

DESTABILISATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Potgieter counter-attacks

In the past two years, South Africa's foreign policy has entered a new and aggressive period. Settlement of the Namibian issue is as distant as ever. The United States and Europe have lost most of their leverage over Pretoria. The black front-line states to the north fear military and economic destabilisation. In this survey, Simon Jenkins analyses how South Africa has become a regional superpower.

In October, 1836, Andries Potgieter and some 60 voortrekkers approached the Vaal river and for the first time encountered hostile Ndebele tribesmen occupying the land they hoped to colonise. Faced with an estimated 5,000 warriors at what became the Battle of Vegkop, Potgieter ordered his wagons into a circle—first use in a major engagement of the famous laager. The tribesmen charged, but the assegai was no match for the gun and they had to withdraw, leaving hundreds dead. Yet they carried off most of the trekkers' cattle and draught oxen, leaving them marooned in a hostile land.

The trekkers plunged into months of internecine quarrelling, sheltering uncertainly behind their wagons. It was not until late 1837 that Potgieter finally led his men north against the Ndebele, driving them decisively across the Limpopo into what is now Zimbabwe. His offensive gave the Afrikaners, he believed for ever, the land now called Transvaal.

When South Africa left the Commonwealth in 1961, its foreign policy seemed stuck within the laager. Its ambassadors protested first that apartheid was an internal matter, then that it was anyway changing. They pointed to their anti-communism and role in western defence. The former prime minister, Mr John Vorster, tried to prove his sense of responsibility by forcing Mr Ian Smith to yield to international pressure in Rhodesia. His department of foreign affairs and information (DFAI) employed the techniques of covert propaganda to improve South Africa's international image.

Even when the hard-line Mr P. W. Botha took power in 1978, the new foreign minister, Mr Pik Botha, curried the favour of Washington, talked to any African state ready privately to listen and applied his brittle charm to building the



The Great Trek: north again today?

“pariah alliance” of South Africa, Israel and Taiwan. Yet he could offer his government and his country nothing but constant humiliation, insults and rejection. The laager was a static policy. It would not do for the 1980s. As black majority rule pressed ever closer—in Angola, Mozambique and then Rhodesia—it would clearly have to change.

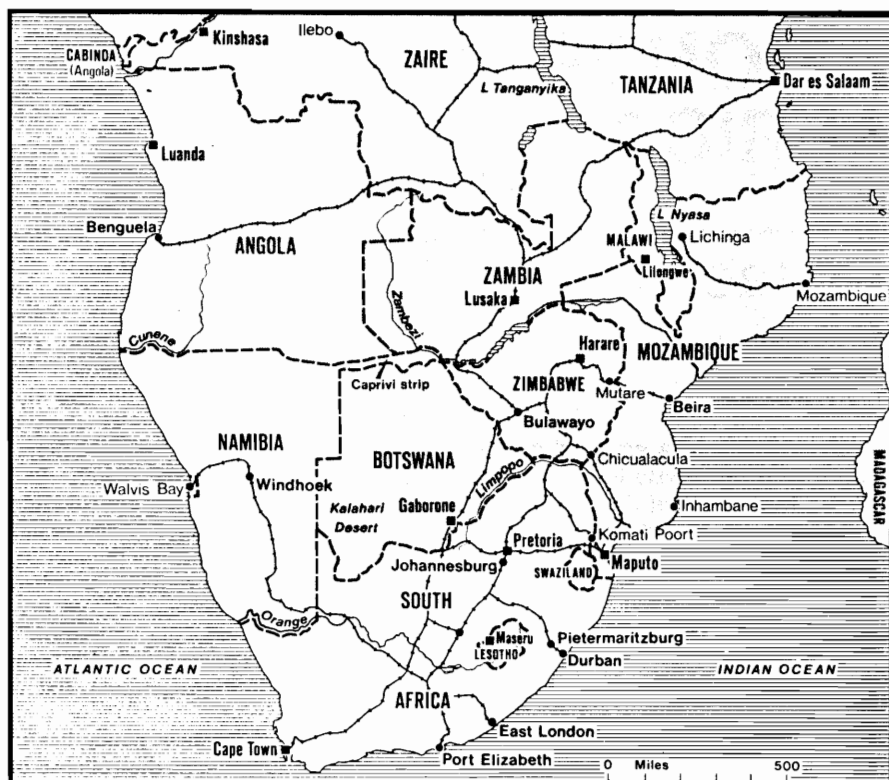
Changed it has. The laager has been abandoned as defeatist and inflexible. Potgieter is on the counter-offensive. The “new South Africa” refuses to apologise for anything, let alone apartheid. It spurns the “cocktail diplomacy” of past and present foreign ministers. It is built on the reality of South Africa's military and economic power, particularly to-

wards the increasingly chaotic front-line states. It argues that first these states and then the world will have no option but to treat with South Africa as South Africa becomes decisive to their stability (or instability). Foreign policy should be flexible and amoral. The gun and the maize train will speak louder than a hundred speeches at the United Nations.

This transformation emanates, like change in most stale and introverted oligarchies, from the armed forces: in this case an elite strengthened by the meritocracy of war. As yet it remains unarticulated, except in bitter denials from Pretoria that it involves “destabilisation”. We must therefore piece it together from conversations with its progenitors, and its victims.

The genesis of the new policy lies in two events. The first was the collapse of the Portuguese empire and the shambles of South Africa's 1975 Angolan response. Mr P. W. Botha, then defence minister, and his chief of staff, General Magnus Malan, had reacted by seeking to ensure a “friendly” regime in the Angolan capital of Luanda—the Unita faction of Mr Jonas Savimbi. With the encouragement of the then American secretary of state, Mr Henry Kissinger, three South African armoured columns crossed into Angola in August, 1975, and reached almost as far north as the capital. The desperate government in Luanda, shortly to assume full independence, appealed for more communist help, which came substantially from Cuba. The South Africans appealed in turn for American assistance and received none. Eventually, in March the following year, they had to retreat, humiliated by communist armour.

