EYES ON THE EIGHTIES
The International Political Outlook for Southern Africa

John Barratt

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It should be noted, therefore, that the paper was prepared at a time when important negotiations were proceeding on the future of both S.W.A./Namibia and Zimbabwe Rhodesia, the unpredictable outcome of which would critically affect the outlook for the Eighties.

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The World Scene

A glance at the international scene today, as the world moves towards the beginning of a new decade, shows a situation of continuing rapid change and of considerable disorder. The international order has been undergoing profound changes for the past several decades, particularly since World War II, but traumatic developments of the Seventies have accelerated the change and aggravated the disorder.

One thinks, for example, of the negative effect of the Vietnam trauma on the United States internally and on its leadership role in the world. The Vietnam War has also left a legacy of oppression, conflict and suffering in South East Asia, a region where disorder is likely to become even greater in the Eighties, posing a continuing threat to world peace.

In the Middle East another war erupted in 1973. Although a cease-fire was achieved, as in past Arab/Israeli wars, and although there is now a peace accord between Israel and Egypt, an overall peace settlement is not in sight and sporadic fighting continues across Israel's border with Lebanon which has itself become a centre of civil conflict and acute instability. With the Palestinian issue unresolved, terrorist activities have increased, while the threat that these activities will spark off a wider war - with its implications for world peace - still hangs over the region as it enters the Eighties.

However, the most profound effect of the 1973 crisis on world order was the political use of the oil weapon by the Arab States. This demonstrated the potential of Third World countries, possessing vitally needed resources, to disrupt the economies of the industrialised countries, and the inability of the major industrialised countries to manage the situation. More recently, the revolution in Iran again plunged the world into an energy crisis and underscored the threat which unpredictable political events, especially in the Third World, pose for the world political and economic order.

In this past decade of inflation, combined with stagnation, and of monetary disorder, the dramatic rise in oil prices cannot be ascribed to political causes

alone; inflation generally and rising energy costs have fed on each other as they have spiralled upwards. But there is no doubt that these disruptive economic forces have political effects - which will continue to be felt in the Eighties - on countries throughout the world, both industrialised and less developed. In the United States itself the issues of inflation and energy have, more than any others, been responsible for weakening the present Administration, and they are likely to be the key issues in the 1980 presidential elections. But the overriding questions to be answered in the Eighties relate to the general collapse of the world monetary system and the implications of this for international political and economic relations.

Africa, too, has had its share of trauma in the Seventies - even if the many crises on our Continent have not had the same world impact as events in other regions. In Southern Africa the unexpectedly sudden collapse of Portuguese resistance to the anti-colonial drive of the post-war years altered the situation in the region dramatically. The ensuing war in Angola and the escalating conflict in Rhodesia opened the way for intervention by outside powers, with the Soviet Union and its surrogates moving in to exploit, for their own ends, the opportunities provided by instability and conflict. The West in turn has sought to counter the threat of growing Communist influence by diplomatic initiatives which have so far failed to resolve the conflicts. Southern Africa will therefore move into the Eighties as a region where, like the other examples mentioned, the interests of the Great Powers of East and West are now involved and where, therefore, the escalating conflicts pose not only a threat to the peoples of the region itself, but also a potential threat to world peace.

This apparently disordered world, riddled with regional conflicts and profound economic problems, is still trying to find a new international order to replace the one which was previously dominated by the Western Powers and the colonial system. The case is by no means hopeless, but the hopes which there are for the gradual evolvement of a more ordered international system are still bedevilled by two dividing forces which run through all these issues and conflicts in our changing world: the so-called East/West division between the Communist Powers, dominated by the Soviet Union, and the Western Powers, led by the United States; and the so-called North/South dividion between the industrialised countries of both the East and West and the great bulk of the world's people in the less developed countries, i.e. the widening gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots".

