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**SOUTHERN AFRICA IN RETROSPECT:
The views of two Foreign Correspondents**

Robin Knight and Quentin Peel

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Robin Knight is correspondent for the American magazine *US News and World Report*. Before being assigned to Southern Africa, with Johannesburg as his base, Mr. Knight was in Moscow from 1976-1979, and has now been posted to Rome to cover the Mediterranean and sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Knight, who is a British citizen, is a graduate of Stanford and Dublin Universities.

Quentin Peel has just finished a term as the Southern African correspondent of the *Financial Times*, prior to which he spent two years on the Foreign Desk, in London. He is now returning to London to take up the position of Africa Editor of the *Financial Times*.

Mr. Peel is a graduate of Cambridge University.

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ROBIN KNIGHT

Most people's perceptions of foreign countries are determined by two particular factors - when they see them for themselves; and under what conditions. Foreign correspondents are no different in this respect.

I arrived in this country in August, 1979. I had been here several times before dating back to 1970. But there is a great difference between living somewhere - even when one is out of the country on assignment much of the time - and visiting it for a short period.

Throughout my two years here a single theme has dominated this country's life - change, the prospect of reform, call it what you will,

Over this period, analysis of what has been happening has gone through a number of distinct phases. Optimism that real change was imminent dominated the country two years ago. Then the 1980 parliamentary session doused much of this belief. By the time the 1981 General Election was held, nearly all the momentum had gone out of the Government's reform rhetoric. Now one senses a flickering rebirth of optimism, but on a more limited basis than at the start of Mr. Botha's premiership.

Meantime, the external environment in which South Africa exists has changed in two crucial respects - Zimbabwe has achieved real independence under black rule, and the conservative-minded Reagan administration has taken office in Washington.

The consequence of all these developments is that although I have only been here a short time I am leaving a South Africa considerably changed from the country I came to two years ago. It is around this theme that my remarks are centred tonight.

First let me list some of the ways in which I feel South Africa, and its situation in the world, have altered since mid-1979. Then I will discuss the consequences as I see them.

Most important of all, to my mind, no one in this country or abroad should now be under any illusions about the reform process which continues to inch forward in South Africa. During the last two years a non-stop debate about this process has continued here. The election campaign brought it, in my opinion, to a head. Today all those who wish to view this subject dispassionately have the facts on which to arrive at conclusions - what foreign correspondents do much of the time. In other words, the achievements, real and potential, of the Botha Government may now be outlined and predicted with a fair degree of certainty and accuracy.

I do not personally denigrate the changes that have been, and are, occurring in South Africa. Whether they are "cosmetic" or not seems an academic distinction and in any case misses the point in a country where psychological fear of the unknown plays such a central role in political

life. What I do believe is that the scope and possible achievements of this reform process are now apparent. The debate about this process has moved on since 1979 - the central issue now is no longer whether reform will occur, but whether what is proposed or likely to be proposed will suffice to head off black revolution.

Secondly, it is my feeling that a watershed in black political opinion has been reached and passed during the last couple of years. As I see it, we now have an answer to a question outsiders invariably ask about South Africa - namely, is violent race confrontation inevitable?

Thirdly, South Africa unexpectedly has won a reprieve, in the shape of the Reagan administration, from the total international isolation that threatened it in 1979. Maybe this will prove a temporary development. Maybe it will lead nowhere. Maybe it will in the end actually worsen this country's international position: after all, there is no one more bitter than a lover scorned. But it is undeniable right now that a rare opportunity does exist for Pretoria to break out of the laager into which it has retreated or been forced since the mid-1960s. This will involve paying a price - continued, convincing evidence of a real commitment to internal change - and the central issue in U.S.-South African relations today is no longer about American attitudes to South Africa, but about the willingness of the Botha Government to take the measures necessary to win continued U.S. backing, even though it is certain this process will involve a high domestic cost.

Fourthly, it is my impression that over the last two years Pretoria has achieved a fair degree of success in first obstructing, then making redundant, the United Nations' plan for Namibian self-government. In this, of course, President Reagan's election has proved important. But the undermining of the U.N. plan, and the increasing respectability in Western circles of South African objections to some aspects of this plan, really predate Reagan's victory.