The effect of this first attempt at anti-communist collaboration with Washington was traumatic for both Mr Botha and General Malan. It remains so today, when the former is prime minister and the latter defence minister. It played an important part in the “new neutralism” adumbrated by Mr Botha's foreign minister, Mr Pik Botha, in 1979. South Africa, he said, would seek its own salvation in a regional context. It would consider a “constellation of states” south of the Cunene-Zambezi line (thus ambitiously embracing Zimbabwe and Mozambique). It was the first sign of a new subcontinental equation: not South Africa versus the front-line states and the rest of the world, but South Africa locked in mortal em-



brace with the front-line states while the rest of the world could go hang. At the time, the rest of the world scoffed.

The second catalyst came with the victory of Mr Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. South Africa's strategy for Rhodesia had been carefully laid as early as 1974. A secret report for Mr Vorster had concluded that Mr Ian Smith could not survive and that a compliant black regime was in South Africa's best interest—led, so Pretoria intended, by Bishop Abel Muzorewa. This comfortable prospect evaporated in Mr Mugabe's electoral victory. The presence of a committed Marxist immediately over South Africa's northern border shattered Pretoria's complacency. Zimbabwe was the one front-line state with the industrial potential and (apparent) political unity to be a launching pad for guerrillas of South Africa's exiled African National Congress (ANC).

Pretoria had no answer to Mr Mugabe's success. Years of support for "moderation" in Rhodesia had led nowhere. Years of patient diplomacy with the west had been wasted. The DFAI had no policy, only a vacuum, and into that vacuum a new elite smartly stepped. The army had been establishing a growing supremacy in the war against guerrillas of the South West Africa People's Organisation (Swapo) in Namibia and southern Angola. Throughout the late 1970s, the South African Defence Force (SADF) had been treating the Namibian war as a "low-intensity" conflict. It was sustain-

able, admittedly at a cost, but was essentially a holding operation pending a settlement. South Africa co-operated with the United Nations' Namibian initiative in 1977-78 under Resolution 435 and worked hard to prepare the ground in Windhoek (capital of Namibia) for what might be UN-supervised elections. Mr Pik Botha and his former senior official, Mr Brand Fourie (now ambassador in Washington), negotiated for five tortuous years, constantly assuring the Americans and the contact group of five nations, including Britain, that settlement was "near".

The chief obstacle to such a settlement has never been external but internal, lodged in the shifting geology of South Africa's ruling group. At least since 1980, the DFAI has not been the formulator of foreign policy but the mere executor of decisions of the state security council. This body, Mr P. W. Botha's central organ of internal and external security planning, meets weekly before cabinet. It is composed of the defence minister, the chief of staff and the heads of the army, military intelligence and the security police. Mr Pik Botha is the only representative of civilian rule (apart from the prime minister) and he tends to be a boisterous but ineffective participant. The security council's secretariat is of high-calibre graduate officers led by Lieutenant-General A. J. van Deventer. Its briefing material, embracing economic and social policy as well as military and foreign affairs, is regarded as far superior to that of the

conventional civil service.

These men are by no means hawks. Though they are Afrikaans-speaking, the Afrikaner Broederbond has little influence over them. They are military pragmatists, guided by the central principle of Afrikaner survival: that no concession should be made to an enemy until absolutely necessary. They argue that politicians and diplomats have recently been giving too much away. In survival's ceaseless round of defence and offence, South Africa has been too concerned with defence. Like many soldiers, they are a curious amalgam of unsophistication and realism. They pace the linoleum corridors of Pretoria talking naively of the "red menace stomping across Africa"; yet, the next minute, they show an intricate knowledge of the politico-military balance in Zambia or of General Giap's Vietcong trench systems. They do not so much reject the language of "black majority rule", incanted in the world's diplomatic forums. They simply regard it as of no relevance to a subcontinent dominated by starvation, economic chaos and a crude pre-colonial struggle for tribal survival. Their concern is that the Afrikaners, who unlike other African whites have nowhere else to go, should always be the strongest tribe.

Into Angola again

The military ascendancy can be traced back to 1977, at the time when the UN's Namibian initiative was under way. A decision was made to take the war back into southern Angola with Operation Rheindeer—against the strong advice of DFAI diplomats. Ostensibly the purpose was to take out Swapo bases and protect Namibia's northern border. It had the additional effect of undermining South Africa's good faith at the negotiating table and thoroughly demoralising the DFAI. Operation Protea in 1981 went much further. It was a major invasion aimed, among other objectives, at removing recently installed Soviet Sam missile sites. It was wholly successful.

Operation Protea meant that South Africa could no longer deny destabilisation. It was more than a pre-emptive incursion or a "hot pursuit", it was an occupation. It established South African military supremacy over much of southern Angola, partly through the agency of Mr Savimbi's Unita forces. A special secret battalion, the 32nd, was formed of former members of another dissident Angolan group (the FNLA) to operate inside Angola. Another such battalion, the 31st (now designated 201), had been formed of Bushmen in the Caprivi area

between Botswana and Angola. South Africa is becoming one of the world's leading mercenary employers.

The basis for this policy of "pro-active defence" was the age-old principle of buffer territory. South African strategists love to cite southern Lebanon in aid. Their own version of Major Haddad, Jonas Savimbi, is a leader of remarkable charisma who has clearly established a plausible authority over large tracts of Angola. Some observers put this at 55%, stretching as far north as the Benguela railway. With substantial arms aid from South Africa (mostly communist-made and captured from Swapo or obtained by the old sanctions-busting Morocco-Gabon conduit), Mr Savimbi has wreaked a terrible toll on the Angolan infrastructure. The Americans assess this damage—to roads, bridges, railways, factories, refineries—at over \$7 billion since 1975.

It is hard to see how Angola's President Eduardo dos Santos can regain authority over his country without reaching a settlement with Mr Savimbi; nor how he can survive in Luanda without his Cuban mercenaries, their numbers variously assessed at 20,000-30,000. There has been a noticeable absence of front-line state assistance either to Angola or to Swapo throughout the eight-year war with South Africa. The shrewder heads in Harare, Lusaka and Maputo know that Swapo and Luanda are by no means sure winners against Pretoria.

