ENTERING 1975 WITH THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE IN AFRICA

The fall of Portuguese colonial rule in Africa marks the beginning of the last stage of the struggle to liberate all Africa from European political domination. The previous stage, which began with the successful Gold Coast revolution that freed Ghana in 1957, has now ended in victory.

Though neo-colonialism remains a serious danger that imperialism poses to all of independent Africa, the struggle against this form of imperialist penetration will sharpen as the struggle to free Zimbabwe, Azania, and Namibia from the illegal governments of Rhodesia and South Africa reaches its conclusion.

Now that Angola no longer guards the Namibian flank, and Mozambique doesn’t shield half of the Zimbabwe frontier for white Rhodesia, the armed liberation struggle, particularly in Zimbabwe, has been immeasurably strengthened. When the people of Zimbabwe overthrow the Ian Smith government, the northern frontier of Azania will be naked, exposing the Transvaal region, the source of South Africa’s great riches and prestige, to easy armed attack from the north.

Of course, this will not necessarily be the sequence of liberation. The Azanian people aren’t sitting on their hands waiting for it to happen. Here is how the situation was described in the January 8 issue of Pretoria News:

"The fuse is shortening on South Africa’s most lethal time bomb. As politicians search for a new dispensation in the sub-continent which will release her wealth and power from the bondage of conflict, the very source of that wealth — South Africa’s gold mining industry — is wracked by riot and stained by sudden death.

“This week’s violent strike at the world’s largest gold mine is merely the latest grim addition to a mounting toll which, in the last few months, has involved more than 37,000 Black workers and claimed the lives of 26.”

While other white papers tried to blame the strike wave on a recently introduced deferred wage plan, the News article offered the masters a more realistic view of the plight they face:

“... violence that has become a festering sore in many a South African gold mine is too widespread and persistent to be pinned on every stray infection.

“Whatever the superficial and immediate cause, the basic reasons lie in the labour structure of the industry itself: in an inhuman and demoralizing system which separates men from their families and consigns them in their thousands to single-sex hostels, which ... has failed ... to pay them enough...”

The article concluded by calling on the government to "defuse" the issue quickly, "before it imperils the whole of southern Africa." Pretoria’s Afrikaans-language newspaper, Hoofstad, on the same day offered the traditional white-settler solution:
"...more attention will have to be paid to proper ethnic grouping so that only one national group works at a particular mine."

If that isn’t done, the article says, the problem “could well become an international matter.”

Though the imperialists could not have predicted the timing of their deepening crisis, their contingency plans were laid well in advance. The recently revealed “Tar Baby” memoranda have helped fill in some of the blanks, helping to increase our picture of how they function.

On April 10, 1969, a memo from Henry Kissinger to the U.S. Secretaries of State and Defense and the CIA Director directed them to draw up “a comprehensive review of U.S. policy towards southern Africa (south of Congo K. and Tanzania).” In December of that year, after considering five possible options submitted by the National Security Council, Nixon approved the “Tar Baby” choice, which called for secret support for the white-supremacist states and sharply curtailed aid to neighboring black governments.

The policy called for relaxing the sanctions against South Africa, and said that in Rhodesia the U.S. should “retain the consulate, gradually relax sanctions and consider eventual recognition.” It called for military aid to support the Portuguese colonial regimes.

So when the U.S. officially closed its Rhodesian consulate in 1970 under heavy pressure, it remained faithful to “Tar Baby” by keeping open an unofficial liaison office with Rhodesia in Washington. In late 1971, as Congress passed the Byrd Amendment, exempting minerals from the ban on Rhodesian trade, the Treasury Department licensed Air Rhodesia to step up its business in New York. Shortly after that, the Treasury and Commerce Departments licensed Hertz, Avis, and Holiday Inn to establish franchises in Rhodesia. These were important concessions, because tourism is Rhodesia’s second largest source of income, after minerals.

And four months later, the first chrome shipment arrived at Burnside, Louisiana. (There were also attempts to smuggle in items not covered by the Byrd Amendment. When Reynolds International imported 197 tons of Rhodesian petalite, the invoice listed the cargo as “South African Feldspar.”)

The importation of chrome sparked a mass movement of opposition in the United States, primarily composed of black workers and students, to prevent these blood-stained cargoes from being unloaded, and demanding repeal of the Byrd Amendment.

While the struggle was unfolding in public on this level, the imperialists, behind the scenes, were preparing militarily to enforce the “Tar Baby” policy. In 1970, a U.S. Navy research team proposed a multinational naval presence in the Indian Ocean, in violation of United Nations policy, and that “...the Navy of the Republic of South Africa should be invited to participate...”

The South African government, for its part, opened up a naval communications complex
buried in a mountain near Capetown, designed to withstand nuclear attack, which can accurately chart ship movements as far away as Latin America, the Antarctic, and the Bay of Bengal.