It is still too early to say whether or not this development will have any practical effect on what actually occurs in Namibia. Much of what is being argued about now is extremely short-term and keyed largely to public relations. Nothing much has occurred, or seems likely to, to block Swapo's eventual accession to power. But from a South African viewpoint new options have opened up recently. Meanwhile, however, the continued delays over Namibian independence also have boosted Third World efforts to impose economic sanctions on South Africa. Compared to 1979, this threat is now much more real, and increasingly difficult for the U.S. and Britain to resist.

Lastly, there is Zimbabwe - today independent, more and more self-confident as its internal problems diminish, buttressed by massive Western aid and sympathy, Marxist in little more than name, and the focus of black African efforts from Nigeria to Mozambique to construct an alternative power centre to South Africa in the sub-continent,

What a contrast to 1979! And what a shock to the South African Government! All those stories about Pretoria being surprised by Mugabe's victory are not apocryphal. Only two days before the vote, a senior Cabinet member personally assured me that Muzorewa would win,

In any event, Mugabe's victory has drawn the knot tighter round South Africa, reduced Pretoria's options while increasing those of states like Mozambique and Zambia, and had a tremendous impact on South African blacks. Undoubtedly, to my mind, this last development more than any other over the past two years, holds long-term implications for South Africa which will outlast any political shifts in Washington and any verligte initiatives within the country.

These, then, are the major developments I have seen here since 1979. What do they all portend?

To begin with, the question of internal reform. As I mentioned earlier, the limits of this process have now been drawn. For all the talk of the collapse of apartheid, its irrelevance to contemporary South Africa, its erosion in everyday life, its conceptual bankruptcy and so on, it remains in my view the central reality around which all else revolves in this country. I have seen no change at all in this respect since 1979. Furthermore, Prime Minister Botha has repeatedly emphasised the restricted nature of his reformist policies - and in every respect separation of the races remains central to his view of the future. How else can one explain "reform" within the confines of the Group Areas Act, influx controls, residential and educational segregation - all of which Mr. Botha insists will continue unchanged under his leadership? How else can one explain the exclusion of blacks from the President's Council? How else can one interpret the refusal to grant freehold rights to urban blacks in the townships? One could go on like this for some time. The point is, all talk that apartheid is dead, dying or irrelevant simply does not square with the facts on the ground, which it is our task to discover.

From this I conclude that whatever reform occurs under the present Prime Minister's stewardship, it will take place within the limited conceptual framework which has guided the National Party for three decades or more. Mr. Botha may once have wished to escape from this straitjacket - who knows? But the day he publicly put National Party unity before all other considerations was the day he also ensured that fundamental reform towards a truly non-discriminatory society was out of the question while he was in charge.

To those of you better schooled than I in the introspective, defensive and exclusive world of Afrikaner politics - one which, I should note in passing, deliberately excludes foreign correspondents - this may seem like an unduly harsh judgement, given what has gone before under other Nationalist governments.

After all, has not Mr. Botha revamped the Cabinet and thrown out many hardliners, allowed labour reform to proceed, restructured the bureaucracy with a view to making it more flexible and less reactionary, speeded up the abolition of petty apartheid, held talks with black leaders, set up the President's Council mainly to outflank his recalcitrant party caucus? And so on and so on.

But observing all this, one is constantly left with the feeling 'too little too late'. Every poll of white opinion I have seen these last two years suggests - the recent election result notwithstanding - that something like three out of four whites favour more rapid change than is now occurring. Clearly this response involves Afrikaners, especially those living in urban or suburban areas. Against all the odds, the P.F.P.

increased its share of the vote in the April election. For sure you can still find reactionary employers dealing with black labour in a way that would have been applauded by 19th century mill owners in Britain. But much more typical is the way big companies like Barlow Rand and Ford and others have been prepared to accept the inevitability of black worker power and are trying to live with it.

What I am getting at is that the Botha administration, dominated by the pressures of Afrikaner nationalism and the shibboleth of party unity, has let go a golden chance - perhaps the last one whites will ever have - to preside over, determine the pace of, and inspire real change in the direction of a fairer South Africa. Anything that occurs now between 1981-6 will be anti-climatic. Almost certainly it will fall far short of black expectations. To take one example: personally my feeling is that the Prime Minister will 'do something about the Coloureds'. But consider for a moment the context he will now be operating within - at least 50 M.P.s in danger of losing their seats to the H.N.P. at the next election; a government indebted to its most conservative element, the Transvaal section, for having saved it from an even worse mauling at the hands of the H.N.P.; a house divided within itself about the Coloureds. Who can doubt in these circumstances that whatever is proposed will satisfy no one and solve nothing?

