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THE SOVIET UNION, CHINA AND THE WEST IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

By Colin Legum

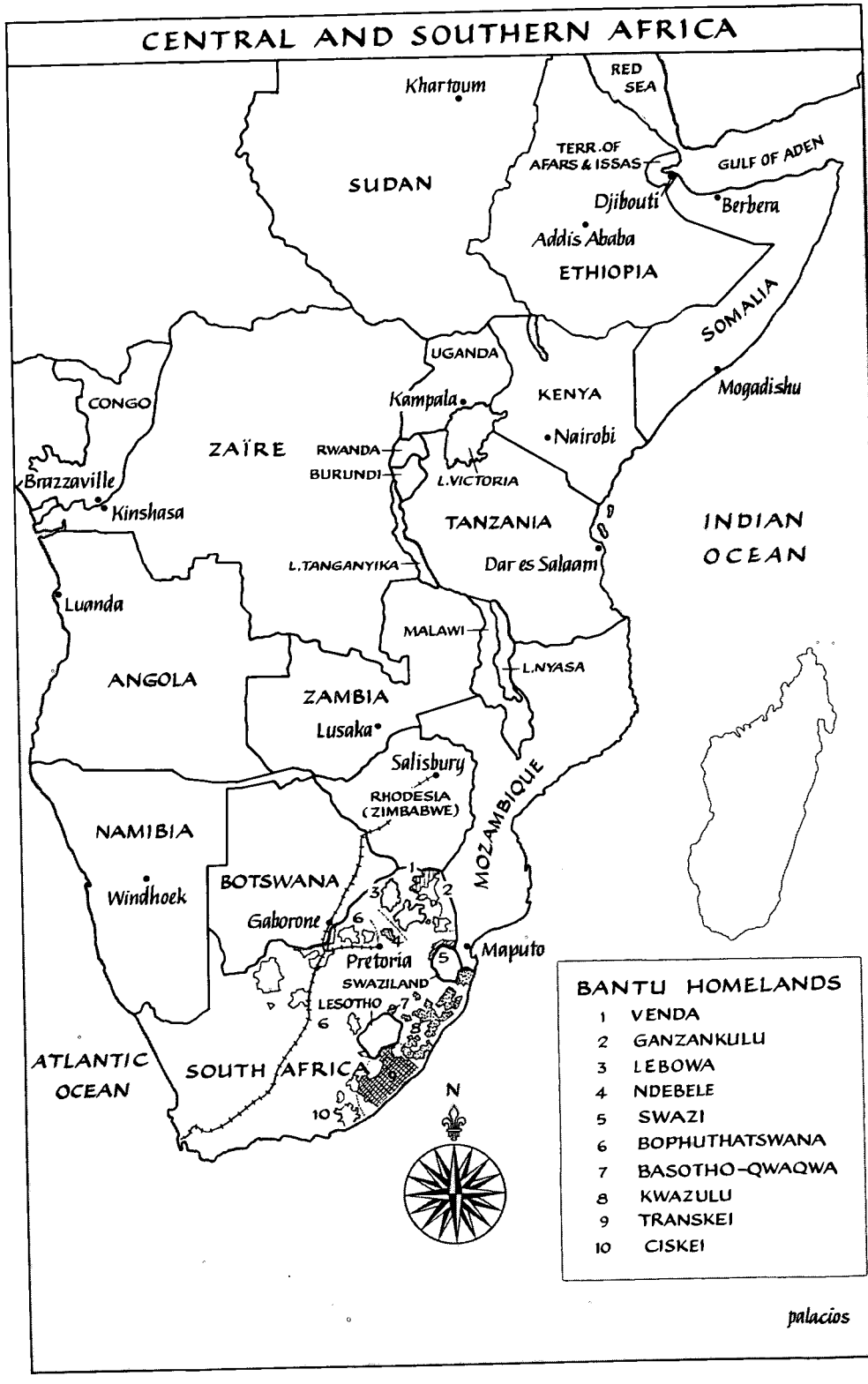


LIKE Henry Kissinger, most American commentators have interpreted the Soviet intervention in Angola almost solely as an extension of Soviet cold war competition with the West into Africa. In this perspective the outcome in Angola has been viewed as a major gain for the Soviet Union against the West, with the Russians capitalizing on the American disadvantage in its years of support for Portugal. With the South African intervention against the Soviet-backed liberation movement, the Russians also scored an important "diplomatic triumph," as the Organization of African Unity swung around to overwhelming support for the Soviet protégé, against the Angolan leaders who had called in the South Africans. In all this the United States and the West were the big losers.

While this interpretation contains some elements of truth, it is an inadequate framework for analysis of what actually happened in Angola and what may now be in immediate prospect for Rhodesia and Namibia. For it leaves out an extremely important element—the rivalry between the Soviet Union and China for influence in Africa. Only if this rivalry is given the emphasis it deserves can one understand the true nature of the struggle that is now taking place in Rhodesia, and, prospectively, future conflicts in Namibia and South Africa.

