

Carter Scrambles For Leverage In Southern Africa

Seven hundred Rhodesian soldiers, backed by jets and helicopters, invaded neighboring Mozambique May 29 in an effort to wipe out guerrillas of the Rhodesian Patriotic Front nationalist movement and destroy their bases. The Rhodesians bombed Mozambican villages, killed civilians, and destroyed rail lines and bridges as part of their effort, according to Mozambican and Patriotic Front sources. For several days they occupied the town of Mapai in the southern Gaza province. Another Rhodesian raid in Tete province further north was reportedly driven off.

The raid has been accompanied by an increase in repression inside Rhodesia, following the dictum issued this week by Rhodesian Defense Minister Roger Hawkins that supporters of the guerrilla movement should be "eliminated from society." At present, black Rhodesian civilians are fleeing across the western border into neighboring Botswana at the rate of 800 each week to escape the "free fire zone" tactics recently imposed in western Rhodesia.

At the same time as the Rhodesian raid, the Anglo-American negotiating team of British Foreign Office Under Secretary John Graham and U.S. Ambassador to Zambia Steven Low left Salisbury, Rhodesia, for Maputo, the capital of Mozambique. In Maputo, Patriotic Front co-chairman Robert Mugabe reiterated his objection to American participation in the talks and refused to meet with Low. Mugabe later accused the United States and Great Britain of complicity with the Rhodesian invasion, a charge echoed in the Mozambican press this week which said that the "growth of Smith's aggression is due to the indulgence and complicity of Western countries." The Mozambican report added that "it is not by chance that this raid coincided with the visit of the Anglo-Americans, whose settlement efforts are aimed at ending the isolation of the Smith regime."

The Rhodesian aggression coincides with the flop of the vaunted Anglo-American initiative over Rhodesia, and follows by a week the near-unanimous rejection by African leaders of UN Ambassador Andrew Young's hustle diplomacy. The invasion is clearly designed to be an intolerable provocation to the black front line states around Rhodesia, aimed at forcing them to call in outside — presumably East bloc — military assistance to create the stage for an East-West showdown over Africa. Such an escalation would also put considerable right-wing pressure on the Vorster government in South Africa to come to the defense of Smith.

British Edgy

It is by no means certain, however, that the British will stick with Carter's plans for an East-West showdown

over southern Africa. Even avid Conservative Party supporters of the American involvement are now having serious second thoughts: "The Carter Administration's attitudes to South Africa," say the conservative *Daily Telegraph* June 1, "though echoed by Dr. Owen, may be going further and faster towards confrontation than a purely British policy would have done..." The *Telegraph* also reports that envoy Graham will have "no progress to report to the Commonwealth Conference when it convenes in June...American involvement is not bringing Black nationalist factions any closer together and is resented by some of them. Nor has it aroused any great enthusiasm among leaders of neighboring African states..."

To regain leverage over the front line, the State Department and the Foreign Office have both denounced the invasion and are proposing to take the matter to the United Nations Security Council. The invasion "calls into question the sincerity of the Smith government's intention to implement majority rule next year," Owen told reporters May 31, adding that he was expressing to African governments "the seriousness with which we view the latest developments." The State Department in a June 1 statement also viewed the invasion as a "very serious matter," and said they "share the concern expressed by...Owen that the Rhodesian attack threatens the British-American peace efforts and challenges the territorial integrity of a member state of the United Nations." American officials told the June 1 *New York Times* that the Security Council might be asked to condemn the aggression. They also told the *Times* that they were "concerned that the Soviet Union might use the incursions as an excuse to step up its military involvement in the area..." and that to counter this possibility, the U.S. and Britain were in close touch with key African states, "urging them to take the lead in keeping outside powers out of the situation."