Of course, this essentially white political debate is not going on in a vacuum. Two years ago Mr. Botha apparently also enjoyed considerable black goodwill. Even the mere hint of reform, it seemed at the time, was enough to arouse hope in the still basically moderate, unrevolutionary black community - and this just two to three years after the Soweto riots.

But as time has passed, nothing much has changed, and hopes for reform have faded among blacks; one sees the harsher attitudes unleashed by the '76 riots reasserting themselves. It is part of our job as foreign correspondents here to make the effort to find out what blacks are thinking. The longer I live here the more I discover that we, together with the police, are among the very few groups within South Africa actually testing the water temperature like this. In my experience, white ignorance of black feelings is so profound and widespread as to be the norm, just as it was in Rhodesia. Blacks learnt from what occurred in that country - not necessarily the lessons white South Africans might wish. Whites on the other hand give every indication of repeating precisely the same mistakes which in the end proved fatal to Ian Smith's vision of a thousand years' white power.

One minor consequence of this situation is that whenever people like myself describe the tremendous polarization that now exists in South Africa, the growing respectability of violence among blacks, their new generational unity, their deep mistrust of capitalism, their attraction to Marxism on the argument 'my enemy's enemy is my friend', and the contempt and derision that exists within the black community for people like Thebahali of Soweto and Matanzima of the Transkei, we are in turn dismissed as 'Marxist agitators' by white officials. Indeed, the foreign press was actually accused of inciting the unrest that occurred in Soweto a year ago. Doubtless if similar unrest occurs next week we will again be made the scapegoats for others' failures.

But does all this mean that violent confrontation between the races is now inevitable in South Africa, not necessarily tomorrow morning or even this century, but nevertheless sometime in the future? Increasingly, I feel, it looks that way.

If I had to select one single reason for this gloomy judgement it would be the way black voices of moderation and compromise are continually undercut and discredited within the black community by white actions. The fact is that unless black moderates can point to real changes, they are finished. This is something they know themselves - look, for instance, at some of the things Hudson Ntsanwisi, Chief Minister of Gazankulu, has been saying recently. What on earth do the leaders of such squalid rural slums as Qwa Qwa and KwaNdebele have to show their people for their cooperation with whites? Where is the pay-off for these people who have risked their necks and their influence to play the game of homeland politics? There is none.

Meantime the facts of the escalating violence in South Africa are there for all to see - the growing numbers of bomb blasts, assassination attempts, assaults on police stations. And in turn the increasing belligerency of whites towards the supposed sources of this black dissent within and without the Republic.

What can break this cycle of violence and counter-violence? One thing only: drastic, dramatic political reform that gives blacks real political rights, removes all statutory discrimination, and attempts for the first time to forge a partnership on the basis of equality between the races of South Africa. But as I said earlier, the evidence of the last two years suggests such a scenario is a mirage. It was the last South African Premier, John Vorster, was it not, who asked the world to give him six months? Today there seems little reason to believe that Mr. Botha will be any more successful in clearing the roadblocks that obstruct the evolutionary course of political change in this country, despite the greater sincerity of his commitment to reform. If that is the case, what else is left but confrontation and eventual revolution? I certainly did not arrive here believing such a future was inevitable for this country. Two years later I leave feeling that only a miracle can prevent such a development - not tomorrow, not next year or even this decade, but inevitably one day.

How does this square with the Reagan Administration's expressed view that discernible movement away from apartheid is now under way here and should be encouraged by any means at the disposal of the U.S. Government?

Well, frankly it does not, even though I would accept that apartheid is far less rigid than it once was. But I am not a politician and my views are not primarily motivated by U.S. strategic interests in this part of the world. That is the difference. At present South Africa is the beneficiary of a changed world overview in Washington - one which, in my view, is only marginally related to actual developments on the ground in this country.