The root of the conflict in southern Africa is of course entirely indigenous—that is, it arises from the determination of black Africans to bring an end to the white supremacist regimes there. Most African leaders would much prefer, in their own interests, to see this come about through nonviolent means, as was demonstrated by their response in 1974 to the offer to start talks by South Africa's Prime Minister Johannes Vorster. They will, nonetheless, support violence if no other way seems open, as they do presently in Rhodesia. Similarly, most influential African leaders are hostile to communism and strongly opposed to the intrusion of big-power politics in Africa;

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CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA
Khartoum
RED SEA
SUDAN
TERR. OF AFARS & ISSAS
GULF OF ADEN
Djibouti
Berbera
Addis Ababa
ETHIOPIA
SOMALIA
UGANDA
Kampala
KENYA
Mogadishu
Nairobi
CONGO
ZAÏRE
RWANDA
BURUNDI
L. VICTORIA
Brazzaville
Kinshasa
TANZANIA
INDIAN OCEAN
L. TANGANYIKA
Dar es Salaam
Luanda
MALAWI
L. NYASA
ANGOLA
ZAMBIA
Lusaka
Salisbury
RHODESIA (ZIMBABWE)
MOZAMBIQUE
NAMIBIA
Windhoek
BOTSWANA
Gaborone
Pretoria
Maputo
SWAZILAND
LESOTHO
ATLANTIC OCEAN
SOUTH AFRICA
N
BANTU HOMELANDS
1 VENDA
2 GANZANKULU
3 LEBOWA
4 NDEBELE
5 SWAZI
6 BOPHUTHATSWANA
7 BASOTHO-QWAQWA
8 KWAZULU
9 TRANSKEI
10 CISKEI
palacios

but because they see white racism in southern Africa as a bigger menace to them than communism, they will welcome anti-Western forces in the struggle against the white supremacist regimes.

Neither the Soviet Union nor China has had any conflicting interest or ideological difficulties in wholeheartedly supporting the African drive against white-minority rule. The Western position, on the other hand, has necessarily been more ambiguous, given a sizable Western economic stake in the area and strong social constraints against the risk of a race war which guerrilla tactics would unavoidably entail. At least until Secretary of State Kissinger's recent trip to Africa, this diplomatic disadvantage was reinforced for the United States by its reputed and discernible "tilt" toward the white-minority regimes.

Mr. Kissinger's statements during his April journey to Africa could signal an important shift in U.S. policy. It is true that he avoided directly taking issue over South Africa in his major speech in Lusaka, but few really expected at this stage that there would be any clear-cut U.S. declaration on this question, given South Africa's old, barnacle-like attachment to the hulk of the West. The Secretary of State's full commitment to early majority rule in Rhodesia and to an internationally acceptable independence for Namibia, however, sounded encouraging in African ears.

If the Administration can quickly follow up on the promises, its ability to influence developments in southern Africa will undoubtedly be improved. Three steps are seen by Africans as an immediate test of a meaningful change in U.S. policy: repeal of the Byrd Amendment which permits chrome imports from Rhodesia; recognition of the new 18-member High Command of the Zimbabwe Liberation Army (ZILA) which is now more important than the old leadership of the African National Council (ANC); and a firm rejection of any independence for Namibia which does not have the substantial endorsement of the country's political leadership, including the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO).

But if the U.S. (and Western) posture is in fact moving closer toward African aspirations, it is more than ever vital to take full account of the deep-seated rivalry between the Soviet Union and China, and the way that rivalry interacts with the interests of black African nations, and South Africa. For the West, the Sino-Soviet struggle in Africa may hold both perils and opportunities.

II

Since the early 1960s, rivalry between the Chinese and the Rus-

sians in the Third World has grown increasingly intense. The "first front" in this struggle has been South and Southeast Asia. There the Russians, over the past decade, have more than held their own: in Vietnam and Laos they have emerged at least more influential than the Chinese, and their developing relations with Mrs. Indira Gandhi's India are, at least in the short term, a considerable achievement. In Bangladesh the rivalry is now growing keener, as the Chinese move to underpin the military regime to resist the pressures of New Delhi and Moscow.

A related part of that struggle, in Soviet strategic thinking, has undoubtedly been the competition for influence in the countries on both sides of the Red Sea, notably in the Horn of Africa. Here the Soviets were able to establish military facilities in Somalia but also suffered sharp setbacks, including the failure of the communist-led coup in the Sudan in 1971, and the erosion of their close relations with Egypt since 1972. It now also looks as if they are being eased out of the important Aden port in South Yemen.

