objectives. Immediately these seek to accompany the abandonment of the "forward defence" posture, implied by a withdrawal from Angola and Namibia, with a reinforcement and tightening of security demands vis à vis other regional states. In a more general sense, the above list can be seen as wholly compatible with the approach defined in the Botha regime's original strategy to build a "Constellation of Southern African States" through promoting security and economic cooperation as a step towards political acceptance and even cooperation. In this respect it is noteworthy that in addition to the above list of specific goals, Pretoria has also indicated its desire for a regional security conference in which it would participate along with a number of key regional states. This plus the evident desire to see regional states endorsing its "reformed apartheid" programme, would clearly aim at building legitimacy and gaining acceptance as the "regional power".

However, while Pretoria clearly has its regional policy ambitions, the Frontline states also have their own agenda. In addition to the withdrawal of South Africa from Angola and independence from Namibia, the Frontline states are also seeking a more generalised withdrawal from destabilisation in order to secure their independence and create conditions for economic development. While the current strategy of a number of Frontline states is predicated on conceding certain economic and diplomatic openings to South Africa in the hope of encouraging those forces favouring less bellicose options, it seeks simultaneously to ensure that any such cooperation is on mutually beneficial terms. Moreover, the Frontline states have all reaffirmed their commitment to SADC and are clearly hoping that any reduction in the intensity of destabilisation will enable the SADC programme (which aims at reducing dependence principally, but not only, on South Africa) to advance.

The final outcome in terms of the balance of gains and losses remains to be seen. Whether in the end it is Pretoria or the independent regional states which gain most will be determined by the course of future struggles and the strategies and tactics followed by both sides. What seems certain is that the new phase of regional struggle will be both more complex than in the past and multifaceted in the sense that it will take place on a number of terrains. It is also likely, at least on some of these terrains, to be characterised by compromises rather than clearcut victories and defeats. It is unlikely in such a conjuncture that Pretoria will completely abandon destabilisation. The present phase has been viewed by some observers as one of "compromise"

not only in terms of objectives but also in terms of conduct of regional policy (Shaun Johnson in Weekly Mail 23-29/9/1988). Perhaps, the most likely scenario is that there will be a partial pull back from destabilisation in corridors of economic interest to South Africa. In these areas, Pretoria will encourage involvement by South African capital with the objective of advancing strategic interests (including those related to sanctions busting) as well as promoting purely commercial gains. It will also attempt to use this involvement as a diplomatic lever to ward off sanctions and reduce international isolation. Outside of these corridors, however, it is likely that Pretoria will continue to be involved in destabilisation \_ although its involvement will probably be re-organised and concealed in new ways.

Such a conjuncture is, moreover, likely to be a very fluid and even volatile. The fact that it is likely to be dominated by compromises rather than clearcut victories and defeats may contribute towards heightening conflicts between advocates of different options within the apartheid state, if only because interpretation of the relative balance of gains and losses is unlikely to be unanimous. There is also the fact that the present course is not the first choice of the military securocrats whose dominance within the major decisionmaking apparatuses of the apartheid state seems to have been enhanced rather than undermined by recent developments (see Star Weekly 21/9/1988). These factors would suggest that militaristic options are likely to continue to have significant support and that a reversion to full scale militaristic aggression will thus remain an ever present possibility, particularly if the current diplomatic and economic action is not seen to be advancing Pretoria's hegemonic ambitions and if sufficient pressure is not maintained to make the costs of such options prohibitive.

#### 4. Potential Domestic Implications

Developments in the regional front have never occurred in isolation from those in the domestic front of struggle, and the current post-Cuito Cuanavale conjuncture is unlikely to be an exception. Pretoria's rulers are clearly hoping that the new regional conjuncture will benefit them on the domestic front in at least the following ways:

First, as already indicated, there are clear hopes or expectations that the new regional conjuncture could lead to a reduction of international pressure, including the threat of sanctions. There is also the related hope that it might result in greater international and regional acceptance of the "legitimacy" of the regime's "reformed apartheid" programme.