The South African armed forces are thus poised to avenge 1975, a prospect beyond their imaginings five years ago. Alone among the white armies of Africa they appeared to have turned back the black tide. Unlike the British in Kenya, the Americans in Vietnam, the Israelis in Lebanon and the despised Rhodesians, the SADF is actually containing an insurgency war. It is doing so by sheer practice, with home-produced weapons superior to anything the Russians can supply to the enemy and with a lack of moral scruple towards its neighbours. Pretoria strategists are even now pondering a separate Ovambo state embracing southern Angola and northern Namibia and wholly beholden, like Swaziland and Lesotho, to South Africa. Two years ago, senior SADF officers were privately canvassing outsiders on a possible lightning assault on Luanda. To be sure, Mr P. W. Botha would like the Cubans out of Angola. But he is in no hurry; least of all if the price were to be a loss of South African influence over half Angola, the ditching of Mr Savimbi and, worst of all, the danger of a Swapo government in Windhoek.

To the state security council, Mr Pik Botha's endless Namibian negotiations

with the American assistant secretary for Africa, Mr Chester Crocker, are an unnecessary risk. The crisis came in December of last year, a month in which all southern Africa erupted in a bout of destabilisation clearly promoted by Pretoria. On December 7th, talks were held on Cape Verde between Mr Pik Botha and the Angolans aimed at producing a phased withdrawal of all foreign troops from Angola and a timetable for Namibian independence. Military representatives on the state security council, including the army chief, General Jannie Geldenhuys, and the head of military intelligence, General Piet van der Westhuizen, bitterly protested against the talks, fearing a deal involving a South African withdrawal from Angola without a linked Cuban withdrawal. They added their intelligence that a new Swapo incursion was planned and that South Africa was vulnerable to a double-cross.

The Cape Verde talks went extremely well. The Americans were openly professing their optimism on both a Cuban withdrawal and elections in Namibia. The optimism was short-lived. Mr Botha returned to a hostile security council at which his progress was all but repudiated, in particular a proposal that at one stage the Cubans withdraw just 150 miles north of the Namibian border while South Africa leave Angola altogether. The final Cuban withdrawal was to be linked with

Namibian elections. The South African chief of staff, General Constand Viljoen, at the same time added his minor sabotage by assuring his troops in Namibia that he looked forward confidently to seeing them there again the following Christmas. The council insisted that the next round of talks, in February, be attended only by an official, Mr Hans van Dalsen. The predictable result was a walk-out by the Angolans.

The military predictions of a Swapo assault were proved correct. So too was the armed forces' confidence in their ability to meet it. In January, some 700 guerrillas crossed south into Namibia, clearly with the foreknowledge of South African intelligence. Impeded by the drought as well as by the militarisation of the territory through which they were passing, their mission was a fiasco. Over 200 expensively trained fighters were killed by the SADF or by Namibian territorials, recently formed as a black front line against Swapo.

South African officials make no bones about their operations inside Angola. Whether or not they choose to call it destabilisation, the policy has been to destroy the credibility of the dos Santos regime and undermine its economy. (South Africa is most likely to have had a hand in the sabotage of the Luanda oil refinery in November 1981, though this is unconfirmable.) Unlike most of the



Savimbi: master destabiliser in the ascendant



Angolan refugees in search of a government

front-line states, Angola is a prize well worth fighting for. Companies as diverse as Lonrho and Anglo-American are open supporters of Mr Savimbi and appear, through the SADF, to have ready access to him. The government in Pretoria admits it would love to have him installed in Luanda and appears to assume it is only a matter of time. There will be no South African disengagement from Angola-Namibia in the near future.

The great excuse

Such a straightforward approach is less discernible to South Africa's east and north-east. Since the mid-1970s, Pretoria's chief worry about Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland (the BLS states) and Mozambique was about their being launch pads for ANC terrorists. Although South Africa had suffered spasmodic attacks for many years, it was the 1975 Soweto riots, when the Johannesburg police crassly recruited some 2,000 young exiles for the ANC, which brought the terrorist issue to a head.

The ANC is not the world's most effective resistance movement. Its Christian roots and left-wing pacifist tradition previously cut it off from the mainstream of the African liberation struggle. This, coupled with the ruthlessness of its suppression by the South Africans, rendered it moribund and often divided. Whether in Europe or America or at its Lusaka headquarters, it has evoked sympathy and moral support—especially since South African agents have no scruples about summary assassination. But at home in South Africa it has regularly been upstaged by black consciousness organisations or by ad hoc community and trade union groups able to wield real social and industrial power.

As a result, the ANC has tended to confine its domestic activities to unco-

ordinated incidents staged by small (usually six-man) commando units sent in via neighbouring states: minor bombings of public buildings and occasional machine-gun or rocket attacks on police stations. The post-1975 influx of young people, many of them sent for training to Libya or Russia, has certainly radicalised the ANC and stimulated it to more daring raids. This change was seen in attacks on the Sasol and Koeberg power plants in 1980 and 1982, and in the killing of 18 people by a car bomb left in a Pretoria street earlier this year. Yet with the exception of the Pretoria bomb, casualties and damage from these incidents are insignificant. South Africa is less troubled by political violence than most western

nations, and certainly most African ones. Security officials who like to react as if they were Ariel Sharon dealing with the PLO ludicrously overstate the ANC threat.

But react they do. The ANC has become the great excuse for an increasingly militarised state. Huge sums go to informers and intelligence gathering. Infiltration of the ANC is thorough if not total. It was even rumoured that the despatching agent for young ANC guerrillas from Botswana into neighbouring Transvaal was once a South African agent: the Botswanans have since assured Pretoria they will not permit any ANC activity on their soil.

The fate of those who do is well illustrated by the tiny state of Lesotho, mountainous and entirely landlocked by South Africa. Its autocratic ruler, Chief Jonathan, is wholly dependent on South African Customs Union (SACU) revenues—in part a covert Pretoria subsidy—and migrants' remittances. Five times as many Lesotho nationals work in South Africa as in Lesotho itself and remittances comprise 40% of its national income. To Pretoria's diplomatic doves, Lesotho should be a client state par excellence. Yet this dependence has not stopped Chief Jonathan harbouring ANC groups in his capital, Maseru, and belabouring Pretoria for its apartheid policies. Maseru is just two hours' drive from Bloemfontein, a favourite ANC bombing site.