Elsewhere in black Africa, the Soviets made determined efforts in the early 1960s, notably in Zaïre, Ghana, Guinea and Mali, but with the failure of their efforts in the first two countries and uncertain results in the latter, the Russians became increasingly clumsy in their dealings. By 1973, Moscow had few worthwhile connections in black Africa, other than tiny Somalia and unstable Congo-Brazzaville.

The Chinese, on the other hand, having also got off to an early bad start, profited more quickly from their mistakes than the Russians, notably after their Cultural Revolution. Avoiding blatant bids for political domination, and tailoring their programs to meet the particular requests of the Africans themselves, they imparted a sense of both generosity and disinterest to their aid role which has led to their steadily widening their sphere of friendly influence on the African continent.

The Chinese had two particular successes. The first was the expansion of their friendship with Tanzania (through the building of the Freedom Railway to Zambia) and later with Zaïre: thus they established a network of relationships across the tropical waist of Africa from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic. (At present they are considering a request from Botswana to help operate that country's section of the line recently taken over from Rhodesian Railways.) Their second success was in winning the confidence of the major liberation movements in southern Africa to a much greater extent than did the Russians, despite Moscow's arms and economic aid. With the exception of the African National Congress of South Africa

(ANC-in-exile), all the major liberation movements appear to have found it easier to work with the Chinese than with the Russians. This was notably the case with the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) of Rhodesia, and SWAPO of Namibia.

Moscow had a particularly troubled relationship with the Angolan leadership during the liberation struggle. Although they had consistently supported the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), they had never found it easy to get along with the rather secretive and prickly Agostinho Neto. For a time in 1973 they went so far as to support one of Neto's challengers, Daniel Chipenda, and cut off all their aid to MPLA; but once it became clear that Chipenda could not win, Moscow switched its support back to Neto.

The Soviets' concern over China's successes in Africa led them, around 1972–73, to embark on a much more vigorous policy in black Africa. They became the main arms suppliers to Uganda's tyrant ruler, General Idi Amin, and they entered into an arms agreement with Libya's Colonel Qaddafi, despite his militantly anti-communist stand. While the move toward Libya was clearly aimed at President Sadat (whose relations with Qaddafi are notoriously bad), the decision to gamble on Amin gave them an apparent "gain" in East and Central Africa—in a country, moreover, hostile to Tanzania and Zambia, both of which are seen by the Russians as being "under Chinese influence." (Moscow's classification of African countries bears a strong resemblance to the simplistic views held by Western military establishments.)

This new higher priority given to Africa by Moscow enabled it to respond quickly to two major developments early in 1974. The first was the February army mutiny in Ethiopia, which marked the beginning of the end of Haile Selassie's long rule and began a new period of instability around the Horn of Africa. And the second was the Portuguese coup two months later.

The collapse of the Portuguese dictatorship in April 1974 initiated a new phase in the Sino-Soviet struggle, with the Chinese initially making far the greater gains, particularly in Mozambique, and in consolidating their relations with Tanzania and Zambia. Given the strong Chinese position already established with two of Angola's liberation movements (the Zaïre-backed Front for the Liberation of Angola [FNLA] and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola [UNITA]) as well as with the Zaïre government, the cards were heavily stacked in the Chinese favor at the end of 1974.

In this context, and within what was already emerging as a much speeded-up timetable in southern Africa generally, the Soviets made their crucial decision in Angola in 1975.

III

In terms of size and risk, the Soviet operation in Angola went a good deal beyond their previous ventures in Africa. In their all-out support of the MPLA, the Russians gambled on the success of a minority party, and for a time defied the collective policy of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which favored government of national unity in an independent Angola. The key to these bold Soviet decisions lay above all in the Chinese factor.

In Angola, in the early months of 1975, the MPLA was facing an open challenge from the Zaïre-backed FNLA. At that time the Chinese, with their military instructors based in Zaïre, were FNLA's most effective foreign backers. U.S. aid was still small in scale. If the Russians had been primarily concerned with neutralizing U.S. aid, they could have invoked the Moscow accords to prevent the development of a situation which could lead to a military confrontation between them. But this would have meant leaving the field clear for the Chinese to spread their influence through FNLA and Zaïre.

Instead, by March 1975, the Russians were already engaged in sending substantial military supplies to the MPLA—fully six months before the first U.S. arms shipments had begun to reach FNLA through Zaïre, and only two months after Kissinger had asked Congress to approve a limited military aid program to Zaïre for this purpose. The March 1975 date is important because it explains how the MPLA could by then have become sufficiently strong to best the FNLA forces in the continuing struggles for control of the capital in April and May. By June the MPLA was strong enough to take on UNITA as well, and to spread its forces, albeit lightly, across 12 of the 14 provinces.