That is not to dismiss the new American stance as mistaken, built on sand, or bound to alter in time - though all three criticisms may be valid. But it is to stress to you the fragile nature of the new U.S.

rapprochement with South Africa. Recently I was in Washington and had the chance to talk to Chester Crocker. The overriding impression I took away with me from this meeting was of the limited scope of American aims in relation to Pretoria, the acute awareness of the cost to the U.S. of this new stance in terms of American ties with black Africa, and the lack of consensus among the Western allies about the new American approach. The fact is that the Americans want a number of specific South African concessions in return for their support. All these concessions involve hard choices for Mr. Botha. On his side he may gamble that the present U.S. desire to stop the Soviets and Cubans will outweigh any backsliding on reform on his part. But that is a gamble. Few Americans are emotionally attached to white South Africa, or know or care much about this part of the world. Short of a world war, South Africa is not a country that Americans generally believe is vital to their well-being. There is no South African lobby of any real consequence on Capitol Hill. In fact there is a very clear limit to the amount of political and diplomatic capital any U.S. administration will expend on South Africa's behalf.

What this points to is that if recalcitrance, dissimulation and obstructionism characterise South Africa's internal and external policies over the next couple of years, Pretoria will find Reagan every bit as tough to handle as it did Carter. It is a very fine line along which the Botha Government is now walking. An opportunity does exist. But it is decidedly a two-way street - U.S. support in return for real South African concessions.

Lest you think this an exaggerated view, let me, in passing, detail to you the conclusions recently reached after two years' study by the Rockefeller Foundation-financed 'Study Commission on U.S. Policy Toward Southern Africa'. This group of sober-suited Americans - at one stage advised by Dr. Crocker - recommended :

A tighter, wider-reaching U.S. arms embargo on arms sales to South Africa; a halt to new or expanded U.S. investment in South Africa; controls on the export of oil-drilling technology to South Africa; aid for African states seeking to lessen their economic dependence on South Africa; and the creation of mineral stockpiles by the U.S. to reduce the impact of any break in South African supplies.

The Commission also stated that white-minority government here is "more of a danger to, than guarantor of, U.S. long-term interests" in southern Africa. And it blamed white "intransigence" for the growth of Soviet influence in the region which, it argued, increased political instability, caused rising levels of racial violence, and promoted armed conflict.

Namibia and its future currently shapes up as one of the two crucial aspects of this developing U.S.-S.A. relationship. The pace of internal change in the Republic is the other. Here one sees a clear U.S. approach. American diplomatic efforts will be made to produce a peace formula that ultimately will need U.N. endorsement provided South African goodwill and cooperation are offered in advance. Both countries share an important goal in this exercise - to find a way to check Marxist advances in this part of the world. Clearly this linked objective is important. Equally

important, though, are the two countries' differing perceptions of what constitutes a Communist or Marxist threat. Zimbabwe is the obvious example. To the Americans, contemporary Zimbabwe is the example to be emulated as Namibia approaches self-rule. To Pretoria, Zimbabwe is the awful example to be avoided at all costs. Clearly the seeds of future disagreement lie in these differing views.

Were Swapo, for instance, to win an election conducted along U.S.-inspired lines, Washington would accept it just as the Thatcher Government accepted Mugabe's win. But we cannot be sure Pretoria would behave similarly. Should Pretoria scuttle the U.S. diplomatic initiative over Namibia, that surely would undermine, if not destroy, the Reagan Administration's present goodwill towards this country. Next year will be the acid test. Were 1983 to begin without agreement on Namibia's future, the chances are high that one casualty would be South Africa's improved relationship with Washington.

Finally, how does one assess the consequences of Zimbabwean independence for South Africa? Essentially there are both internal and external dimensions to this development. First, the internal ones.

On whites here the effects seem to have been almost entirely negative. To an outsider like myself the main lesson of U.D.I. in retrospect is that the longer whites in Africa resist change, the worse deal they ultimately achieve. Yet it is my clear impression that the fate of the Smith regime is widely interpreted in official circles in this country in purely negative terms - whites were not tough enough, Smith was too vulnerable to external pressures, neighbouring countries were treated too leniently, blacks enjoyed too much freedom of movement and association. And this attitude has been compounded in the past year by the way independent Zimbabwe has been depicted - in chaos, going Communist, with each white murder played up and each setback magnified. None of this can possibly have encouraged South African whites - reinforced by thousands of disgruntled Rhodesians - to view a future under black rule with equanimity or open-mindedness. To put it another way: instead of encouraging a belief among whites that black rule after all is a tolerable option, the Zimbabwe saga has reinforced white intransigence and made a future South African settlement more difficult to achieve.

