Election 1980: Carter and Reagan on Southern Africa

The 1980 presidential election campaign will have important implications for future US policy towards southern Africa even if southern Africa itself is not often raised in the foreign policy debate. Jimmy Carter will defend his policies as having contained Soviet influence in Africa while at the same time promoting human rights. Ronald Reagan will press the attack emphasizing the communist threat in the Third World.

Throughout his administration Carter has vacillated between an “Africa-centered” policy and one which stresses East-West confrontation in Africa. Although the President has taken a harder line on the Soviet Union since the invasion of Afghanistan, he is using the success of his southern Africa policy as a way of reaching out to disaffected black voters in the US. Reagan’s major interest in Africa, on the other hand, has been the presence of Soviet and Cuban troops in Angola and Ethiopia.

The Carter Africa Image

Jimmy Carter has placed greater emphasis on Africa than did his immediate predecessors though this was dictated to some degree by circumstances as much as by design. The Johnson, Nixon and Ford administrations virtually ignored Africa until the Angola and Zimbabwe conflicts began to heat up in 1975/76 and Kissinger and the CIA stepped into the fray. In 1978 Carter became the first American president to visit sub-Saharan Africa when he made stops in Nigeria and Liberia. Over the past three years he has received in Washington numerous leaders of African states including Nyerere of Tanzania, Kaunda of Zambia and Obasanjo of Nigeria, whose assistance he attempted to enlist in achieving a negotiated settlement to the Zimbabwe conflict consistent with US interests.

The major visible figure in US Africa policy in the Carter administration was Andrew Young. Young’s appointment as US Ambassador to the United Nations was meant to woo African and Third World nations as Jimmy Carter himself explained: “I think we have a new sense in the minds of those people of caring about them and to a major degree it is because of their trust in Andy Young.”

Contrary to complaints from his critics in the US, Young explicitly represented the interests of US capital abroad. For example, his controversial statement that Cuban troops “bring a certain stability and order” to Angola reflected the views not only of the majority of African states but also of the Gulf Oil Company which has extensive production facilities in Cabinda, Angola. Although the US does not recognize the government of Angola, the Export-Import Bank extended in April, 1980 a $96.9 million credit to two state-controlled oil companies for equipment to increase offshore production. This is Andy Young’s type of Africa policy. As his final act as Ambassador to the UN, Young led a group of 24 American businessmen to Africa and claimed to have brought back a phenomenal $2 billion worth of business commitments.

Young and former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance were the two major advocates in the Carter administration for an accommodationist approach to the Third World. In 1977 Vance set forth his views on US Africa policy in light of Shaba I: “A negative, reactive American policy that seeks only to oppose Soviet or Cuban involvement in Africa would be both dangerous and futile ... we see no advantage in unilateral responses and emphasizing their East-West implications.” Less than a year later following Shaba II, Vance was eclipsed by National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski who falsely accused Cuba of initiating the conflict. Accommodationists in the State Department found their new Africa policy threatened not so much by the Soviets or Cubans as by the administration’s own verbal pyrotechnics.

The resignations of Young and Vance signaled the demise of the accommodationist approach and the resurrection of the confrontationalist approach employed by Nixon and Kissinger and championed by Brzezinski in the Carter administration. One sign of this shift is the administration’s failure to oppose the proposed legislation to ease restrictions on CIA covert activity in Angola when it was
passed by the Senate in June, 1980. Carter is also now pushing the Rapid Deployment Force and expanded military presence in the Indian Ocean. Foreign aid is also affected: the confrontationalist approach demands increased defense spending which, when combined with a desire to balance the budget, puts the squeeze on foreign aid.

Courting Black Africa

The Carter administration actively sought to increase US influence in black African states and access to their strategic resources. A number of key African states were willing to cooperate with this strategy, but only if the US clearly demonstrated its efforts to work towards majority rule in Zimbabwe and Namibia and continued to put public pressure on South Africa. Nigeria was the most important state in this group on account of its size, its influence in the O.A.U. and, of course, its oil. Nigeria is the second largest exporter of oil to the US, surpassed only by Saudi Arabia, supplying 16 percent of US oil imports.

The Carter administration continued to show the importance it places on relations with Nigeria by sending Vice President Mondale there in July, 1980 at the head of a 72-member delegation. While Mondale was there, Nigeria pressed the US to keep its part of the bargain on southern Africa. A pro-government newspaper criticized the Carter administration for the small amount of aid it was giving to independent Zimbabwe and for its South Africa policy which had "degenerated into indifference."

Diplomatic Success in Zimbabwe

Welcoming Prime Minister Robert Mugabe to the White House in August, President Carter called the Zimbabwe settlement the greatest affirmation of his administration's human rights policy. US interests in Zimbabwe were not served by a continuation of the war which would further radicalize the liberation forces and the population as a whole. The Carter administration correctly concluded that it was a war which Ian Smith could not win. The problem for the US, according to one diplomat, became one of finding "the point of military and political equilibrium. The [Patriotic] Front has to be not too strong and the [Ian Smith] government not too weak." Various forms of military, diplomatic and economic pressure were put on the Patriotic Front and its supporters among the Frontline states while the administration successfully resisted pressure from the right wing to lift economic sanctions against the Smith-Muzorewa government which would have upset the equilibrium and destroyed US credibility as a negotiator. These tactics eventually set the stage for the Lancaster House agreement.