It is not yet possible to fix with certainty the exact date when Moscow first began to arrange with Fidel Castro to bring in large numbers of Cubans as bearers of the communist flag on the battlefield, or when President Ngouabi of the Congo agreed that his capital, Brazzaville, should serve as the base for the buildup of Russian arms for the MPLA and the staging post for the trans-shipment of Cuban soldiers to Angola. By July, however, the Russians were almost certainly going for broke.

By September, two months before the date set for independence on November 11, the Russian and Cuban military aid was of a size that

promised military supremacy to the MPLA. The scale of the Soviet/Cuban intervention increased sharply in early October, three weeks before the South African forces entered Angola in any size. (However, by September, the MPLA were very likely already convinced that such an attack was probable.) Because the Russians and Cubans had by then already established their communication lines to, and through, Brazzaville, it was a simple matter for them to increase the size of their intervention at short notice. The Russian and Cuban contention that their military intervention was the result of the South African invasion is clearly an ex post facto rationalization.

In October, the Russians openly opposed the OAU position in favor of a government of national unity. They showed their hand by a blunt demarche to the OAU Chairman, General Idi Amin, demanding that Amin, the recipient of quantities of Soviet military aid, should break with the policy of his own organization and follow the Moscow line, recognizing the MPLA as the sole legal authority. Not one to knuckle under—in any direction—Amin refused. This remarkably clumsy diplomacy was evidence of the Soviet Union's overriding determination to see its Angolan enterprise succeed.

The Chinese, on the other hand, made their decision to withdraw their instructors from the FNLA camps in Zaïre in July 1975 in response to the OAU's call for neutrality among the three rival Angolan movements. The reason they gave for this decision was that since they were not in a position to deliver aid to the MPLA, they would have been taking sides if they were left supporting only the FNLA and UNITA. Two months later the Chinese in fact withdrew all their military instructors from Zaïre. Peking was not equipped to compete with massive Soviet aid. It is also probable that the Chinese, taking a much longer historical view of their role in Africa than Moscow, believed they would be able to achieve more in the long run by proving themselves loyal to OAU decisions. (It is likely, too, that they counted on the United States not to allow itself to be ousted by the Russians from an area of traditional Western interest.)

After the South Africans invaded Angola in October, all political risk of the Soviets offending Africa was eradicated, but they were still faced with the perils inherent in their role as patron of an undeveloped and divided nation. Their willingness to commit themselves fully in the face of these uncertainties resulted largely from a desire to counter the significant Chinese influence in East Africa, particularly the Chinese involvement in the liberation struggles.

What happened in Angola suggests that in the Third World the Sino-Soviet rivalry with each other has become more important to

them than either's rivalry with the West. The Chinese felt themselves to be in de facto alliance with the United States and reportedly urged U.S. intervention against the Russians and Cubans. The Russians, for their part, were willing to place détente with Washington in jeopardy at a time when opposition to détente was already growing in the United States and Western Europe.

The clearest evidence of the primary importance of the Sino-Soviet contest was provided by the propaganda circulated in the Third World by Moscow and Peking during the Angolan crisis. Both sides were concerned almost entirely with discrediting each other and only to a minor degree with attacking "U.S. and Western imperialism." Indeed, the leitmotiv of Peking's line on Angola was to accuse the "modern tsarists" of "single-handedly provoking the civil war in Angola." The Russians, on their side, insisted that:

> all the action taken by the Peking leadership shows that the Maoists, who are seeking their own hegemonic control (over the world), have not stopped subversive activity against the Angolan people for a single minute, that they gave active support to pro-imperialist groupings and organizations, pushing them to take action against the genuine representatives and vanguard of the Angolan people—the MPLA.

Each side strained to convince the Third World that the role of the other in Angola was proof of a clear design to achieve "world domination"—an obsessive refrain in the propaganda of both.

In this contest for the allegiance of the Third World, the Russians are concerned to defend themselves against what they regard as "Peking's false doctrine about the role of the two superpowers . . . a cunning trick of the Maoists who dream of dominating the world." Moscow's defensive line is typified by this kind of statement:

> The present leadership of the PRC are taking considerable pains in order to justify the so-called vanguard role of China in the world revolutionary process and to represent itself as one of the truest and most consistent allies of the Afro-Asian and Latin American peoples in their struggles for national liberation, against imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism. But events have proved absolutely false the Maoists' representation of Peking as a factor working to cement the national liberation forces of Angola. . . .

To which the Chinese counterattacked by saying:

> People have become increasingly aware that in contending for hegemony with the other superpowers, the Soviet revisionists stoop to anything to frenziedly penetrate and expand in Africa in a vain attempt to replace the old colonialism. Their interference in the internal affairs of Angola constitutes an important step in their scramble for hegemony in Africa, the aim being to place strategically important Angola, which is rich in natural resources, in their neocolonialist spheres of influence.