On South African blacks, Zimbabwe has had a reverse impact. Without question it has helped spread the view that violence pays. It has enormously boosted black self-belief and self-confidence. The ground has been cut from under the feet of thousands of would-be Muzorewas - presumably the same constituency to which Mr. Botha is appealing with his plans to create a black middle class. Strategically, too, blacks have gained since a potential new "front" has opened up on South Africa's borders. Overall, on both black and white, the effect of Zimbabwean self-rule can be summed up in a phrase: compromise between the races here has become more, not less, difficult to achieve.

In conclusion, after two years here I find it hard to be overly sanguine about South Africa's future. Let me stress that there are bright spots - the removal of job discrimination; the new stress on black education and training; the formation of some new multiracial forums; the decline in naked racism; efforts to improve life in Soweto; the

removal of some types of apartheid; the more constructive official approach to change; the way many companies are turning their backs on discrimination at work. Compared to 1970, all this does indeed represent a marked improvement.

Where this kind of analysis breaks down is that it views South Africa in isolation to Western attitudes, Communist aspirations, black Africa's gut feelings, and political developments in neighbouring countries. It assumes this country has unlimited time to establish a more equitable political, economic and social structure. It ignores Africans' repeatedly-demonstrated capability to struggle for political power regardless of cost. Above all, it presupposes that the white elite of this country actually favours a multiracial, integrated society and eventually some form of power sharing with the black majority.

Two decades ago it might have been possible to work in an evolutionary fashion towards a genuinely equal black-white constitutional dispensation in South Africa. Now I doubt it. In their search for national identity, Afrikaners chose the path of white exclusivism. In reaction, blacks increasingly look to black power for their salvation. In between there is very little - this is not a country today for moderates of any race as polarisation deepens.

White rule does not, however, seem in any immediate danger of collapse to me. If I have to guess, I would think it can easily survive into the 21st century, assuming South Africa is left alone to decide its fate.

But two years here have convinced me that sooner or later black rule is inevitable for this country. What form it will take, how it will be achieved, where whites will fit in - these and many other aspects of the future are far from decided. In fact I would argue that it still remains well within whites' capabilities to mould the future shape of South Africa. But when almost 200 000 Afrikaners vote against their party and their people, it is clear that a new era has begun here - one in which white opinion is increasingly fragmented as the pressure for reform mounts and the central question is no longer 'if' but 'when' black rule will occur.

It has been my good fortune to live here and report from here at a most interesting time in South Africa's development, for which I am duly grateful. Probably ten years from now many of the same themes and conclusions will still be at issue. But I suspect the past two years will turn out to have been a crucial period in South Africa's troubled, varied history.

QUENTIN PEEL

Shortly after I arrived in South Africa, rather more than four years ago, I was involved in a passionate debate with an eminent South African newspaperman. The argument concerned whether or not a journalist should be "committed" to a political cause, or whether he or she should strive for some vague, abstract goal of "objectivity".

My colleague argued the former case: that because anyway there was no such thing as true objectivity, commitment to a cause was inevitable, and justified. I attempted to say that, while I admitted absolute objectivity was beyond the reach of ordinary mortals, it was nevertheless a goal towards which one should strive.

After four years in this country, I can understand my colleague's belief in commitment: this is a society in which it is almost impossible not to be committed to one side or other of the political debate. More than any country I have lived in, politics in South Africa are part of daily life. Issues like the recent celebration and boycotting of the Republic Day festivities, and the passion aroused by the flag-burning that went with them, show just how few real fence-sitters there are.

I suppose one of the reasons why I am happy to be leaving the country now, in spite of this being a fascinating time of political, social and economic debate, is that I do not believe I could go on much longer pretending at some form of journalistic objectivity. It is certainly no easy thing to work as a foreign correspondent in South Africa. Everyone seems to assume you have already chosen sides. The standard view in government is that a foreign journalist is a cross between a voyeur, a spy and an agent provocateur. On the other side of the fence, in the black community, there is an attitude that we are automatically on the side of the liberators, and can therefore be allowed into secrets from which South African journalists are excluded.

I must admit at the outset that I cannot judge events from anything other than a European viewpoint: I believe it would be dishonest to try. I come from a libertarian European tradition, with a fond belief in civil liberties, and an abhorrence of racial discrimination. For that I make no apologies. But I hope that, being aware of my basic values, I can still hope to bring a little objectivity to bear on the subject.

