

# International

## outlook

By Sol W. Sanders

### Russia's mastermind for southern Africa strategy

The Soviet Ambassador to Zambia, Vasilii Grigorevich Solodovnikov, is having his 62nd birthday in Lusaka in early March—and he has plenty to celebrate. The recently negotiated deal for Soviet arms for Zambia (BW—Mar. 10), plus the strong possibility that the guerrilla leaders whom the Soviets have supported will hold on to power in neighboring Zimbabwe Rhodesia, are arguments that the Ukrainian scholar's strategy for Soviet domination of southern Africa is winning.

Since his arrival in Lusaka in 1976, Solodovnikov, who is probably a high-ranking member of the KGB, the Soviet secret police, has proved himself as effective an operator as a theoretician. One example of his diplomatic skill is the involvement of radical Iraq (below) in the arms deal he has negotiated with Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, once a staunch anti-Communist. Iraqi pilots and ground crews are already arriving in Lusaka to begin training Zambians for a small fleet of MiG 21s, which Kaunda is paying for with cobalt.

**Few readers.** Solodovnikov, an economist by profession and former director of the prestigious Africa Institute of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, was the Russian official most instrumental in turning Moscow's Africa policy around in the late 1960s. More practical than his ideological predecessor at the institute, Ivan Potekhin, Solodovnikov has argued that Africans' traditional values are breaking down, thus allowing their mobilization in the cause of communism. And in a 1970 book, which got rave reviews in official Moscow organs, he argued for a more aggressive policy of exploiting Western weakness in Africa. His *Political Parties of Africa* is considered "a primer for subversion".

During Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny's visit to Zambia in March, 1977, Solodovnikov was able to arrange a meeting between key Russians and leaders of the southern African revolutionary movements. The Russians included the general responsible for delivery of weapons to guerrilla groups. The guerrillas themselves included Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe, working separately at that time to destroy the former white-dominated government in Salisbury. They also included Sam Nujona, the leader of the Southwest Africa People's Organization, which is still waging war against Pretoria for control of that territory, plus a representative of South Africa's own banned Africa National Congress.

**Low profile.** It was Solodovnikov's intervention that helped to patch together a temporary alliance between the two anti-Salisbury guerrilla armies—and Mugabe will now apparently control the new government of Zimbabwe Rhodesia.

Solodovnikov maintains a low profile in Lusaka with a Russian mission that, considering it runs Soviet policy throughout all of southern Africa, is relatively small. But it has been extremely successful. He can also take credit for elbowing out the Chinese Communist influence that was once prominent in Lusaka, and for reducing it in other newly independent African regimes and guerrilla organizations. ■