The Chinese position closely approximates that of the hawks in the West in seeing the Russian design as being concerned solely with becoming the new "colonial power in Africa." At the height of the Angolan affair, a senior Chinese diplomat remonstrated with me for questioning whether the Russians were really interested in acquiring military bases in Angola. "That," he said coldly, "may not be the wish of the Angolans; but we know how difficult it was for us to shake the Russians off our necks in China and we, after all, were in a somewhat stronger position to resist the Russians than are the Angolans."

The outcome of the Angolan affair did shift the balance of influence between the Soviets and Chinese in Africa. The Soviet Union demonstrated its willingness and capability to produce effective military support for an ally in a strategically crucial part of southern Africa. In doing so, the Russians succeeded in encouraging other liberation movements to think seriously about accepting their support. It is too early yet to know how much China's influence has suffered in Africa as a result of the Russian/Cuban/MPLA victory, but what is certain is Chinese determination to ensure that the Russians do not, if they can possibly help it, repeat their victory in Rhodesia and Namibia.

IV

The experience of Angola should not be taken as a sure guide to what will happen in Rhodesia. The Russians were able to play an effective role in Angola for a number of reasons particular to that situation, including: the peculiar nature of the power struggle among rival Angolan movements in a country without a legally recognized government; South Africa's decision to intervene militarily; the Chinese decision to opt for neutrality in the local power struggle; and the paralysis of U.S. foreign policy making in the aftermath of Vietnam, Watergate and the CIA investigations.

In Rhodesia and Namibia, the role that external powers will play is likely to be circumscribed by the active role of the leaders of the neighboring black African countries. The so-called Front-Line Presidents—Tanzania's Julius Nyerere (the chairman), Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda, Mozambique's Samora Machel, and Botswana's Sir Seretse Khama—exercise a controlling influence over what happens in the liberation struggle in Rhodesia. The effectiveness of this strong quartet depends on their ability to carry the majority of the OAU membership with them—which seems assured—and especially on their ability to retain the confidence of the new Zimbabwe Liberation

Army (ZILA) high command. ZILA, whose leadership is as yet relatively unknown, has now replaced the divided leadership of the African National Council (ANC), as represented by Bishop Abel Muzorewa, and the two main guerrilla movements, the Zimbabwe African Nationalist Union (ZANU) led by the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) led by Joshua Nkomo.

Although Messrs. Kaunda and Khama had ended up on opposite sides from Messrs. Nyerere and Machel in the Angolan controversies, the four Presidents have remained on close and friendly terms and are agreed on a strategy for Rhodesia. They are united in their commitment to a full-scale guerrilla war in Rhodesia until a white Rhodesian leadership emerges which is willing to enter into negotiations premised on the acceptance of immediate majority rule. Although they have committed themselves to the struggle, they want to keep it as short as possible to avoid unnecessary loss of life and bitterness, and to minimize the damaging effects on the economies of Zambia and Mozambique of a war on their borders. For landlocked Zambia the disruption of its transport routes to the sea is a serious matter. Mozambique's parlous economy makes its commitment especially heroic, or reckless, depending on one's point of view.

The second point of agreement among the four Presidents is that all foreign military and economic aid for the guerrillas must be channeled through the OAU Liberation Committee in Dar es Salaam. By this measure they seek to prevent any of the major powers from backing possible rival black nationalist factions, thus repeating Angola's tragedy. The third and fourth points of agreement are also aimed at curtailing further outside intervention by insisting that the fighting itself must be done only by Zimbabweans, thereby excluding the possibility of Cuban commandos repeating their Angolan role in Rhodesia; and that no new foreign military instructors are to be admitted into the training camps of ZILA situated in Mozambique and Tanzania. This last point ensures to the Chinese a primary role in the training of the guerrillas. The Chinese already have been involved for about seven years in support of the main guerrilla group, ZANU, whose forces have now been absorbed by ZILA. The Russians have in the past given their support to ZANU's rival, ZAPU, which failed conspicuously to build up an effective guerrilla force. ZAPU is represented in the joint command, but its past military ineffectiveness makes it the subordinate partner. The ZILA military command, with only one or two notable exceptions, favors cooperation with the Chinese instructors. Continuing Russian pressures for a major training

role to be given to Cuban military instructors are being vigorously resisted by the Chinese, who have described the Cuban commandos in Angola as "Russian mercenaries."

However, a small number of Cuban instructors have now been admitted as a trade-off for Russian deliveries of SAM missiles and other sophisticated weapons not yet available from China—and relations between the few Cubans and the Chinese instructors in the camps are known to be producing difficulties for the ZILA High Command.

So, in the developing Rhodesian struggle the Sino-Soviet rivalry witnessed in Angola is continued. For the Front-Line Presidents and the Zambabwe leadership the risk of introducing the damaging rivalry between the two communist capitals into ZILA's ranks is a major concern. It is possible that, under continuing heavy Russian pressure, the Chinese might be asked to give up their present training role, but this is not immediately in prospect. The Russians, however, can be expected to exercise considerable pressures on the African leaders to undercut the Chinese role. There is reason to believe that they are proving reluctant to supply arms through the OAU Liberation Committee in protest against the present policy of the Front-Line Presidents. Because the guerrillas are particularly keen to get Russian supplies of SAM-7 missiles, Moscow has a strong card to play.