The ANC car-bombs Pretoria: we can destabilise too

South Africa has responded by harbouring—and, some claim, arming—the military wing of the Basuto Congress party (the LLA), which Chief Jonathan exiled when it defeated him at his last “election” in 1970. It periodically impedes the passage of migrants and supplies across the Lesotho frontier. Then in December, 1982, a team of South African commandos crossed into Lesotho and attacked 12 separate “ANC targets” in and around Maseru, killing 40 people. Although Chief Jonathan—and the rest of the world—reacted fiercely to this humiliation, claiming that Lesotho was now “at war” with South Africa, there is circumstantial evidence of collusion between South Africa and the Lesotho security forces. General Johan Coetzee, the South African security chief (now commissioner of police), visited Maseru just before the raid. There was no intervention by the Maseru paramilitary authorities. Within the month, 100 ANC people were reported to have left Lesotho for Mozambique.

Swaziland, to the north, is only marginally less vulnerable. It reacted to the Maseru raid promptly, by rounding up and expelling a number of ANC refugees then on its territory. South Africa may not have been involved in the recent deposition of Prince Mabandla Dlamini (indeed it offered him refuge), but the new regime is clearly more to its liking. It may now proceed with the handing over of 3,000 square miles of Zululand to the Swazis, ridding itself of black population, snubbing the Zulu leader, Chief Buthelezi, and bribing Swaziland to behave itself with a 40% increase of its land area. Sandwiched between the Transvaal and Mozambique, Swaziland is an important buffer state.

The South African authorities protest that they have no interest in the internal affairs of these border states, only in the threats their lackadaisical security may pose to South Africa. If their rulers wish to aid the ANC, then they must pay the price. This will mean “hot pursuit and pre-emptive strikes against bases, training centres, logistics and leadership cadres of the terrorist movements”, in the recent words of General Viljoen. It will mean more. In a clear enunciation of the policy of tit-for-tat destabilisation, a Pretoria spokesman said last November: “If neighbouring states continue to harbour anti-South African forces, they should not be surprised if South Africa considers doing the same for them.” In February, the defence minister, General Malan, was even more direct. South Africa would fight against its enemies, “even if it means we will have to support anti-communist movements . . . and allow them to act from our territory”. Thus

warned, all the BLS states now deny formal refuge to the ANC. The armed forces can argue with some force that the pre-emption policy works.

On to Maputo

If South Africa is now having little trouble keeping the former British protectorates under its thumb, Mozambique has been less amenable. Here the Marxist Frelimo government of President Samora Machel was greeted on its formation in 1975 by the then prime minister, Mr Vorster, as a potential good neighbour. With the mass exodus of Portuguese workers, South Africans moved in to run Maputo port and upgrade and administer the railways which ran inland to the Transvaal and north to Rhodesia. South Africa continued to accept at least 60,000 migrant workers (remitting some \$30m a year in foreign exchange).

South Africa's attitude towards Mozambique has been pretty ambivalent. Nobody denies that in the past the ANC has operated out of Maputo, but Pretoria has shown itself quite ready to confront this threat head-on, and bloodily. In January, 1981, South African commandos raided Matola outside Maputo, attacking a claimed ANC “terrorist base” and killing a dozen people. Two South Africans were killed. Then, in May of this year, South African jets bombed houses and a factory in Maputo, killing six people only one of whom was later said to have had ANC connections. This was despite continuing talks with the Mozambique government on the removal of all

ANC personnel to the far north of the country. It was an overt aggression, largely a gesture of retribution for internal consumption after the Pretoria car bomb.

However, no ANC activity in Mozambique so far has been sufficient to justify the devastating retaliation of Pretoria's support for the dissident Mozambique National Resistance movement (MNR). Unlike Angola, where the SADF can at least argue it is countering Swapo's systematic military incursions, Mozambique harbours no such threat. Indeed, since Maputo generates enough dissent by its own incompetence, South Africa's involvement might seem superfluous.

The MNR claims it is indigenous, growing from the natural resistance of the Mozambique people to President Machel's shambolic Marxism. However, the catalyst was clearly the old Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO). After Mozambique's independence in 1975, the CIO needed a network to gather information on Mr Mugabe's operations in that country and to harass them. (The snakes and ladders of African politics have left deposed agents galore, eager to tell their tale.) Training camps were set up in 1976 and a motley crew of Rhodesians and black and white Portuguese was assembled, some linked with Lisbon's unsavoury Pide intelligence organisation. Operations included an anti-Machel radio station broadcasting into Mozambique from Rhodesia.

At the time of Zimbabwean independence, the MNR directorate was flown south to Pretoria, lock, stock and radio station. It was established first at the Phalaborwa military base in northern Transvaal and its commander, Afonso Dhlakama (“Jacomo”), was openly welcomed by General Malan. Since then, it has emerged as a major guerrilla force some 10,000 strong. It is financed and armed by the SADF and given logistical support in the form of training, command and control equipment, helicopter transport and special operations. Its radio, the Voice of Free Africa, broadcasts regularly into Mozambique from South African soil.

In addition, the MNR has at its back the mass of Portuguese refugees who poured across the border to settle in the Pretoria-Johannesburg area after 1975. The Portuguese community now numbers some 600,000, despised by some Afrikaners as “sea kaffirs” for their dark Latin skin, but joining with the ex-Rhodesians to form a large and increasingly vociferous revanchist pressure group on Pretoria's policy towards the front-line states. The MNR's chief handicaps have been the traditional ones of such dissident groups: a leadership internecine



Pik up, then put down



Machel gets cold comfort in Moscow

even by African guerrilla standards and a lack of any guiding ideology beyond a hatred of President Machel.

Pretoria persistently denies offering the MNR anything more than moral support and maintains this denial against all evidence to the contrary. When, in April, the MNR secretary-general, Mr Orlando Cristina, an ex-Pide agent, was murdered in his bed at an MNR training camp near Pretoria, the authorities had both to claim he was on a "farm" and nothing to do with them and simultaneously issue editors with a D notice banning any mention of the circumstances of his death. When international opinion complained that the MNR had no programme, Pretoria researchers hurriedly put one together (of quite staggering blandness). Yet SADF helicopters have regularly droned over the Kruger national park carrying MNR supplies into Mozambique. And Pretoria must suffer the occasional embarrassment of South African "advisers" caught or killed (as two were in March) and arms caches discovered whenever the MNR suffers an occasional reverse.