Also in 1970, the Nixon administration began to allow the U.S. aviation industry to sell aircraft to South Africa in violation of the United Nations resolutions against arms sales to South Africa by calling the planes “non-military.” Communications equipment has also been supplied under a similar ruse.

The South African air force, brazenly pushing the same fiction, arranged to acquire an additional 200 new planes over a four year period, including 48 Mirage F1 fighters, the latest and deadliest of the French line of aircraft. These will be built entirely in France, but South Africa’s state-run Atlas Aircraft Corporation will also be building Mirages, under license, by 1977.

At the same time, South Africa has greatly expanded its capacity to manufacture its own arms: rifles, revolvers, grenades, mortars, ammunition, tear gas, rockets, anti-tank and anti-personnel mines, bombs, napalm, and armored cars.

The collapse of Portuguese colonial power in Africa created panic in the imperialist ranks, and the stepped-up efforts to shore up the eroding white-supremacist domination of Southern Africa. In January of last year, South Africa’s Information Minister to the United States, Dr. Cornelius Mulder, held talks with influential Senators and Congressmen. (Mulder is often mentioned as the likeliest successor to South Africa’s Prime Minister, B.J. Vorster.) And in May, the South African Defense Force Chief, Admiral Biermann, visited Washington to hold talks with Admiral Thomas Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Navy Secretary William Middendorf.

According to the Southern Africa Committee, Mulder also held secret talks with a high official in the Pentagon, Vice Admiral Ray Peet, the man in charge of International Security Affairs. The assumption is that the subject of these talks concerned closer naval collaboration between the U.S. and South Africa, as well as increased violation of the arms embargo, since that was the same month that the U.S. announced it planned to build a $20 million air and naval support facility on Diego Garcia, an island in the Indian Ocean.

Last May, the United Nations Decolonization Committee uncovered a secret plan authorized nearly a year earlier by NATO’s defense ministers in Brussels, authorizing NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander in the Atlantic Region to plan for contingencies “outside the NATO area.” The Supreme Command, headed by U.S. Admiral Ralph W. Cousins, based in Norfolk, Virginia, had already begun to concern itself with the bases and facilities that might be needed in the Southern African area. The authors of the U.N. report quote a NATO official as saying that the plan was to make it possible “to go to the aid of our potential allies in southern Africa if the need should arise.”

Naturally, as all this was going on, the liberation struggle continued. ZANU, with the most effective fighting force in Zimbabwe, was able to strike within 30 miles of the Rhodesian capital. Armed struggle and strike activity both stepped up in Azania. And international pressure, mostly from the Third World, intensified. Finally in November the
United Nations General Assembly voted 91-22 to expel South Africa.

Facing this increasing isolation, the imperialists adopted a new strategy for continuing their rule, based on the traditional carrot-and-stick approach. Uppermost, of course, as always, is the stick. According to *Peking Review*, “Large military reinforcements have been sent to areas bordering Mozambique and Angola and secret military bases have been built there. Lately, in Caprivi Strip, the heavily guarded borderland between Namibia, Angola, Zambia, and Botswana, a highway network has been constructed and large numbers of troops have been concentrated.” South Africa is backing white fascist terrorists operating in these areas.

What’s new is the carrot—code named *detente*.

The idea was to sacrifice Ian Smith’s Rhodesian government in exchange for a guarantee of continued white rule over Azania. While the U.S. and South African governments put pressure on Smith to come to terms with the liberation movements in Zimbabwe, president Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia applied similar pressure to the liberation movements. (Zambia is in some ways a hostage to Rhodesia, pending completion and operation at full capacity of the TanZam Railroad.)

Bowing to the pressure, Smith agreed to talks, promising the release of political prisoners in exchange for a cease fire. Actually, he never intended to stick to that pledge unless his government was given guarantees of continued survival. But the imperialists hoped that the “moderate” black forces would gain prestige and strength among the people, in order to blunt the appeal of the armed movement.

That tack failed, however. Despite a formal declaration of unity among ZANU, ZAPU, Frolizi, and the African National Council, under the leadership of ANC, ZANU stuck to its hard line, insisting on “the inevitability of continued armed struggle and all other forms of struggle until the total liberation of Zimbabwe.”

Since then, the negotiations have disintegrated, while the armed struggle continues. There is no reason to expect any dramatic breakthrough from the last remnants of diplomatic effort. The real struggle is on the battlefields, and in the mines, and on the docks.

Our job, here in the United States, is to decide how we can provide the most effective possible support in bringing these struggles to an early successful conclusion.

All Africa will be liberated!

Ken Lawrence
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SOUTHERN AFRICA

ANGOLA

ZAMBIA

MOZAMBIQUE

MALAWI

AMERICA

BOTSWANA

AZANIA

(South America)

AZANIA

(South America)

ZIMBABWE

(Rhodesia)

(Republic of Zimbabwe)

ZIMBABWE

(Rhodesia)

(Republic of Zimbabwe)

ZANU and ZANLA
Operational Zones