UN Intervention A Trap For Front Line States

Making the Rhodesia question an official U.N. issue would give the Trilateral Administration the chance to define the political environment in southern Africa, following the lines of the example set in the Middle East. Such a development would constrict the maneuvering room of the front line states, by depriving them of the authority to call in military allies unilaterally, and enabling the U.S. to brand socialist country military support of the front line as "impeding the efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement" or some similar formulation equivalent to the "just and lasting peace" slogan in the Mideast.

Given the U.S.'s already existing ability to manipulate

the Smith regime, the Carter Administration would be in a position to orchestrate provocations against Mozambique, already branded as a "Soviet puppet," and could set up the "Cuban missile crisis" showdown with the Soviet Union he is seeking.

One such provocation-option surfaced this week in Lisbon, where the leader of an organization calling itself the Democratic United Front of Mozambique (FUMO), announced the launching of an "anti-communist freedom crusade" against Mozambique's ruling FRELIMO. The leader, Domingas Aronca, claimed to have the support of the Rhodesian government and a recruitment pool of 20,000 Mozambican exiles to launch an armed struggle.

With United Nations involvement, furthermore, Ambassador Young would have a forum to continue his effort to portray the southern Africa situation as merely an issue of white racism, while attempting to downplay the broader issues of North-South relations and Third World debt which lie at the root of, particularly, the U.S. involvement on behalf of the white regimes. Young's "white racism" line has already caused President Machel and other African leaders to brand Young a racist himself. Further attempting to establish this line of Carter diplomacy, columnists Evans and Novak on June 2 published a rather disingenuous "criticism" of Carter's Africa policy, claiming that Vice President Mondale's treatment of South African Premier Vorster at their meeting in Vienna "ought to shatter any illusions that the Carter Administration intends to take an even-handed position on racial conflict in southern Africa..." The columnists even accused Carter of uncritically backing any black movement against any white government.

The response to U.N. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim's offer to Mozambique to convene the Security Council has been total silence to date. Efforts to intimidate the Zambian government of Kenneth Kaunda — targeted as the "weak link" in the front line alliance — with threats of invasion from the Rhodesians have also been unsuccessful. Speaking to reporters June 1, at the beginning of a visit to Europe, Kaunda said that Foreign Secretary Owen had "made a profound impression on me when we first met. But I am sorry to say that this is disappearing very quickly." Kaunda also said he was "disillusioned" with Owen's handling of the

Rhodesian invasion. The Anglo-American opposition to the armed struggle over Rhodesia was not motivated by their desire to avoid bloodshed, he said, but by their "dread of communism." "There is now only one solution left," he said, "to give all our support to the armed struggle."

The cohesiveness of the front line alliance was further emphasized at a meeting of the alliance's Defense and Interior Ministers, where the five constituent states pledged their mutual military support. "We shall spare no effort," said Tanzanian Defense Minister Rashidi Kawawa at the meeting, "to ensure that the momentum of the liberation struggles reaches its logical conclusion, while ensuring the territorial integrity and security of the front line states are effectively defended."

South Africans Eyeing Overture to Soviets

Heavy-handed efforts to push the South African government into a "breakaway ally" mode are also backfiring. The Carter Administration hopes to play on South Africa's fear of communism and the spectre of a black onslaught to force the Vorster government to come to the defense of Smith and possibly launch some invasions of their own — acting as Carter's proxy in "facing down" the Soviets.

The South African option which was not foreseen by Administration policy makers, however, is to make a separate peace with the Soviet Union, a policy reportedly advocated by Prime Minister Vorster's brother among others. "If we can find no friends in the West," comments the South African *Financial Gazette* May 20, "maybe we should start looking eastward..." Trial balloons have also been floated by various high-level officials in recent weeks concerning the internal changes South Africa would have to make to come to an accommodation with the Soviets and with black Africa.

In addition, Prime Minister Vorster has launched an attack on David Rockefeller's (and Andrew Young's) close South African ally, mining magnate Harry F. Oppenheimer. In a recent speech in Parliament, after Oppenheimer had played host to Young, Vorster told Oppenheimer: "The time has come for you to say where you stand and what you are playing at..."