In the circumstances, the MNR has been remarkably successful. It has destroyed government authority in much of south and central Mozambique, though unlike Unita in Angola it appears either unwilling or unable to establish its own administration in these areas. It can dis-

rupt the country's main communications at will—including the Beira railway and oil pipeline to Zimbabwe in the north and the coast road from Maputo to Beira, on which traffic must now go in armed convoy. In the latter case, the MNR's ascendancy over the central Inhambane province has cut the country in two—particularly demoralising for the government. It has bases the length of the country and in Malawi. In 1980 and 1981 it blew up the main Cabora-Bassa power line and it makes frequent attacks on other government and economic targets. The railway into South Africa from Maputo is relatively safe, but for obvious reasons: it carries some 17% of South Africa's overseas trade.

The Mozambique government acknowledges all this, while adding graphic accounts of the atrocities inflicted by MNR terrorists on recalcitrant villages, including the habitual removal of ears and lips. It also acknowledges the inadequacy of its own troops, Russian-trained, ill-led and often unpopular in country areas. (Soviet-block counter-insurgency training is proving a disaster in Africa, as the Ethiopians, Angolans and Mozambicans are learning to their cost.) In an effort to recapture lost prestige and repair the economy, President Machel has launched a series of campaigns in the past two years against corruption and in favour of greater private enterprise: bitter

lessons he tried to teach Mr Mugabe during the latter's sojourn with him prior to 1980. Mozambique now possesses the sure signs of Marxist failure, a flourishing black market believed to be larger than the official one and periodic executions for "economic crimes".

Yet what are South Africa's intentions in Mozambique? The latter's economy relies heavily on remittances and transport payments, for both of which it is already beholden to South Africa. Frelimo now controls only a part of the country and the Machel government admits its vulnerability. A secret report to President Mugabe by Zimbabwean intelligence early this year is believed to have argued that Pretoria could topple President Machel in 48 hours if it wanted to. This is known to have so appalled Washington as to produce another flurry of "Crockerism" between Maputo and Pretoria and a series of meetings between South African and Mozambican ministers at the Komatipoort border town. At one of these, the South Africans promised to stop supporting the MNR in return for the expulsion of ANC personnel from Maputo. It is unlikely that the SADF will honour its side of this bargain, though it may temporarily halt cross-border assistance.

In Mozambique, South Africa appears, under intense American pressure, to have accepted the Frelimo devil it knows for the time being, while allowing the armed forces to stage occasional shows of force. Yet these attacks are humiliating for Maputo and risk drawing external forces to President Machel's aid. Already Zimbabwe has at least 1,000 troops in Mozambique guarding the Beira pipeline. There is believed to be a similar number of Soviet-block advisers. Continued aggression (or the encouragement of internal rebellion) risks attracting more substantial support, as happened in Angola. Mr Pik Botha has warned the government in Maputo that Cuban troops in Mozambique would simply "not be tolerated". Yet the state security council appears to be recklessly willing just such a confrontation. It is all tactics and no strategy.

The Zimbabwean challenge

The same doubts are raised by the last and most puzzled of South Africa's current victims, Zimbabwe. To Pretoria, Zimbabwe has always been the bete noir of the subcontinent. Of the once-threatening front-line states, Zambia and Tanzania are imploding into economic chaos,

Angola and Mozambique are riven with dissension and the rest are too weak to matter. But Zimbabwe is seen as rich and dangerous. Blessed with 15 years of sinew-toughening sanctions, it was the only state in which a multiracial democracy might just succeed in establishing a mixed economy and a potentially stable society. Its capital, Harare, was and still is a handsome, well-kept city and Bulawayo a thriving industrial centre. All this was now in the hands of an able leader from the dominant Shona tribe, backed by a battle-hardened guerrilla army.

Pretoria loathed Mr Mugabe. His apparent sophistication, his international success, his idolisation in Soweto, his conciliatory manner towards the whites, all fuelled an existing Afrikaner xenophobia. One of Mr Mugabe's earliest acts was to assure South Africa that his country would not provide military help to the ANC; he warned his radical colleagues that South Africa's enmity would be disastrous for the new state. To Pretoria this was merely duplicitous. Policy towards Harare rapidly polarised the differing strands in South African foreign policy, with the hardliners to the fore.

During the years after Mr Ian Smith's unilateral declaration of independence (UDI), links between South Africa and Rhodesia had been extremely close. The 1964 preferential trade agreement gave Rhodesian exports, notably tobacco and textiles, special status in South Africa. About 40% of Zimbabwe's manufactured exports in 1980 went to South Africa, while 90% of its exports passed through South Africa's transport system (this is now down to 60%). Some 40,000 Zimbabweans were estimated to be working in South Africa, either officially or unofficially.

In addition, the two countries' military and intelligence systems were closely interlinked. Many SADF officers had been posted to Salisbury during UDI and, after 1980, senior figures in the Selous Scouts and Rhodesian Central Intelligence came south to offer their services to Pretoria. Others stayed and some are still of doubtful loyalty but well-placed to trade information. Relations between Harare and Pretoria at present comprise an espionage jigsaw of fiendish complexity. On a recent covert mission to swap intelligence, a South African general berated the Zimbabweans for presuming to accuse Pretoria of destabilisation. To his total confusion, the young black brigadier opposite calmly laid out the evidence for each incident, clearly based on excellent inside information. This was clearly to be no ordinary front-line state.

After Zimbabwean independence, a substantial lobby in South Africa argued with the government for continued close relations with the new nation. Despite its economic potential, Zimbabwe was still heavily dependent on South Africa. Why not use this dependence as a bridgehead to the subcontinent, bartering economic co-operation for recognition? Why not take Mr Mugabe's protestations of good neighbourliness at face value and use him to build a new regional interdependence?

Mr Mugabe did not help this lobby by castigating "racist" South Africa in almost every public speech. He naturally accepted the status, and the jargon, of southern Africa's leading Marxist (despite his poor relations with Moscow and his stark economic illiteracy). He criticised Zimbabwean migrant workers in South Africa. He attacked private industry, much of it South African-owned. Ministers, of whatever rank, were

banned from having any dealings with South Africa and relations which might hint at recognition were forbidden. Clearly any hope on Pretoria's part that Mr Mugabe might prove as amenable as, for instance, Dr Hastings Banda of Malawi, was naive.