As long as the Front-Line Presidents are able to maintain their present unity, and to retain the confidence of the ZILA high command (a crucial factor), they are in physical control of the strategy to be followed in Rhodesia. It is presently no part of their strategy to allow the Cuban commandos to repeat their Angolan role in Rhodesia. Independence and African self-determination are important ideological goals for them. Even more important, they have no desire to see outside powers exacerbate Zimbabwean divisions by choosing sides.

However, there are a number of elements which could influence their present strategy. If the guerrillas fail in the next several years to crack the morale of Ian Smith's supporters, who still include the great majority of white Rhodesians, frustration could induce an erosion of the present policy. A prolonged struggle could change the political situation in Mozambique (whose leadership is still engaged in implanting its authority in the recently born republic) and in Zambia. Serious economic dislocation and internal insecurity caused by the wars along their borders could, in time, undermine the present leadership in both countries. Unless there is an early outcome to the Rhodesian struggle, pressure could arise for a greater input of military power against the Smith regime; and frustration would induce a

greater openness to the involvement of outside powers.

Furthermore, if an open split were to develop within ZILA's High Command, the Russians and Chinese could step in to support rival factions.

Another major element of uncertainty is South Africa's future role in Rhodesia. Mr. Vorster believes majority rule in Rhodesia is both inevitable and necessary. His present firm policy is not to become militarily involved in the Rhodesian fighting, having withdrawn his forces from that country in 1975. His decision to withdraw his backing from the Smith regime was made immediately after the collapse of Portuguese colonialism, when it became clear to him that the Rhodesian position was no longer defensible in military terms without a total commitment of South Africa's resources—an option he rejected as not being in South Africa's best interests. Involvement in the Rhodesian struggle, he feels, would not only entail an open-ended military commitment against the guerrillas, but would stimulate more militant opposition from black South Africans. He also must recognize after Angola that it could induce the African leaders to invite the communist powers to become more directly involved in the area.

But, on the other hand, Mr. Vorster will not apply pressure on Rhodesia by closing his border with that country, or impede the transport of its exports and imports to South Africa's ports, even though this action would be the quickest way of forcing white Rhodesians to accept majority rule. He will refuse to assist in "a quick kill" for two reasons. First, in joining in the international embargo on Rhodesia he would be playing into the hands of the anti-apartheid lobby which advocates sanctions against South Africa. Second, and most important, he must take great care not to arouse the right wing of his own white electorate. Even though the majority of the ruling Afrikaner National Party's supporters appear to accept the reasons for Mr. Vorster's refusal to continue to back the Smith regime, white South Africans are, understandably enough, emotionally involved in the fate of white Rhodesians. Not only do they feel strong kinship, but they also suspect they might be watching a rehearsal for their own coming agony. The *verkrampte* (inward-looking) elements among the Afrikaners—an articulate minority—regard the abandonment by South Africa of the Smith regime as a "betrayal," and they argue that this pragmatic policy will not help South Africa to fight off the black challenge once Rhodesia has been taken over by a black government.

In the approaching denouement of the Rhodesian crisis, the big powers will be kept out of the struggle—if the African strategy works out as intended. Once the guerrillas begin to develop a more pow-

erful thrust, it is expected that an increasing number of white Rhodesians will begin to trek southward to the South African border to settle either in the Republic or in parts of the white commonwealth. Such an exodus will then demoralize the rest of the white Rhodesians and lead to the collapse of the Smith regime, producing a new white leadership (as in the transition period in Kenya), which will be ready to negotiate acceptable terms for a settlement. That, at least, is the scenario of the Front-Line Presidents. What this picture leaves out of account is the tenacity of white Rhodesian resistance and the possibility of a white backlash in South Africa upsetting Mr. Vorster's more realistic approach to the Rhodesian crisis. It also assumes the unity of the Zimbabwean liberation movement, as well as the ability of the Front-Line Presidents to maintain their present common stand despite the competing interests of the communist powers, as well as those of the Western nations.

Faced with these considerable uncertainties it is futile to speculate about the likely course of events in Rhodesia, but it requires little prescience to suggest that what happens there will decisively affect future developments in the last stronghold of white rule in the continent—the Republic of South Africa.

V

The penultimate element in the southern African pattern—the territory of Namibia (South West Africa)—is directly controlled by South Africa. What happens there obviously depends directly on decisions taken by Pretoria.