Second, there appear to be some hopes or expectations that the redeployment of military resources inside South Africa itself could lead to improved "border security". It has been suggested that a withdrawal from Angola is unlikely to lead to a reduction of defence spending as such. Most of the existing weapons

development projects will still go ahead, and some indeed will have been given greater urgency by the vulnerabilities revealed in Angola. However, a withdrawal from Angola and Namibia is seen as potentially releasing resources which could be used to reinforce border control measures. A project to construct an electric fence along the Botswana border - costing R 130.060 a kilometre - is being mooted and there are apparently plans to deploy more personnel in border areas. The SADF apparently believes that such measures could cut "infiltration" to 5% of their current levels (see Financial Mail 26/8/1988). On the other hand, the fact that the new regional conjuncture has resulted from setbacks for Pretoria means that it has a certain potential to weaken the position of the apartheid oppressors internally.

First, the processes put in train by Cuito Cuanavale could contribute to the further undermining of the domestic legitimacy of state policies and boost the morale of popular forces. The regime has largely failed in its attempts to portray the SADF as victors in Angola. It is widely recognised that Pretoria is negotiating on south western Africa because it suffered a military setback at Cuito Cuanavale. Moreover, if and when the process of implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 in Namibia advances, the contrast between what is happening there and in South Africa can be expected to sharpen. In particular, if and when Namibia moves to elections under a one person/one vote system, the question why this cannot also apply in South Africa will become more difficult to answer. Moreover, given the nature and content of the "reforms" proposed by the regime ("power sharing" in a system in which the existing regime retains "ultimate control"), it is extremely unlikely that they will gain endorsement from regional states. Finally, the spectacle of SNAFU (which has been denounced as a "terrorist organisation") taking over government in Namibia, can be expected to have some effect on the morale of the oppressed people of South Africa similar to that when FRELIMO took over in Mozambique.

In addition, as already indicated, the new regional conjuncture characterised by compromise rather than clearcut victories and defeats could heighten contradictions both within the regime and the wider ruling class. This could add to the already existing incoherence of state policy and slow down or impede the process of decisively opting for any particular strategic course. In the short term any such developments could add to pressures for a reversion to militaristic options. If popular struggle becomes more intense and the regional conjuncture is seen as reinforcing this struggle, the temptation to step up regional aggression will be greater.

##### 5. Conclusions

While the present chapter has argued that the emerging post-Cuito

Cuanavale regional conjuncture is likely to be fluid and even volatile pregnant with an ever present possibility of a reversion to full scale militaristic aggression, the experience of the transition to .it has hae exposed critical windows of vulnerability in Pretoria'e militarism. It has shown that the way to get Pretoria's rulers to move towards more benign option in both the region and domestically is not to place high hopes or mpectatione on influencing the subjective attitudes of decision-makere, but rather to influence objective circumstances in such a way that, regardless of their subjective intentions, the rulers of Pretoria have no option other than to follow a certain course of action. If Pretoria can be prevented from closing the existing windows of vulnerability, if the defensive capacity of the Frontline states is strengthened and if sufficient international pressure can be maintained to make the costs of a reversion to full scare destabilieation prohibitive, the present regional conjuncture has the potential not only to result in a South African withdrawal from Angola and independence for Namibia but also to more generally influence events both in the region and inside South Africa in ways which could centribute towards a strengthening of antieapartheid forces at the expense of the apartheid oppreesors.

Reference:

1. Geremny, R. "Summary of Mozambican Refugee Accounts of Principally ConflictRelated Experience in Mozambique: Report submitted to Ambassador Jonathan Moore, Directbr, Bureau for Refugee Programs and Dr Chester A Cracker, Assistant Secretary of African Affairs by Robert Gersony, consultant to Bureau for Refugee Programs", Washington: Department of State Qpril 1988.