Whatever one's attitude, official hostility becomes apparent from the moment of arrival at Jan Smuts Airport. One of those glum gentlemen at the line of passport control desks ponderously peruses his blacklist of banned correspondents, before giving in with ill grace to the discovery that this particular agitator has amazingly not yet blotted his copy book. Then there is another gauntlet to run, as the customs men search diligently for banned literature - although they seem more interested in finding "Playboy" than political tracts. I have even had one official leaf page by page through the Malawi state budget, for a reason I have never fathomed.

An added complication on my very first visit to South Africa was that I was arrested and questioned by the security police within 24 hours of

my arrival, which I suppose confirmed my preconceptions of South African thoroughness. I had flown down from Nairobi to have a look at Johannesburg, in July 1976, to decide whether or not I could come and live here. There was never any question in my own mind about it - to be offered a posting to South Africa at such a time was something no self-respecting journalist could refuse.

What actually happened was that I drove out next morning to Soweto, to see the place attracting so much attention around the world. I went with a British colleague, knowing that the townships were sealed off with roadblocks, but hoping nevertheless to pick up some impressions. The next thing we knew, we had been ordered to abandon the car by the side of the Old Potchefstroom Road, and were bundled off to the Protea police station in the back of a paddy wagon. You can imagine my feelings. After a couple of hours questioning, we were told it was all a mistake, but I have since followed the career of Captain Heysteck with a sort of proprietorial interest.

If you will bear with me, I might just tell another story of the sort of hazards facing an intrepid foreign correspondent in the field. This was the occasion when, also with a British colleague - there is some comfort in numbers - I went to interview General Hendrik van den Bergh on his farm at Bapsfontein, shortly after his passport had been impounded during the Information affair. When we arrived, the General was out, so we sampled the extremely indifferent cooking of the Bapsfontein Hotel before returning to the farm. When we got back, the General had just returned with a load of fodder for his cattle. Well, we tried to attract his attention by waving our press cards but he very obviously was not looking to be interviewed by any Press, foreign or whatever, and in fact saying just as much, walked into one of his outhouses and slammed the door. We regrouped and thought what were we going to do about this because the trip to Bapsfontein was rather pointless if we didn't get anything out of the General. So I wrote a little note and went up to the door of the outhouse and rapped rather cautiously. Anyway, I saw the General going into a backroom and then marching back towards the door. He appeared at the door carrying a crowbar. I hesitantly proffered this note and said, "General, could we give you this letter?", to which, bashing it out of my hand, he said, "I'm not talking to the Press - get off my property." So we decided that the shotgun would be next and got off rather rapidly. The only conclusion to the story is that as we drove away my very glum-faced colleague said, "It was such a pity he didn't hit you - at least we would have had a story!"

But the life of a foreign correspondent is not all drama. The Financial Times itself is scarcely a foot-in-the-door newspaper, I suppose that I really work as an informant for the forces of international capital: that is my main audience. It is a good discipline, for businessmen tend to require hard facts. Indeed, one of the greatest compliments I have heard paid to my newspaper came from a Chinese diplomat in Lusaka. He said that of all the Western press he preferred the F.T., as capitalists demanded reliable information.

I suppose I have been fortunate in having a brief in Southern Africa which included not only following political developments in detail, but also economic and financial developments. I think it does help to give a more integrated and balanced view of events. It is also a sobering

exercise, for I believe it tends to undermine those rather simplistic views of the world peddled by politicians, and even some newspapers and other media, which present everything in terms of convenient black-and-white formulae. They would have us believe that man is in control of events around him and that those events are the result of clear government strategies and planning.

If nothing else, I think my time here has led me to believe that most decisions are taken by default - that both government, and often business, are seat-of-the-pants operations, responding to external events, reacting, not dictating. All they want is not to look too silly, or at least, not to lose too much money in the process.

There is an awful lot of mythology talked about this divided region. What I would like to try and do tonight is look at what I see as one or two of the more blatant myths about Southern Africa, and have a go at debunking them.

One of the more pervasive myths in this part of the world is that there is some sort of coherent international communist onslaught in Africa, which has as its ultimate goal the conquest and domination of South Africa, and the destruction of this last bastion of white Christian civilisation on the continent. It is a myth which I suspect is shared equally in Pretoria and Moscow, and these days has a lot of sympathy in Washington too.

I have no doubt that Moscow does have some sort of master-plan for Africa. That in turn is convenient for Pretoria, which needs a good bogey-man to unite the "volk", but in practice it simply does not work that way.