Mr. Vorster has announced his decision to go forward with plans to grant full independence under black majority rule to Namibia within two or three years. While broad agreement has already been reached with some black Namibian leaders, headed by Chief Clemens Kapuuo, Mr. Vorster has not been willing to negotiate with the external wing of the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), although he is reportedly ready to talk to their leaders inside the country as well as with acceptable exile leaders. Endorsement from at least some of the recognized SWAPO leaders is essential to winning international recognition of the new state since SWAPO is recognized by both the United Nations (which holds the mandate over the territory) and by the OAU as the only representative movement of black Namibians.

SWAPO has recently been experiencing internal troubles—the first in the 15 years of its existence. There are a number of reasons for these difficulties. The recent efflux of young Namibians has produced more

open criticism of some of the exile leaders in the party hierarchy and over the allegedly undemocratic way in which the exile organization is run. SWAPO has also come under pressure in recent months from the Russians, who are known to have offered the exiles' leader, Sam Nujoma, considerable military and economic support on condition that he scale down the aid his organization receives from the Chinese. After their military buildup in Angola, the Russians and the Cubans are obviously in a strong position to make an enticing offer of aid to SWAPO's leaders. So far, the organization has been remarkably successful in avoiding entanglement in the Sino-Soviet dispute; it remains to be seen whether it can continue to maintain a carefully neutral position in the present state of rivalry between Moscow and Peking in southern Africa.

If the South African government remains adamant about dealing with SWAPO, the issue of Namibia is likely to become an increasingly strong magnet for political censure of South Africa and the possibility of external intervention to aid the SWAPO guerrillas will increase. Here, as on the question of Rhodesia, protraction of the uncertainties is also likely to increase the militance of the *verkrampte* right-wing of the South African Nationalist Party and decrease the likelihood of a peaceful transition to majority rule in any of the affected areas.

With regard to South Africa's own situation, Mr. Vorster promised, well over a year ago, changes which would surprise and disarm his critics—"within six months." No one, whether within or outside the country, knew exactly what he meant by this statement, and it aroused a storm of anxiety and speculation in South Africa. The time period having long since elapsed, the most plausible conjecture is that he was referring principally to his active mediation of the Rhodesia dispute, and to his policy of "détente" with black Africa. Mr. Vorster's attempts to win the friendship of African states through offers of economic aid and cooperation have not been very fruitful: the Ivory Coast is the only important black African state to have proved at all responsive; other takers have been Malawi and the Central African Republic. None of these has been reliable political allies in the United Nations or the OAU.

Mr. Vorster may also have been referring to several parallel policies for incremental change in South Africa's domestic institutions. These include the elimination of some of the harsh racially discriminatory measures against urban black South Africans; and, the launching of the Republic's ten black Homelands, or Bantustans, on the road to "independence." The first of the Homelands to achieve

this form of independence will be the one relatively sizable and integrated area, the Transkei, next October. It is slated to be followed by the smaller areas of BophuthaTswana, Venda and the Ciskei, whose territories include a number of scattered parcels of land. Two other areas, KwaZulu and Gazankulu are headed by influential leaders, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi and Professor Ntsanwisi, who are strongly opposed to the "balkanization" of the country, and presently opposed to "independence" for their own areas.

The future of South Africa's policy of "separate development" depends on whether the partition of the republic into one state embracing two-thirds of the country, and ten black states sharing the rest will offer an acceptable basis for a peaceful settlement between the 18 million Africans and the four million whites. To outside observers this seems an extremely shaky proposition.

VI

In all this, what is the likely future role of the big powers in Africa? In general, the Soviet Union is likely to engage in the most actively aggressive pursuit of influence there, motivated both by a desire to "contain" the spread of Chinese influence and by an interest in building up the Soviet Navy's world role by establishing facilities in the littoral countries along the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. In broad political terms, southern Africa has probably now become the most important area of competition, but the secondary arena, the Horn of Africa, will also attract increasing attention and concern.

There the Russians, having established themselves in Somalia, may well use the opportunities presented by the difficulties of post-imperial Ethiopia to enlarge their role in the Horn. Berbera, in Somalia, in fact offers only limited facilities for the Russian Navy. Besides, the Saudi Arabians, concerned about the Russian role in the Red Sea, are known to have been using their economic power to try and persuade the Somalis to end their military reliance on the Russians, as the South Yemenis seem to be doing, and as Sadat has done in Egypt. (It is interesting, incidentally, to note that the Chinese have agreed to provide military assistance to Egypt to make up, in addition to the Americans, what they will lose through the expulsion of the Russians.) Moscow is now engaged in courting the military regime in Ethiopia, which has become uneasy in maintaining relations with its traditional ally, the United States. So far, the Ethiopians have refused to accept Moscow's offer of military aid because of their enmity toward the Russians' ally, Somalia. They have been preferring to rely on economic aid from the

Chinese, and reluctantly, on military and economic aid from the United States.