Southern Africa in the World Context

The problems of our region should be viewed in the context of this changing world, and not in isolation. We are affected by international trends and cross-currents, and we have to respond to the dynamics of the world situation. This means that responses now may have to be very different from those of a few years ago, and there is no doubt that they will have to be changed again in the future.

Likewise, the outside world needs to respond to the dynamics of our region where the situation is by no means static. The statements last week in the U.N. General Assembly by the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, and even by the Dutch Foreign Minister showed some recognition of this need and of the changes taking place in South Africa.

The tendency within South Africa to ignore world trends is being countered by the new approach of our political leadership, an approach which recognises that changes are necessary if the threat, internally and externally, is to be faced and overcome. Attempts to maintain the status quo or even to carry out changes in terms of a policy laid down in a previous decade, without adaptation, are now viewed by the Prime Minister and other Ministers as threatening to lead to disaster. The phrase "change or die" is no longer uncommon in Government circles, and the Prime Minister has even spoken of the threat of revolution, supported from outside, unless drastic action is taken to move away from a system which does not satisfy, and even alienates, the vast majority of black South Africans and our neighbouring independent states. Whether one agrees or not that the changes now proposed are adequate or even the right ones to assure future harmonious relations, there is no doubt that the sense of urgency in the Government's new approach is fully justified when one considers the current international trends and the pressures building up internally and externally.

South Africa is affected directly by the two world divisions already mentioned - East/West and North/South. They complicate efforts to resolve our problems in Southern Africa, and they cannot for that reason be ignored. In fact the opposite should be true, because they affect the attitudes and policies of other countries towards South Africa, and they affect South Africa's response to external developments and pressures. In Southern Africa, including South Africa domestically, we have the North/South division in microcosm, overlaid by the East/West division, with Communism taking the side of the "have-nots" and trying to paint the West

into the corner of the "haves".

Western Attitudes

One should deal with the approach of each important Western country separately, as there are significant differences, but time only allows for a consideration of Western attitudes and policies in fairly general terms. The approach to South Africa is conditioned by several factors, some of which will be briefly discussed below. But first one must appreciate the general point that South Africa is not treated as an isolated issue; for Western governments it is one issue among many interlinked foreign policy issues. Therefore, policies to South Africa are affected by these other issues, and one can, for instance, see this working out in Britain at present, where a Conservative Government is evolving a rather different approach from that of the Conservative Party in opposition.

The first factor influencing attitudes towards South Africa is the priority given to economic considerations, especially in the countries of Western Europe. As they look into the future, the availability of resources and trade generally assume crucial importance, and here Africa enters strongly into the picture. The Lomé Convention, which links most African states with the European Community, is central in relations with Africa, and great attention is at present being given to the negotiation of a second Lomé Convention. The Europeans are working to build new structures on past colonial links, which will take into account the sensitivities of their ex-colonies. France especially places a high premium on its relations with French-speaking countries of Africa, and so far it has managed this relationship with considerable success.

In the face of Third World demands for a new economic order and of resistance from Africa to anything which appears to smack of neo-colonialism, the negotiations over Lomé II are not easy. The Europeans, therefore, wish to avoid any additional complicating factors, and in this regard South Africa provides a continuing dilemma for them. South Africa dominates a particularly important region of the Third World, as far as the mineral resources so vitally needed for the future of the industrialised countries are concerned, and the major Western countries do not wish to have to choose between South Africa and the rest of Africa. But there are signs that their calculations about the future envisage the possibility that they may be forced to choose, or that they may simply lose their access to Southern African resources, as a result of growing instability and conflict. Proposals for stock-piling in Germany and France, and suggestions in Britain and the United States that companies should

not become too dependent on their South African links, are such signs.

In the shorter term Western governments appear to be placing their hopes on reform within South Africa itself. The employment codes adopted by American firms operating in South Africa and by the European Community for European firms, are one of the means employed to reduce pressure for cutting economic links with South Africa. Although the pressures are still there, both domestic and from African states, implementation of the codes does seem to have helped to defuse the issue. More important, however, will be the positive impact of the fairly radical reform of South Africa's own labour legislation and practices, which has now been announced.