The hawks needed no further encouragement. If Zimbabwe was not prepared to acknowledge its reliance on South Africa, why should South Africa show any favour in return? The preferential trade agreement, due to expire in March, 1982, would be terminated—at least unless a proper minister came and asked for renewal. The 40,000 migrant workers would be sent home at the end of their current year's contracts. Eighty wagons and locomotives borrowed from South Africa and desperately needed to shift Zimbabwe's record 1981 harvest were abruptly recalled. Mr Mugabe's hope of using Mozambican railway links to avoid his exports passing through South Africa was sabotaged by frequent MNR bomb attacks.

Pretoria's military planners display a child-like innocence when such incidents are mentioned. Was there not a pronounced thaw in relations in 1982, they ask. Was the trade agreement not temporarily renewed (it was, as a result of efforts by trade organisations in both countries)? And how many migrant workers have actually gone home? They just bribe the policeman 10 rand and wander off. Besides, what does Mr Mugabe expect if he persists in insulting South Africa? (The locomotive withdrawal is believed to have been ordered by Mr P. W. Botha after hearing Mr Mugabe call him a racist on the BBC world service.)

However, even the most ingenuous spokesman in Pretoria cannot deny a certain quiet pride at the mauling meted out to Mr Mugabe in the famous "month of the hawks", December, 1982. Nothing better illustrates the crippling hold South Africa has over Zimbabwe's fate. At the same time as South African forces were going into Lesotho and the armed forces were "destabilising" Mr Pik Botha's peace efforts at Cape Verde, commandos (believed to be ex-Rhodesian SAS) landed at Beira and spectacularly blew up most of its oil depot.

The oil, destined for the recently reopened pipeline to Zimbabwe, amounted to 2½ months' supply and was valued at \$12m. Zimbabwe had enough for just two weeks stored domestically. It faced economic ruin. The alternative rail route for oil was from Maputo via Chicualacuala, but this too was conveniently sabotaged. This left South Africa with a grip on all of Zimbabwe's oil supplies, whether purchased direct or from Maputo by the



When Mugabe called Botha a racist, the trains stopped . . .

(unsabotaged) Komatipoort rail link. South Africa suddenly announced that there was an industrial dispute on this line and wagon turn-rounds would be long delayed. It was the big squeeze, far worse than any UDI sanctions.

The resulting chaos hit Zimbabwe over Christmas. The government admitted its total vulnerability. White morale plummeted. Travel was impossible, cars were abandoned, factories closed, power cuts became frequent and Harare appealed to the world for help. An American diplomatic team, led by Mr Crocker, was in Harare at the time and was appalled at the results of the squeeze. Intense pressure was put on Pretoria to desist. A meeting took place in Botswana between a Zimbabwean minister and the South Africans. Fuel supplies were eventually sent north and the pipeline repaired. South Africa had made its point.

The hawks wanted to show that it was not just the Zimbabwean economy that was at their mercy. There is clear evidence of Pretoria-inspired operations in Zimbabwe, which cannot all be attributed to embittered ex-Rhodesians in the SADF. This evidence includes the sabotage in July, 1982, of Zimbabwe's precious new Skyhawks (two thirds of its air force) at Gweru by commandos using South African equipment; the curious deaths of three white South African soldiers during a mission last August in Sengwe; the periodic, plausible revelations of Pretoria spies caught by the Zimbabweans; the broadcasting from the Transvaal into Matabeleland of the Ndebele "Radio Truth", savagely attacking the Mugabe government. These matters are naively explained away in Pretoria as being the "unfortunate" results of indisci-

pline below the level of colonel, with additional comments on ex-Rhodesian "white trash" in the army. However, the SADF is not known for its indiscipline.

The recent efforts of the Shona 5th Brigade to stamp Mr Mugabe's authority on non-Shona Matabeleland have certainly offered South Africa yet another highly motivated dissident movement on a plate. Yet, faced with the choice of exploiting this dissidence, or leaving Mr Mugabe to restore order in an economically vital part of the region, Pretoria has gleefully opted for the first. The Spencer and Pafuri camps in northern Transvaal contain (or once contained) enough anti-Mugabe Zimbabweans to destabilise Matabeleland for a decade. Recruited from Ndebele refugees and bribed migrant workers, they are a gun held at Mr Mugabe's head. Harare's growing dread is of a South African column rumbling north towards Bulawayo, greeted by cheering Ndebele all the way—the "Lebanon option".

Front-line on the defensive

South Africa's policy towards its northern neighbours seems governed not by consistency but by some arcane Afrikaner intuition. From time to time, an incipient black nation needs to be taught a lesson to emphasise who is regional boss. Like Barend van der Merwe's slaves in André Brink's "Chain of Voices": "if they are new, all the more reason to break them in harshly so they would be sure who has the last word on the farm." They must be

flogged, even if they have done nothing wrong. It is best in the long run.

Brink's slaves found peace of mind only in contemplating their past and in collaborating with their masters. When they sought help from the British it led to delusion, rebellion and death. The black states of southern Africa have struggled for the past two decades to free themselves of white supremacy. They have long assumed—and been assured by western liberalism—that the steamroller of black rule would continue south, powered by the fuel of historical necessity. When the steamroller appeared to break down at the Limpopo, they thought they had only to wait. The western block, or the east, or the ANC, or someone, would soon repair it. To their horror, in the past two years it has begun to move backwards.

The front-line states' defence against this South African threat is meagre. In the early 1970s they formed a comparatively stable regional group. This was largely due to the dominance of the post-colonial leaders of Zambia and Tanzania, Mr Kenneth Kaunda and Mr Julius Nyerere, and a sense of brotherhood against the common enemy, Mr Smith. Mr Mugabe's assumption of power, his antagonism towards President Kaunda and his alliance with President Machel, have endangered that stability, though drought, world recession and structural economic collapse in Zambia and Tanzania have also played their part.