The US and its British allies hoped that the Lancaster House agreement would lead to a coalition government which would either exclude Mugabe entirely or include other parties less radical than his. Ironically, Mugabe's overwhelming victory brought stability and openness to foreign investment which could not have been achieved any other way. Understanding this the US rushed to embrace the result and became the first foreign nation to open an embassy in independent Zimbabwe.

Cyrus Vance saw the surprising outcome of the Zimbabwe diplomacy as a vindication of his accommodationist approach. He reported to Congress in March, 1980: "We have a wide range of interests in Africa ... no policy could have served those interests better than our steadfast support for the principle of majority rule, with minority rights, in Rhodesia." Since Zimbabwe's relations with the Soviet Union have so far remained cool, the administration can boast that it played its cards perfectly.

Carter's South Africa Policy

Confronted by the need to establish a new American image in Africa, Carter announced early in his administration that the US was committed to majority rule in all of southern Africa. In May, 1977 Vice President Mondale met South African Prime Minister Vorster in Vienna where he endorsed a reporter's statement that the US would like to see "one-man, one-vote" in South Africa. Since then the US has always stressed that it has "no specific formula" for changing South African society.

For the past three years the Carter administration has been publicly telling South Africa that it must move away from apartheid or "suffer deterioration in its relations with America." But relations have not deteriorated from any actions initiated by the administration, nor has the administration been willing to impose meaningful economic or political sanctions.

When the Washington Office on Africa's campaign to stop Export-Import bank facilities for South Africa reached the floor of the House in the summer of 1978, the administration opposed the bill despite having claimed that this was one of the options which they were considering taking against South Africa. The April, 1960 State Department Gist, however, claims to "support commercial restrictions against South Africa" and cites the Exim bill as an example.

The Carter administration has continued to throw only carrots towards South Africa. In 1978 Secretary of State Vance reportedly carried a message from Carter to newly-elected Prime Minister P.W. Botha inviting him to visit Washington if he would cooperate on a negotiated settlement for Namibia which was being worked out by the group of five western nations. Today, South Africa continues to stall and manipulate the Namibia negotiations and, while Botha has not visited Washington, he continues to receive encouragement from the US for his "reform" policies. In his 1980 New Year's message Carter told Botha: "the strength of your government gives you the rare opportunity to make real progress. As you follow this path, you can be assured of our interest and understanding."

Aside from some of the public rhetoric during 1977/78, the Carter policies have meant business as usual with South Africa. And that business is booming. The US has replaced Britain as South Africa's top trading partner with over 16 percent of the total two-way trade. In 1979 US imports from South Africa increased by 70 percent and exports were up by 25 percent over the previous year. US investment is growing at an annual rate of 7 percent and American companies are supplying South Africa with technology and expertise in such critical areas as computers and energy resources. In
addition, the Carter administration has carefully kept the wraps on the extent of US government complicity in the sale of artillery shells and technology to South Africa by the Space Research Corporation between 1976 and 1978. Although Space Research President Gerald Bull received a minimal six months sentence through plea bargaining after a secret grand jury investigation, it is not known how the company obtained permission to purchase the rough steel forgings from a US Army munitions plant with falsified documents in a record four days.

The Space Research revelations are a blemish on the one bright spot in the Carter administration South Africa policy. In 1977 the US supported the United Nations mandatory arms embargo against South Africa and, in 1978, it imposed a unilateral ban on the export of US goods and technology to the South Africa military and police forces.

At the recent Democratic Party platform debate, Kennedy supporters sought to strengthen the party's position on South Africa by calling for "full economic sanctions until that government abandons its undemocratic apartheid system." Some Carter delegations led by Deputy National Security Advisor David Aaron, succeeded in inserting the term "legal" in reference to sanctions. The resulting final version of the platform is vague about what concrete actions are being proposed:

"We support increased pressure through legal diplomatic sanctions on the oppressive South African regime. Initially we will divest, under legal procedures, South African holdings of all public institutions and deploy full legal economic sanctions until that government abandons its undemocratic apartheid system."

Reagan's Advisors and Southern Africa

Ronald Reagan is inexperienced and uninformed about foreign policy issues. While he is not the first Presidential candidate to lack this knowledge and experience, he does not seem eager to correct it. This year he passed up the opportunity to travel abroad and meet foreign heads of state, fearing that his opponents might accuse him of trying to acquire instant expertise. New York Times columnist Anthony Lewis commented, "Ronald Reagan, over many years as a Presidential candidate, has not made himself even basically informed. And that is scary."

If elected, Reagan will delegate responsibility for decision-making to his advisors as he did during his tenure as Governor of California. It is instructive, therefore, to look at Reagan's foreign policy advisors for clues about his potential policies towards southern Africa. Reagan has drawn heavily on three conservative think-tanks for the bulk of his advisors. These are the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) at Georgetown University, the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford and the American Enterprise Institute. In addition, Reagan has gathered around him a number of frustrated hawks from the Committee on the Present Danger and the Coalition for Peace through Strength.