Secondly, this difficult problem for the West of bridging the North/South division in their economic relations with the Third World, is complicated by the East/West division. The Soviet Union seeks to prevent the extension of Western links in the Third World, not because it needs these economic links for itself, but rather because, in trying to extend its political influence around the world, it fears that Western political influence will follow the establishment of closer economic links. The Soviet Union is at a severe disadvantage in any competition with the West on the economic plane, as it is unable to contribute to the promotion of development through trade, investment, technology transfer and aid on the same scale as the West. Therefore, the Soviet strategy appears to be to exploit Western weaknesses and regional conflicts wherever they occur. Given Third World sensitivities about the colonial past, Soviet exploitation of political grievances against the West, especially where colonial and racial factors are still present, is not a difficult task. The support of Liberation Movements - so as to place itself on the side of the angels in the anti-colonial struggle - is also a relatively cheap means of gaining political influence.

The West does not seem yet to have found a way of dealing with this Soviet threat effectively, but one element in their approach - almost unavoidable in the circumstances - is to try to avoid being linked closely with unpopular governments, i.e. in the sense that such governments are perceived as colonialist and/or racist. The lesson of the Portuguese collapse in 1974, according to the Western view, was that the West lost the chance of influencing developments in Mozambique and Angola, because it had been too closely linked with Portuguese colonialism.

This East/West factor has been of particular importance in shaping American policy, or lack of policy, towards Southern Africa, because of the continuing global competition with the Soviet Union. During the period of the Cold War, military strategic considerations obviously played a greater role. During the 70's, however, the competition has focussed more on political and economic influence, and this obviously affected the attitude towards relations with South Africa. There are now signs again of growing concern about the development of a possible Soviet military advantage vis-a-vis the United States, and about the neglect in recent years of the military aspect of the American role as a super-power in the world. This new concern may bring about changes in the 80's in American policies towards regional conflicts, including in Southern Africa, where the Soviet Union is also involved.

Thirdly, the countries of the European community are now much less inclined to act on their own, than they were in the past. While separate national interests within the European Community are still very strong, there is a growing tendency to try to find common ground in foreign policies. Regular meetings of Community Foreign Ministers grapple with problems which they jointly face, and special efforts are being made to develop a common approach to Southern Africa. This trend will become stronger in the 80's, and it will obviously influence policies towards South Africa. It will, for instance, reduce the likelihood of special relations developing between South Africa and, say, Britain or France, as existed in the past.

Fourthly, the policies of Western Governments are also influenced by other international groupings to which they belong. For instance, the Commonwealth remains of great importance to Britain, and most of the 40 members of the Commonwealth are from the Third World. The recent Lusaka Conference demonstrated the impact of Commonwealth membership and influences on the British Government. It was widely expected a decade or more ago that Commonwealth influence would become weaker, but this has not happened, and it is unlikely to happen in the 80's, barring a major world upheavel.

In the case of France, her relationship with French-speaking African states appears to be growing stronger in both directions. Recently French influence on the new President of the Central African Republic not to follow through with his "joke" about establishing diplomatic relations with South Africa was apparently based on the argument that close South African ties would be an embarrassment

in the struggle against expanding Soviet and Libyan influences.

The influence of United Nations membership should also not be underestimated. However ineffective the U.N. may objectively appear to be, and however irresponsible the actions of the majority of members may be regarded often by the Western states, these states continue to regard their membership of the U.N. as of considerable importance. They are frequently placed on the defensive on various issues, especially those of Southern Africa, with the Soviet Union taking every advantage of its support for the majority on these issues, and the consequent embarrassment for the West undoubtedly influences its attitudes.