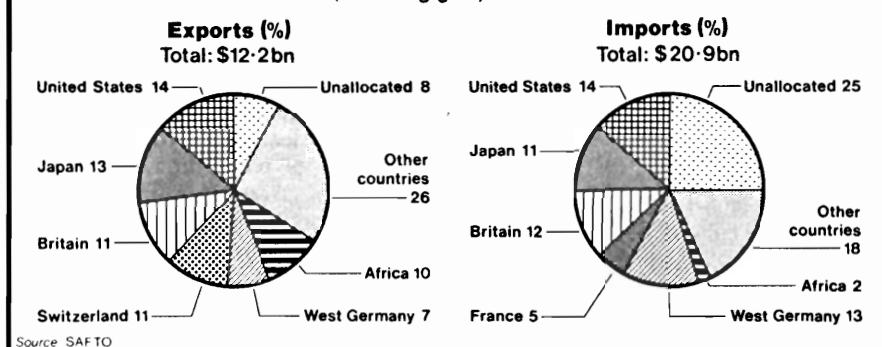
In 1980, the nine black states of the region formed a new economic association under the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC). Its ambition was to seek greater independence from South Africa and collaborate over major aid projects, notably in the areas of energy and communications. SADCC set itself a modest target of some \$800m in project aid. Western agencies have been impressed by the caution—and lack of bureaucracy—with which it has gone about its business. Yet it is severely hampered by its members' reputation for squandering aid resources, by the natural protectionism of its national economies and by the way so many of its commercial channels lead to or through South Africa.

South Africa's regional dominance is as complete economically as it is militarily. It produces 77% of the total gnp of the subcontinent (south of Zaire-Tanzania), with at least three quarters of the output of coal, iron, wheat, maize, electrical power and rail transport. About 90% of the region's energy consumption is within the SACU area (South Africa plus BLS). South Africa's national product per head, \$2,200, is three times the regional average. Even South Africa's blacks have a



... and so did Zimbabwe's economy

Direction of South Africa trade (excluding gold) 1981:



per head income two and a half times that of Zimbabwe's.

The trade of all the SADCC states depends heavily on South Africa (25% for Zimbabwe, 37% for Mozambique). Yet South Africa has no such reciprocal dependence. Its trade profile is widely diversified, exporting less to the whole of Africa than it does to Switzerland or Britain (see chart) and importing from Africa an insignificant amount. (Unofficial trade through middlemen may alter this somewhat.) Some SADCC donors have tried to make aid conditional on there being no South African involvement in subcontracts. The result is merely to distort the end value.

Everything from project management to heavy equipment naturally comes cheapest and, above all, quickest from South Africa. Contractors operating under embargoes must pay up to 150% in commissions to middlemen in non-embargo nations (such as Swaziland) to obtain necessary materials. With rising world freight rates, such politically restricted aid is ever more burdensome. The dream of an anti-South African regional economic community is utterly fanciful (and to be fair, SADCC knows it). The prosperity of the whole subcontinent is indivisible.

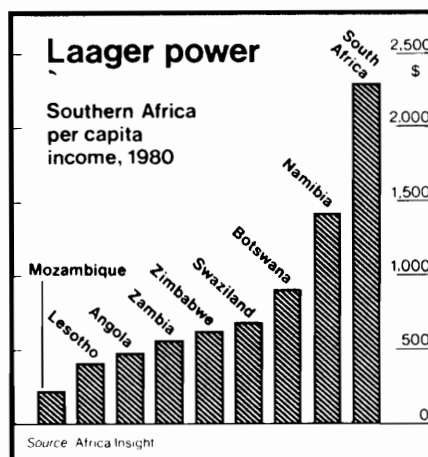
Nor have the front-line states found extra-continental assistance any help in their plight. The Russian attitude to southern Africa is at present hesitant. Earlier this year, the American government invited members of Pretoria's state security council to Washington in great secrecy to give them a briefing with the CIA on the Soviet threat to Africa—or rather, the lack of it. The purpose was to persuade Generals van der Westhuizen, Coetzee and others to slacken their aggressive stance, especially over Angola/Namibia.

Russia had other fish to fry, the generals were told. In the words of Mr Anatoly Gromyko, "in Africa, opportunities have changed". With its protégé, Mr Nkomo, toppled in Zimbabwe, and disenchanted

with President Machel, Moscow was left with Angola, not a gratifying prospect even for the Kremlin. Eastern aid to the region was primarily military. Russia did not see why its valuable foreign exchange should end, like much economic aid to southern Africa, in a Johannesburg bank. Already saddled with Ethiopia, it could see no gain in further heavy involvement. The South Africans returned home rather deflated.

This exercise in teaching South African soldiers the facts of diplomatic life was the reaction in Washington to the destabilising antics of last December. It came as the climax to one of the most intensive American initiatives in the region for two decades. The names of Mr Crocker and his aides, Mr Frank Wisner and Mr Robert Cabelly, occur time and again in the visiting books of Harare, Maputo, Pretoria and Cape Town. Mr William Casey, head of the CIA, was even flown in amid the utmost secrecy to help with the "big lean". The policy of constructive engagement, in antithesis to President Carter's modified non-intervention, required some emphatic success if it was not to seem a mere dodging of the apartheid issue. By the end of 1982, the search for such a success was becoming desperate.

Mr Crocker has been undeniably effective



tive in taming the wilder spirits on the security council over both Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Yet what he wants is a settlement in Angola/Namibia. While others in Washington are sucked ever deeper into the Middle Eastern and Latin American mires, he needs to deliver President Reagan a neat and clean victory: communist forces driven out of southern Africa and the Namibian issue resolved under international auspices. If there was ever a chance of such a victory—and there was never much—it now seems far away. Mr Crocker's colleague, Mr Lawrence Eagleburger, may have said in June that a deal required only that the parties "take the necessary political decisions". One at least of them will not. Angola may be ready to co-operate with Washington. But across Mr Crocker's path lies the massive obstacle of renewed South African self-confidence.

Whither destabilisation

The occupational vice of political observers is to assume politicians have choices. They rarely do. Circumstance is their great dictator. It entices them, ensnares them and usually consumes them. In their policies towards southern Africa, Washington, Moscow, London, Harare, Lusaka, Maputo are all its victims. Yet amid the jacarandas and bougainvilleas of Pretoria there is just now the rare scent of choice. It is a luxury not often given, even to the powerful. It may not last for long.