Purveyors of the "total onslaught" myth seek to equate African nationalism with Marxism, whether it be Robert Mugabe's brand in Zimbabwe, Sam Nujoma's in Namibia, Nelson Mandela's in South Africa, or Samora Machel's in Mozambique. Now, there are strong threads of Marxism in several of those nationalist movements, and individual members obviously espouse the ideology. More importantly, perhaps, the Soviet Union and its allies have proved the most assiduous friends of the so-called liberation movements in providing arms, ammunition and military training to their guerilla forces. Yet at the end of the day, those movements remain first and foremost African nationalist rather than Marxist.

The Soviet Union has often miscalculated. The best example is probably Zimbabwe, where it miscalculated as badly as the South African Government on the eventual outcome. Moscow's backing for Joshua Nkomo has meant that Mr. Mugabe's victorious ZANU-PF party is deeply suspicious of the Soviet Union, and happy to maintain considerably better relations with the West. Only now, in June 1981, have Russian diplomats arrived to take up their positions in Salisbury, whereas the U.S., Britain and the other E.E.C. countries had missions established within days of independence.

Mozambique, along with Angola, is firmly committed to the Soviet camp. Yet even there, top government officials tell me they have nothing in common with their Soviet advisers, and much prefer the company of Western diplomats. Moreover, both Angola and Mozambique have been prepared to go along with the Western efforts to promote a peaceful settlement in Namibia, as part of the African bloc, and in defiance of Soviet attempts

to destroy the initiative. The more that initiative gets bogged down because of South Africa's indecision about whether or not it wants a deal, the more it strengthens Soviet strategy.

Finally, there is a determined propaganda effort in this country to present both SWAPO and the banned ANC as mere lackeys of Moscow, which is a distortion of the far more broadly-based support and leadership of both movements. There are as many fervent anti-communists as Marxists in the ranks of the ANC, for example, while SWAPO's church links in Namibia still colour its ideology as much as Soviet support.

The other myth in South Africa's international relations is that the Government has a "total strategy" with which to oppose the "total onslaught". In reality, South Africa's foreign policy in recent years has been vacillating and inconsistent, reacting to external events rather than following a steady path.

Back in 1974, when Mr. Vorster launched his détente initiative in Africa, the South African argument was that the only way to better relations with the international community was through a deal with Black Africa; once Africa accepted the white south, others would be happy to have her back in the community of nations. I do not doubt that the argument was sound - although much more difficult to achieve than Mr. Vorster and his advisers appeared to think. But suddenly, in the last couple of years, there has been a conservative swing in the governments of key Western allies, notably Britain and the U.S. Pretoria has rediscovered its old friends, and has swiftly decided to abandon its efforts to woo Africa.

Pragmatic relations with the Mugabe Government in Salisbury have been ditched in favour of rhetoric. The economic screw which South Africa possesses in its transport and trade links has been deliberately twisted. Nothing has so encouraged the development of the Southern African Development Co-ordinating Conference (SADCC), which seeks to reduce links with South Africa, than Pretoria's reminders of African dependence. Botswana, for example, always a moderate and cautious neighbour, was prevented for two years from importing enough oil supplies to fill reserve fuel tanks. Zimbabwe is now down to lower fuel reserves (merely a few days) than it ever was at the height of the guerilla war. This is a very dangerous strategy, for in Western capitals governments come and go, whilst Africa's commitment to change in South Africa seems altogether more constant.

Yet another domestic myth now current is that somewhere in the corridors of power there is a secret plan, a plan which will give effect to the vague talk of reform of recent years, so little of which has actually been acted upon. I have found no evidence whatsoever of such a plan. Indeed, there is simply not enough unanimity in any section of government to give birth to one. Instead, reform is introduced piecemeal, without clear perceptions of the consequences, as in the field of labour reform. There, government officials disagree profoundly on whether their intention is to liberalise industrial relations, or to control them. There is also little doubt that part of the package of labour reform proposed by Professor Wiehahn was primarily for international consumption, and simply did not fit into a coherent labour strategy.

The reality of reform has been lost in a game of semantics. Two years ago, I interviewed Dr. Piet Koornhof, not long before he made his famous statement at Palm Springs that apartheid is dead. He told me the same, in as many words. Then I put it to him that surely, everything he was saying about freedom of opportunity remained within the context of separate development. "Don't use those words", he said. When I asked what I should call it, he replied, "Nothing at all. Any words we use to describe our policy are immediately distorted by the international press. So we prefer to call it nothing at all."