Fifthly, mention must be made of the influence of the human rights factor on Western attitudes. Standards may not be applied in an even-handed manner to all countries with which the West deals, thus giving rise to the accusation - not only by South Africa - of "double standards". But the fact remains that South Africa will continue to be judged by the standards which the West has come to believe very deeply are essential for a democratic society. Moreover, there is a growing belief, born out by experience in other parts of the world, that the infringement or inadequate protection of human rights is often the cause of conflict and thus a threat to peace.

While racial discrimination may not always cause the most degrading violations of human rights, compared with violations in other situations, it is a fact that world attention focusses on this phenomenon more than any other at present, for various reasons. One reason is that racial discrimination, especially if formally enshrined in legislation, can affect a wide range of rights, now universally recognised as such, and prevent all people belonging to a particular racial or colour group from obtaining any redress. For too long this factor was not regarded in South Africa as anything more than a superficial one in our external relations; this "domestic" question was to be resolved in our own way and in our own time. But it is now regarded seriously both for reasons of internal peace and to counter external threats, and steps are being taken or envisaged, not only to change objectionable practices, but even to remove discriminatory provisions from the law. There is still a very great deal to be done, and given the complexity of the matter and the ingrained attitudes of both Whites and Blacks, no-one can expect this new process to be carried through in a short time or even without disruption. But there is a new sense of urgency

and determination now, which gives grounds for hope that the 80's will see South Africa move much closer to the Western standards we claim to accept.

In one's optimism on this score, however, one must inject a cautionary note. The concept of human rights includes not only economic and social rights, but also political ones. The removal of discrimination which affects rights in the economic and social field will be relatively easy, compared with the difficulty of meeting aspirations in the political field. This affects not only political rights per se, but also security legislation used in the defence of the political order, a subject which attracts perhaps most attention and negative criticism in the West.

Sixthly, the issues of South West Africa/Namibia and Zimbabwe/Rhodesia are of vital and immediate importance in affecting Western attitudes and policies towards South Africa itself. Internationally acceptable settlements, with South African co-operation, in these neighbour countries will have a very positive effect on the attitudes of the West towards South Africa - if such settlements can be achieved. These particular issues will be dealt with separately below.

All these factors, and others, will continue to affect Western relations with South Africa in the 80's, and the pressures which grow out of them are currently increasing. We cannot ignore these pressures, because in our interdependent world we need links with the Western industrialised countries. But there are ways of responding which will reduce the pressures, and, as already indicated, there is now considerable hope that the Government is very conscious of the need to respond positively. The alternative is to dig in our heels and simply to hope that we can ride out the storm. But that would be to close our eyes to the realities, internally and externally, and hopefully that is not what the Government intends doing. The new internal initiatives of the Prime Minister have already made a positive impression abroad in government, press and other circles, even if the reaction is still cautious.

The possibility that sanctions in some form might be used as a means of pressure or influence on South Africa has now receded. A year ago this had to be taken very seriously, but there have been two general developments which have changed the outlook. Firstly, the more Western governments studied the question, the more they realised that sanctions would be very difficult to implement effectively. They might have consequences very different from those intended, e.g. for South Africa's neighbour states, and they would therefore be a blunt and ineffective weapon. Moreover, they realised that even very carefully

selected sanctions might lead to wider measures which would then affect their own interests, e.g. their access to mineral resources and even domestic employment, if trade with South Africa were disrupted. Secondly, changes within South Africa and continued negotiations over South West Africa and Zimbabwe Rhodesia have helped Western Governments to hold off pressures within the U.N., from Africa and also domestically. However, the issue of Namibia still remains an Achilles heel, and the idea of selective sanctions, with the specific aim of forcing South Africa to comply with a U.N. settlement plan, could still be revived.