Military ascendancy has undoubtedly brought a new realism to Pretoria's foreign policy. Much of the world's anti-South African stance has been built on bluff. The soldiers have suggested that Washington's favour is no longer of great consequence, and Europe's is less so. Sanctions against South Africa would be ineffective or, at worst, a nuisance. The pattern of South Africa's arms and regional trade—both subject to varying degrees of embargo—indicates that what is needed can be got at a price. "Sanctions equals a 20% tariff," is one Pretoria rule of thumb. Israel, South Africa's great friend in adversity, already helps it round various embargoes, most recently with nuclear power and a wide range of high-technology defence equipment. Since the start of the arms embargo, South African military self-sufficiency has increased from 50% to 95%.

As Rhodesia found, and as Pretoria's weapons conglomerate, Armscor, is finding, self-sufficiency has its uses. Armscor is poised to become a net exporter, well versed in the world of phoney end-user

(and producer?) certificates. Throughout South Africa, industries are encouraged to go for import-substitution and to diversify their overseas sources of supply. Intense effort is devoted to export promotion, especially within Africa. To be sure, South Africa would not enjoy sanctions, however ineffective. But their economic, let alone political or military, impact would be limited and would certainly have a severe knock-on effect north of the Limpopo.

The armed forces have now shown they have and are ready to use deterrents every bit as lethal as any which might be ranged against them. They may deny they have any "policy" of destabilisation, but they play with words. Soldiers do not have policies. They have weapons and tactics for their use. They point out that black Africa yearns to destabilise South Africa. Black Africa must be shown the price. The armoury is formidable: raids on Matola, Maseru, Maputo; backing for Unita, Zipra, MNR, LLA; sabotage of Luanda, Beira, Cabora-Bassa; the manipulation of transport links, trade agreements, migrant remittances. Sometimes the weapons fail, such as the ludicrous attempt to topple the Seychelles regime in 1981. Usually they are effective.

To what end? Strategists in Pretoria argue that the intention is to create a "shield of instability" to deter incursion and warn South Africa's 20m blacks of the horrors of majority rule. Behind it, South Africa can pursue her own way. To moderate supporters of Mr P. W. Botha, the policy buys time for him to push ahead with domestic reform, gradually drawing new sections of the community into his neo-apartheid political economy—if not into the formal constitution. To the extremists on his right, the policy at least offers a new national pride. The armed forces have shown what can be done if the Afrikaner is prepared to fight.

There are those in Pretoria who now dream of exerting over southern Africa the same "hegemony" (their word) that Russia exerts over eastern Europe. They see a renaissance of Mr Botha's "constellation of states", so derided when proclaimed three years ago. (Zimbabwe would be the Poland of the subcontinent.) Or they see South Africa as Israel, custodian of a promised land, ready to use its wealth and strength without scruple against encircling foes. They talk freely of the "Lebanonisation" of Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, a cocktail of destabilisation, factional sponsorship and de facto partition. Apart from Russia, South Africa is the only major nation prepared to arm and train foreign guerrillas in Africa. Could it become the catalyst of capitalist counter-revolution?

Certainly the seeds of such a counter-



SADF soldier: nowhere to go but north

revolution are already sown. For most of the front-line states, Marxist ideology has been the most welcome casualty of the economic chaos of the past two years. Leaders are learning to agree with Professor Joan Robinson: "the misery of being exploited by capitalists is nothing to the misery of not being exploited". Whether under IMF pressure or from bitter experience, Zambia and Mozambique are hesitantly rediscovering some of the virtues of a private-sector economy. Angola and Zimbabwe have not quite forgotten them.

All these states are beginning to understand the debilitating results of indiscriminate outside aid. Trade balances, once so healthy in this part of Africa, are in ruins. If a choice must be made between state socialism and free enterprise, the front-line rulers are slowly turning to the latter: albeit a free enterprise partly motivated by corruption, as soldiers steadily take power from their ideological elders. As in west Africa, so now in southern, Sandhurst is ousting the LSE.

Whether the front-line states are yet ready to respect Pretoria's new realpolitik is doubtful. All know they must treat with South Africa or starve. Some, such as President Machel, are realising they must treat if they wish to stay in power. Like Washington and London, they have all miscalculated South Africa's internal stability and its willingness to suffer external criticism without retaliation. They are aware that continued ostracism is not "meeting the moral challenge" of apartheid and that the ostracised can threaten them with economic and political catastrophe. They are trapped and sorely in need of all Mr Crocker's (and Britain's)

creative diplomacy to build bridges, however painfully, with Pretoria.

South Africa's rulers can see only advantage in this new ascendancy. They gladly acknowledge the long-term importance of regional interdependence. They point out that they will trade and deal with any African state, provided only that a measure of recognition and "non-aggression" is offered in return. But if that price is too high, then too bad. Such recognition as has been achieved has come after, not before, destabilisation. Why, therefore, should South Africa shift roles, and become the peacemaker of the subcontinent rather than its vigilante?

The danger in this is obvious. It is that Pretoria's quest for regional security will become a substitute for internal reform and external economic interdependence; that the obsession with the ANC, whose attacks will not diminish, will fuel a paranoid adventurism. There are signs already that Pretoria is facing the well-known, barren dilemma of all destabilisation: if you move from instability to toppling, you must find a replacement regime and then sustain it against renewed insurgency. The destabiliser must become the protector. Yet if you seek to maintain the instability in some sort of equilibrium, you must suffer intense dislocation along your border and meet disillusion and factionalism among your sponsored dissidents.

A South African general told this correspondent that "Savimbi has promised" there would be no guerrilla war if he took power in Angola, as he would embrace everyone in his government. The assertion suggests how far the South African leadership still is from understanding its predicament. Within the next five years, it could conceivably be having to support expensive and embarrassing client regimes not just in Namibia, Transkei, Ciskei and Bophutatswana, but in Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique and even Angola. Backing insurgents in the mountains or on the bushveld is chicken-feed compared to backing them in power.

The new soldier-imperialists of Pretoria are terrifying ingenuities. If counter-revolution is to come to southern Africa, they cannot see that they are its least acceptable protagonists. Apartheid may have enabled 5m whites to keep 20m blacks in sullen subjugation for a quarter of a century. It may do so for another quarter. But to extend that subjugation to more than 60m blacks is a different matter. The world may be witnessing the growth in Africa of a new form of white supremacy, potent, reckless and temporarily effective. Destabilisation is not control. South Africa can throw its weight about the subcontinent; it cannot rule it. Its achievement will be anarchy.

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BOOM OR SPOTTER? Page 1

Destabilising southern Africa



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