On Namibia, too, Pretoria's policy has hardly fitted the description of a total strategy. There is obviously a continuing division in the top ranks of government over whether an international settlement - which might allow a SWAPO victory - is desirable or not. Even the military is divided between those who favour orderly withdrawal, and those who argue that the risks are too great. The domestic political implications of a SWAPO election victory - both in terms of conservative white backlash, and the encouragement of black radicalism - are seen as more serious than any balance of military advantage. But there are also those both in the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Defence Force who realise that the inevitable cannot be indefinitely delayed.

If you will allow me a brief diversion to tell a story of one of my experiences in Namibia which has left me with what I still find the most delightful description of Namibia's status these days. I had driven up three years ago, with a German colleague, to Ovamboland. (He was a rather wealthier colleague than I, and had an air-conditioned Mercedes - the only way to travel in Ovamboland.) We were driving back on that dead-straight, absolutely empty road doing probably at least 200 kms/hr, and we overtook a car with a funny numberplate - but it didn't say S.A.P., so I didn't know what it was. And as we overtook, he flashed and waved and we thought he was in trouble. It was the middle of nowhere, so we stopped, and of course it was the police. This fellow got out and walked up with that sort of slow gait and said, "Do you realise that you were speeding?" So my colleague says, "Ag, you know, we're German tourists - what a lovely country - just in here for a week - didn't realise there was a speed limit - we know in South Africa there is a speed limit, but in Namibia?" "Don't you realise", said the policeman, "this still is South Africa - almost!"

On the domestic front, the most popular myth of the moment is the belief that the forces of free enterprise and the free market in South Africa will somehow magically erode the entrenched racial divisions known to the world as apartheid. The cult of the free market has been revived with a vengeance, as other hopes of more deliberate reform have faded.

The truth is, it is all very well in theory. If a free market existed in South Africa, entrenched racial discrimination would undoubtedly be forced to crumble. But South Africa actually has one of the least free economies of the industrialised and semi-industrialised world. It is dominated by a handful of mining houses and financial institutions, along with a few massively powerful parastatal corporations. As many as 70% of the shares on the stock exchange are controlled by large parent companies.

Prices are controlled or administered across broad swathes of the economy. The Anglo American Corporation alone probably controls directly or indirectly some 25% of the private sector's contribution to G.D.P.

The other side of the economy, the labour market, is equally unfree. It is not so much the effect of job reservation and closed shops which prevent free labour bargaining, but the whole system of influx control. As long as that exists, then so-called economic forces cannot work to promote black advancement in any meaningful way. Moreover, as long as Africans, Coloured people and Indians are banished to distant townships, in terms of the Group Areas Act, they will also be at a permanent disadvantage in the labour market.

I am afraid I still call it apartheid; far from being dead, dying, or a failure, it has been a tremendous success, at least in so far as the effective separation of the races is concerned. Over the past four years, I have seen communication between black and white deteriorate appreciably. It is now extremely difficult for whites in South Africa to know what is happening in the black community. The lack of information is compounded by the insistent government propaganda, purveyed above all by the S.A.B.C., which distorts black aspirations and promotes irrelevant black leaders.

Perhaps this to me, as someone in the communications business, is the most dangerous and tragic development in South Africa today. The example of Zimbabwe is surely a stark enough reminder of the dangers of cutting off lines of communication. I am not referring to the end result in Zimbabwe, which I regard as one of the most hopeful developments I have seen in Africa: there is a real, if fragile, chance that black and white will learn to live together there, and prosper. But the prolongation of the guerilla war in that country, and all the lives it cost, was as much as anything because of a refusal of the ruling class to listen to the voice of genuine black aspirations. I remember when Joshua Nkomo, and even Bishop Muzorewa, held huge rallies in the black townships three and four years ago, attracting as many as 250 000 people, and the local newspapers carried one paragraph. The television gave it no mention at all.

I see a very real danger of the same happening here. There is a tremendous responsibility on the media to give a true reflection of what is happening in all the communities of South Africa, to report faithfully on developments in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and other neighbouring states, so that both blacks and whites in South Africa have good information on which to decide their future. But I am fearful that the peddlers of ideology and rhetoric already have too much power and influence to be undermined.