South West Africa/Namibia

A dispute which has lasted 34 years - since the beginning of the U.N. - cannot be easily or quickly resolved. But the determined efforts made over the past two and a half years in the negotiations of the Western Five "Contact Group" with South Africa, on the one hand, and with SWAPO and the Frontline States on the other, have produced impressive results, and it would be a tragedy if the present deadlock over aspects of the settlement plan could not be broken. This deadlock has lasted since February, when the U.N. Secretary-General proposed that SWAPO forces within the Territory at the time of the cease-fire should be located in bases inside Namibia, while no provision was made for monitoring SWAPO bases in Angola. The compromise proposals now involve a demilitarised zone (DMZ) along both sides of the Namibian border with Angola and Zambia.

It may very soon be known whether agreement can be reached on the new DMZ proposals, so as to allow for the implementation of the U.N. plan to proceed. If there is agreement, the future will become clearer and more hopeful. But if the deadlock continues much longer, then the likelihood will increase of new circumstances arising on both sides, which will prevent an international settlement. Already the death of President Neto of Angola has introduced a new and uncertain element. He was known to have been seeking a greater degree of accommodation with the West, to which a Namibian settlement would have contributed, because of Angola's pressing economic and security needs. His successor, President Santos, is reputed to be more closely committed to the Soviet link, but there are no indications yet as to whether he will adopt a different line from that of Neto on the Namibian issue.

On the South African side there is growing impatience within the Territory over the continual delays which have allowed reaction to develop from the Right against changes taking place under the auspices of the DTA-dominated National

Assembly, with the blessing of the South African Government. While the West counsels patience and at the same time tries to hold off the threat of renewed U.N. pressures, in order that time can be allowed for a compromise agreement, it is clear that there are limits on the extent to which the negotiations can be dragged out. For South Africa there is a danger that the momentum within the Territory towards independence will be lost, with possible political disintegration and loss of confidence. On the other hand, the SWAPO leadership, never keen on the Western-sponsored settlement plan, may provoke new moves within the U.N. to sabotage the negotiations.

Within the Territory there is not much optimism that the current negotiations are leading to agreement, and there is a widespread feeling that the South African Government will soon decide unilaterally on the next steps to independence, perhaps by mid-1980, possibly with another round of elections before then. Alternatively, the U.N. Security Council may precipitate such action by South Africa by deciding to break off the negotiations and to renew pressure - although it is unlikely that the Western Powers would permit such a resolution to pass while South Africa still held the door open for negotiations.

It would seem that the only way in which the Western Powers can now prevent a breakdown and unilateral independence will be to persuade the Frontline States to force SWAPO to forego some of its demands, while at the same time convincing South Africa that they will somehow ensure a fair implementation of the U.N. plan, which will not be tilted to the advantage of SWAPO. The DMZ plan, as outlined in recent press reports, is being interpreted as favouring South Africa's position, and for this reason SWAPO spokesmen have reacted against it. SWAPO's final decision will, however, depend on whether the Frontline States support the plan or not. At this stage it appears that they do, and the onus in that case will be on South Africa to accept or reject it.

UNITA's activities against the MPLA Government of Angola are an important factor in this uncertain situation. They prevent the Government from effectively controlling and administering large areas in the southern half of the country; they keep the important Benguela Railroad closed to traffic from Zambia and Zaire; and they hinder SWAPO in its operations against South Africa. The 20 000 Cuban troops in Angola cannot be reduced, because they are largely required for the struggle to suppress UNITA, and their presence, with the continued civil strife in the country, is a deterrent to further much needed Western economic involvement.

As it is, 90% of Angola's foreign exchange comes from the operations of Gulf Oil in Cabinda, while diamond production is reportedly down by 80%, iron ore mining has virtually stopped and the coffee crop is 50% lower than in Portuguese times. The recognition of the need for Western assistance - which Russia is incapable of giving - was illustrated in the announcement in September that a $360 million oil-exploration contract had been signed with Texaco.

