

In southern Africa, the Soviets are tightening the military vise

by Thierry Lalevée

The June 16 celebrations of the 10th anniversary of the Soweto riots, expected by the Soviet-controlled African National Congress of Oliver Tambo to become the "beginning of the mass upheaval" against the South African regime, failed to fulfill the ANC's wishes for a bloodbath. The South African regime, which had announced at the beginning of June a ban on all political meetings, imposed on June 12 a national State of Emergency. The entire police and armed forces were deployed to prevent any unrest, as some 2,000 persons considered to be township agitators were arrested.

Though impressive, such a deployment could not have met its goals alone. Credited with having ensured that mass rioting did not take place, was the meeting between President P. W. Botha and Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu on June 13—the first such meeting ever.

One day earlier, as he announced the State of Emergency, Botha warned, "We have learned the lessons of Vietnam and Angola; we will not allow our 300-year-old heritage to collapse into chaos." According to BBC, he also revealed that among the papers seized by the South African army during its recent raids in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Botswana, was a set of ANC internal memoranda, reportedly describing how the ANC is to remain the "only leader of the anti-apartheid fight," and saying that although the "work of the UDF [United Democratic Front] and of other organizations is useful, they have to accept our leadership." True to Leninist dogma, the UDF and others were described as mere "useful fools."

Though the content of the Botha-Tutu talks was not made public, the memos were clearly a topic. Describing his meeting as a "private one" which didn't require a public communiqué, Tutu said afterward they had discussed their convergences: "We are both South Africans, we are both Christians, and we are both anti-communists." Hence, whatever Botha presented as evidence to Tutu was enough for the Bishop to find it necessary to stress his convergence with Botha and his divergence with the ANC, whose leadership is staffed by members of the outlawed South African Communist Party.

During Tutu's sermon on June 16, he dropped for a moment the radical tone he has adopted in the last year, calling for a "reconciliation between white and black." But while the mass rioting predicted by the ANC did not materialize, South

Africa remains a ticking time bomb. Unless such a reconciliation is permitted to occur, there is no way the conflict can be resolved. Preparations have already begun for South Africa to "go it alone," in defiance of international pressures, which will mean a bloodbath and the destruction of any potentially positive role for the most economically powerful country in Africa.

Soviets tighten the noose

A fight has broken out internationally over economic sanctions against South Africa, heralded by an international conference sponsored by the "U.N. Commission for Economic Sanctions against South Africa" in Paris June 16-20. Dozens of organizations and church groups staged demonstrations throughout the world. On June 15, the Pope demanded an immediate end to apartheid.

Using the fight against apartheid, which obviously must be eradicated, the Soviet have built up their strategic position in southern Africa through these meetings. On June 16, the Front Line states (bordering South Africa) called on the U.N. Security Council to implement economic sanctions to commemorate the Soweto riots. On June 18, another Security Council session was called on the issue of sanctions, this time to protest South Africa's alleged June 5 raid on the Angolan port of Namibe.

The Paris U.N. conference then became a forum dominated by the ANC, with many countries jumping on the anti-apartheid bandwagon. But with the United States, West Germany, and Britain absent, and France present only as observer, the conference was doomed to fail. An EC foreign ministers conference, the same day in Luxembourg, decided to postpone any decision on sanctions until the heads of state meeting at the end of June.

Further economic sanctions against South Africa will mean genocide—as Inkatha, the largest black-liberation movement in the country, has stressed. South Africa's industrial power is the only basis in the region for large-scale, rapid economic development, but the "disinvestment" policy pushed by the United Nations, the World Council of Churches, and the Soviet front groups would dismantle that capability. The Soviets have never shown the least concern for such

life-and-death economic issues, as the catastrophe in the countries closest to them, such as Ethiopia, betrays.

In Britain, the country responsible for establishing apartheid in the first place, the resistance to sanctions is hanging by a thread. On June 8, the *Sunday Times* revealed that the Queen of England, generally supposed not to intervene into political matters, was pressuring the British government to enact full economic sanctions. As Queen of the Commonwealth countries, Elizabeth II had reportedly received warnings from the prime minister of India and especially from President Kaunda of Zambia that unless sanctions were applied, they would leave and break up the Commonwealth. The group of so-called Eminent Persons is to present to a special Commonwealth meeting in London, the results of its fact-finding investigations in southern Africa. August 2 was given as the ultimate deadline.

Ironically, the Commonwealth may indeed collapse. Prime Minister Thatcher, supported by such media as the *London Times*, made it clear that she opposed any wide-ranging sanctions, though she refused to comment on the Queen's position, outside a mere declaration: "It is between me and my Queen." In the United States, Congress pushed a motion on June 18 demanding broad economic sanctions.

The real battles

The very fact that these debates have taken place, is a major success for the Soviet Union. While attention focused on sanctions, and predictions of ANC leader Oliver Tambo in Paris of "success very soon," Moscow's direct, on-the-ground operations have almost gone unnoticed. Only a few months away from Gorbachov's planned visit to Africa for the Ethiopian Revolution celebrations in September, the Soviets are shoring up their military presence. Since May 27, they have launched three offensives in southern Angola against the anti-government forces of Jonas Savimbi's UNITA. According to intelligence reports, the offensive is moving eastward toward Zambia, and southward toward the Namibian border, with major deployments in the center-east of the country.

Reports from the battlefield indicate that though the Soviet and Cuban forces have not yet committed all of their military potential, each unit of the FAPLA (Angolan government troops) is under direct Soviet and Cuban control. Similarly, not one Angolan is being allowed to fly the MiGs or the MI-24 gunship helicopters. As in Afghanistan, Moscow wants to do it itself. Whether UNITA can resist such an onslaught when it is fully unleashed, can only be surmised.

The aim is to send a message to every African capital that the Soviet Union is unchallenged in the region. One response, according to the weekly *Jeune Afrique*, was the May appointment of a new Zairean foreign minister, Mandungu Bula. He was trained in the Soviet Union in the early 1960s together with many of today's leaders of the Angolan regime. A former adversary of Zaire's President Mobutu, Bula is strongly anti-American.

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