Trouble is likely to come to a head in a dispute over the French Territory of the Afars and Issas (known by the name of its port, Djibouti) which will achieve its independence from France next year. Ethiopia will strenuously resist the attempts of the neighboring territory's ethnic Somalis (who are a majority of the population) to cede the new state to Somalia. How far the United States might feel called upon to aid Ethiopia against the Soviet-backed Somalis remains to be seen.

It is in the military strategic competition to establish facilities for the Soviet Navy around the coast of Africa that the Russians are likely to offer their biggest challenge to the NATO powers, as has already become clear in the controversies over the new U.S. and British base in Diego Garcia. However, the Russians still appear to be primarily interested in the northern reaches of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. This is their approach route to South and Southeast Asia, which they clearly regard as vital in the context of their preoccupation with what they see as the Chinese interest in developing a world hegemony. Peking, on its side, is greatly concerned about Moscow's growing role in the Indian Ocean; they take this as seriously as the Pentagon or NATO.

It is difficult to write confidently about the long-term interests of China in Africa. Much could change in their world outlook after the death of Mao Tse-tung. Their principal short-term interest is, as already described, to increase their influence in the Third World as a means of reducing Russia's world role. Some observers (other than the Russians) believe that the Chinese, with their much longer historical perspective, are in fact engaged in building themselves up as a future superpower. If so, it is hard to establish this through observing their present behavior.

Their aid is given in an unpatronizing and low-key style that wins widespread acceptance, and most African leaders find the Chinese the most comfortable of the major powers to get along with. But in a situation which requires the ability of a superpower to deliver massive military aid the Chinese cannot compete with the Russians, as is becoming clear in southern Africa.

In this respect, exigencies and strategies for the West and the Chinese in Africa may coincide. The Angolan conflict demonstrated that no Western nation was willing to match the Russian involvement—many Europeans were secretly appalled at U.S. inaction but in no way prepared to get into the fray themselves, while the U.S. polity effec-

tively vetoed U.S. intervention in a far-flung African civil war, despite the concern of the Administration. The reluctance of citizens in the Western democracies to spend money and lives in southern African conflicts is not likely to decrease in the near future. In Angola, the interests of the black African states which had placed their reliance on the West—namely, Zambia and Zaïre—were defeated, thus diminishing the value of alliances with the West, at least for the time being.

However, African attitudes to a future Russian role in southern Africa are bound to be affected by the part played by both the West and China in the present phase of the Rhodesian struggle and in Namibia. While China's position is one of clear-cut support for the guerrilla struggle, Western policies still remain ambiguous. It will be easier for the West, and the United States, in particular, to respond effectively to the situations in Rhodesia and Namibia than to the future challenge of South Africa.

This was shown by the surprisingly favorable reaction of the Front-Line Presidents to Secretary Kissinger's Lusaka pronouncements on Rhodesian and Namibian independence during his April trip to Africa. The firm declaration of support for majority rule, coming after years of "tilt" in the other direction, was undoubtedly gratifying to the African leaders, and they do not necessarily insist on U.S. military aid for the guerrilla movements. For the time being, a firm U.S. commitment to majority rule is enough, although this could change if the guerrilla conflict drags on indefinitely. On balance, it might seem that U.S. and Western policy during the transition of these two countries to majority rule should focus on economic aid and political support, including pressure on South Africa.

South Africa itself inevitably presents the United States with much more serious dilemmas, and Secretary Kissinger was careful to set apart South African whites from those in Rhodesia as "historically, an African people." U.S. and Western investment in South Africa constitutes a form of support for that country and implicitly for the status quo there. In addition the United States has functioned, with Britain and France, as the main protector of South Africa at the United Nations for the past half-decade or so.

In the long run the U.S. economic involvement may force a difficult choice. If no satisfactory way can be found to use the economic leverage to encourage internal political change in the Republic, the United States may have to choose between its interests in South Africa and in the rest of the continent. In the short run, the independence of the Homelands will create other dilemmas. The recognition of the Homelands as independent nations could enable the United States

to pour in economic aid to South African blacks. On the other hand, support of what is at present a highly inequitable scheme to bulwark the policy of separate development could once again place the United States on the side of the status quo and against those seeking change and justice. At the moment the OAU is strongly opposed to official recognition of the Homelands.

The Russians and the Chinese are likely to consider this sort of issue arcane in contrast to the primacy of the revolutionary struggle, and to focus on their rivalry for influence with the liberation movements. The implicit alliance between the West and China will continue, however, in the face of their shared desire to impede Russian interests. The West could capitalize on this common interest by joining the Chinese in continuing support for a major political goal of the OAU —preventing outside powers from usurping the sovereignty of African nations. In the long run this dearly held tenet is likely to be overriding in southern Africa, but what happens in the meantime will be very important in shaping the future relations of all the great powers with the independent regimes that emerge.