Angolan support for the DMZ proposal may be motivated by a desire to deal a severe blow at UNITA which operates fairly freely in the south, and the price of sacrificing some of SWAPO's interests may not be too high. Whether South Africa, on the other hand, will be willing to accept a proposal which limits UNITA's ability to carry on its fight and which may serve to strengthen Angola, is still unknown, but no doubt consideration will be given by the South African authorities to the wider potential advantages in the future of a stabilised Angola, less dependent on the Soviet Union and Cuba, with more Western economic involvement, and with which an independent Namibia and South Africa itself might be able to develop links of a practical nature, such as those with Mozambique.

An internationally recognised Namibian settlement could lead in this direction, away from confrontation, for the benefit of the region as a whole. But a greater degree of trust on all sides would be needed, than appears to exist at present, and an element of risk would be involved for South Africa in regard to SWAPO's role. Even though SWAPO is divided, the external leadership is increasingly militant and uncompromising. The South African Government may not be prepared to take this risk, especially in view of its mistrust of the U.N. and of doubts it has - rightly or wrongly - about the ability of the Western Five to ensure a fair implementation of the settlement plan.

If the Government therefore "goes it alone" with Namibian independence, it will have to expect a strong international reaction. The U.S. and Britain (but probably not France) may continue to use their vetoes in the Security Council to prevent sanctions, but only while there is hope of negotiations. South Africa and Namibia are thus likely to find themselves very soon having to negotiate again, and one can only hope it will not then be from a weaker position - which is the course events have always taken in the Rhodesian conflict.

Zimbabwe Rhodesia

The outcome of the London Conference is still unpredictable. A surprising degree of agreement has been achieved on the draft of a new constitution - in particular regarding the difficult question of the position of the Whites.

This required a major concession on the part of the Muzorewa Government to remove the future blocking power of the White minority, but also a concession from the Patriotic Front in allowing for 20% of the seats in Parliament to be reserved for Whites. Concessions by the Patriotic Front have resulted from pressure by the Frontline States, especially President Nyerere of Tanzania.

However, the most intractable questions have still to be tackled, relating to the transition process, including new elections, before a new constitution can come into effect. The transition has provided the major stumbling-blocks in previous settlement negotiations, with a particular problem being the position of the armed forces of both sides. (This is true also in Namibia.) The British have a plan for transition, which they hope to persuade both sides into accepting, with Frontline and South African assistance. The main element appears to be the elections to decide who has the majority.

The willingness of the various parties to agree to elections depends very much on their calculations as to who will win. But, while both the Bishop's UANC, possibly in alliance with some other internal parties, and the Patriotic Front alliance of Nkomo's ZAPU and Mugabe's ZANU, may have reasonable hopes of winning, neither side can be sure of this. Therefore a great deal also depends on whether they each consider that the conditions during the period before the elections will be fair enough not to give the other side an advantage. But there are obviously great problems in the way of satisfying both sides as to the fairness of the conditions, given the general lack of trust. One thing is clear, and that is that no fair election, which would be recognised internationally, can be held while the fighting goes on. So a cease-fire is an essential prerequisite, but a cease-fire will not be achieved until all other elements of the agreement are in place to everyone's satisfaction.

It is unlikely that there will be an attempt to integrate the armies during the transition, but the aim will perhaps rather be to neutralise them by confining them to bases (similar to the Namibian plan), with monitoring by a U.N. or Commonwealth group. The decision on what should be done after the elections to form a single Zimbabwe army would then be left to whoever wins. Agreement in the current negotiations on this key element of what happens with the armies will be most difficult, and one can understand the concern in the country about anything which might adversely affect the existing forces, without adequate assurances for future security.

If the conference fails, the future of Zimbabwe Rhodesia will greatly depend on whether Bishop Muzorewa's Government appears to have been the reasonable party in comparison with the Patriotic Front. If the P.F. appear to have been obdurate .

and unwilling to accept the British proposals, then there is a good chance that sanctions will not be re-imposed by the British Parliament in November and that the American Congress will follow suit, requiring President Carter to lift sanctions. But otherwise one must realistically expect that sanctions will remain - unless the Frontline States agree to withdraw their full support from the P.F., which is very improbable. Britain is unlikely to go it alone, in lifting sanctions and recognising Zimbabwe Rhodesian independence, against the outright opposition of the African Frontline States, the Commonwealth, the U.N. and some of its Western partners.

In any case, whether sanctions are lifted or not, the war will go on, if there is no settlement with the Frontline States, and it is in fact the war which is destroying Zimbabwe Rhodesia. The lifting of sanctions might help the Government to a degree in the war, but it would take some time for the positive effects to be felt in the economy.

The war is taking a dreadful toll on the country and its people. Figures of 20 000 and 25 000 have been quoted as the death-toll over the seven years of the war. But in any case it is the escalation of the past year or two which is the most frightening, as the war remained at a low level in the early years, and in particular the fact that the most dramatic growth in casualties and deaths is among the black civilian population which is increasingly the target of intimidation and terrorism. In large areas the civilians cannot be effectively protected, resulting in a flow to the cities, where squatter camps arise, or across the borders into neighbouring states. It has been calculated that there are already at least 500 000 "displaced persons" within Zimbabwe Rhodesia, and the refugee problem in neighbouring countries is also becoming acute. The total number in Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia is probably about 200 000.

Black labourers are being frightened away from farms, thus affecting agricultural production, while health and general administrative services are breaking down in the rural areas. The absence of veterinary services in many regions is resulting in the death of thousands of cattle.

The growing loss of Whites through emigration is already causing a problem for the economy and the prosecution of the war. This may not yet amount strictly to an exodus, but a further escalation of the war will no doubt lead to an exodus, with all its dire consequences for the maintenance of economic and administrative structures. The lifting of sanctions alone will not halt this trend or prevent the consequences. So the prime goal of all concerned should be to end the war.

Unfortunately the expected de-escalation of the war after the signing of the internal settlement in March last year did not occur; nor did it occur after the elections in April this year and the installation of Bishop Muzorewa's Government in May. In fact the opposite has happened. The further danger, always present in the background, of a widening of the war outside Zimbabwe Rhodesia, has now become more real. Not only are the number and intensity of the strikes into Zambia and Mozambique increasing, but the level of support in weapons and training from outside powers for the Patriotic Front and neighbouring armies is growing. This could soon include African surrogates of the Soviet Union, such as Ethiopia, in addition to Cuba and East Germany.

Most recently, there has also been the clear and serious threat from South Africa of armed intervention in support of Bishop Muzorewa's Government, if the London conference fails and the Bishop's Government appears to have been treated unfairly. If this happens, it will undoubtedly lead to the consequences for all concerned, which Prime Minister Vorster once described as "too ghastly to contemplate". It is hoped, therefore, that this threat by the South African Government will have the effect of increasing the level of realism at the London conference about the seriousness of the present situation - which was presumably the main intention - and that the threat will not have to be carried out.

South African policy over the past decade and a half has been fairly consistently against any direct military involvement in Rhodesia (with the exception of the limited commitment of police units for a few years), although this policy has not excluded other means of support. The dangers for our international relations of a change in this policy have always been obvious, such as confrontation with other neighbours, increased commitment of outside powers to the P.F., negative reaction from the West, the branding of South Africa as an aggressor and the likelihood of sanctions - apart from the general danger of being sucked into a Vietnam-type, "no-win" situation. These dangers are still very real and have not been reduced by the replacement of Mr. Smith's Government by a black one. The South African Government would therefore have to have very urgent and overriding reasons to change its policy.

If the London conference succeeds, the short-term future at least will be much brighter. But it would be naive to think that the problems would then be over. Economic reconstruction and the rebuilding of confidence will present enormous problems, and these will be aggravated by continuing political uncertainty caused by ideological, personal and ethnic divisions between and within the various

parties. The internal parties are seriously divided - which is already creating problems for Bishop Muzorewa in London - and the P.F. alliance between Mugabe and Nkomo is very fragile. Even within Mugabe's ZANU there are divisions, and he is reportedly threatened by a challenge from an important Karanga element within ZANU, which could form a new party and align itself more closely with ZAPU or even work within the present political framework. These are examples of political uncertainties which will continue to plague our important neighbour in the 1980's, whether or not there is agreement in London, and they are a warning to any outside power of the perils involved in becoming too closely committed to one party or group.

Southern Africa and the Constellation of States

If the Rhodesian war continues to escalate and then also widens to involve neighbouring states and other outside forces, the possibility of stabilising the Southern African region and of promoting co-operative links between states becomes rather remote. Conflict and confrontation will become the dominant features of the region, and there is no point in speculating further now on the course of events in that negative scenario.

If, on the other hand, progress can be made in resolving the conflicts in Namibia and Zimbabwe Rhodesia through negotiations, then the opportunities for co-existence and even co-operation in the region between states with different political and economic systems will be considerably enhanced. This is not a pipe-dream, because already South Africa has been able to maintain and develop mutually beneficial links, on a pragmatic basis, with several countries which are strongly opposed politically to the Government, including Mozambique and Zambia. These links are not imposed on them, but stem from their needs, while they are also of advantage to South Africa.

In 1974/75 a very significant initiative was taken by South Africa and Zambia to promote détente and resolve conflicts through direct negotiations in the region. These efforts ended in the aftermath of the Angolan War, and new negotiations were initiated through the mediation of third parties from the West. But the time may now be coming, when the countries of the region can again approach each other directly to resolve their differences. All five Frontline States are in dire need of resolving the regional conflicts, for their own internal political, security and economic reasons. They cannot be expected simply to capitulate - now or in the

future - but the willingness of Mozambique and Zambia to maintain and even increase links with South Africa, Angola's tentative openings to the West and pressure on SWAPO, and Tanzania's pressure on the ZANU (Mugabe) wing of the Patriotic Front are all signs of a readiness to compromise.

On the South African side, where the need for settlements is also great, there are now new openings for constructive change internally, which will improve the international climate, and there is new thinking on future intra-regional links. The "constellation of states" concept, introduced by the Prime Minister, is a very positive one, because it implies acceptance of the intimate connection between internal and external relationships, and because it provides a possible framework within which both internal accommodations can be made and regional links forged. It therefore may provide a basis for a new direct approach to other African states.

However, it would be naive to ignore the political problems which will have to be dealt with sensitively if the concept is to be given practical substance. A major problem relates to the non-acceptance by other African states of the separate political identity of black states within South African borders. A constellation which only included what were previously known as the Homelands would not contribute to a wider resolution of regional conflicts, and might even create new barriers in the region. It may be necessary at this stage, therefore, not to focus on the political element in the concept, but rather to concentrate on the practical issues on which co-operation can be developed without any political commitments.

Another problem relates to the image created of a military and defensive concept, and this must be replaced by the image of co-existence and good-neighbourliness. Much more still needs to be known of the thinking behind the concept and of the plans for its implementation, but the Prime Minister has already helped to dispel some of the defensive image by including in the concept even "states under Communist influence", which value economic co-operation with South Africa.

It is also very important to appreciate that any impression that South Africa, as the strongest state in the region, is trying to impose a new structure for regional relationships on the weaker states will be counter-productive.

We shall be hearing much more of the constellation concept in the coming months, and hopefully it will lead in the 1980's to a new and realistic awareness

of our place in Africa. Relations with the West will remain vitally important, but the West will not resolve our problems for us, and it is only through mutual accommodations and a coming to terms with neighbours in Southern Africa that the present threats to the peace and stability of our region will be removed.