One of Reagan's hawkish defense advisors is Joseph Churba, a Middle East specialist in Air Force intelligence during the Ford Administration. Churba visited South Africa in June as a guest of the Department of Foreign Affairs. He told a press conference in Johannesburg that if Reagan were elected President, he would urge him to end the US arms embargo against South Africa, establish an American military presence at the Simonstown naval base and strengthen South Africa's capability to defend the Cape sea route by providing South Africa with helicopter gunships.

Churba's views on South Africa probably represent an extreme even among Reagan's advisors and the Reagan campaign quickly sought to distance itself from Churba's remarks saying, "we can't subscribe to his thinking on lifting the embargo on supplying arms." Others in the Reagan campaign use more toned-down right-wing rhetoric but have the same objectives. One of these, Kenneth Adelman, a former assistant Secretary of Defense during the Ford administration, recently completed a study for the Department of Defense entitled Alternative Futures in Southern Africa. In this report Adelman recommends: "Publicly, the US should keep the greatest possible political distance from Pretoria, while privately it should increase diplomatic and military attache contacts with both whites and blacks in South Africa." He urges closer military cooperation with South Africa since "strategic planning must allow for the possible use of the sophisticated naval facilities at Simonstown and Durban in a dire emergency."

The head of Reagan's "Africa working group" is Chester Crocker, director of African Studies at CSIS, who began the election campaign as an advisor to George Bush. Crocker was in Johannesburg one week after Churba and repudiated his remarks saying that they had "no standing" as a statement of Reagan's position. Crocker told the Johannesburg Sunday Times that Reagan's policies would not be constrained on human rights grounds or arms control and sales grounds. He believes that the US should pursue: (1) strategic access to the area, (2) minerals, trade and investment in the country and (3) the successful development of a multi-racial society in South Africa. He disagrees strongly with Carter's view of rhetoric, saying, "We in the US are not preaching to South Africa." But his recommendations do not differ greatly from the substance of Carter policy. For example, both he and Adelman recommend using the US International Communications Agency to increase contacts between the US and South Africa, a practice which has been vastly expanded by the Carter administration. Crocker also advocates increased US aid to Marxist states in southern Africa.

Foreign Influence in the Reagan Camp

The list of Reagan's foreign and defense policy advisors was drawn up by Richard V. Allen, coordinator of foreign policy issues in the Reagan campaign. Allen was a founder and senior staffer at CSIS from 1962 to 1966 and then moved to the Hoover institution before joining the 1968 Nixon/Agnew campaign. As Reagan's chief foreign policy advisor, Allen could be appointed national security advisor if Reagan were elected president.

Allen has a history of ties to colonialism in southern Africa. After leaving the White House in 1973, Allen was hired by the Overseas Companies of Portugal to lobby in Washington on behalf of the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique at an annual fee of $60,000. In his foreign agent's report filed with the Justice Department, Allen states that he agreed to engage in "political propaganda" through "private conversations" with public officials and to report on "the evolution of US foreign and economic policy as regards the area known as Southern Africa." Allen also ran a visitor's program "designed to acquaint media, scholarly and government persons with first-hand experience in regards to the overseas states of Angola and Mozambique." Among those who visited Angola and Mozambique under Allen's auspices were Representative Philip Crane (R-IL) and Lewis Gann. Crane became one of the staunchest defenders of Portuguese colonialism in the Congress.

Allen has always been a staunch supporter of the white minority regimes in southern Africa. When he was in the Nixon White House, he pressured the State Department to lift sanctions prohibiting the importation of Rhodesian chrome in violation of UN sanctions. He has stated that the US should...
take the "politically courageous act" of recognizing South Africa as a key ally. Now Allen has backed away from his previous position telling the New York Times in June, "I think that the legitimate needs of South Africa should be taken into consideration, but I would foresee no special relationship."

Another prominent Reagan advisor with ties to South Africa is William Simon, the former Secretary of the Treasury, who is chairman of Reagan's policy council. Simon wrote an essay for the special advertising section of the November 21, 1977 Business Week which was paid for by the South African government. After extolling the critical importance of the South African economy for the West, Simon concludes his essay with the following advice for foreign investors: "[those] who avail themselves of the opportunities in South Africa now, stand to reap handsome rewards."

Other Reagan advisors with South African connections are Ernest Lefever of Georgetown University and Peter Duignan of the Hoover Institution. Lefever is a frequent visitor to southern Africa and an ardent supporter of both the internal settlement in Zimbabwe and the 1978 Namibia "elections." He is an outspoken critic of the World Council of Churches' grants to the Patriotic Front and SWAPO, but recently he has called on the US to provide military assistance to UNITA. Duignan and his colleague Lewis Gann wrote this past April that the US should lend "cautious support" to the South Africans "for their efforts to maintain a modicum of regional security." Both Duignan and Gann received expense-paid trips to South Africa in 1977 courtesy of the South Africa Foundation, an organization sponsored by South African businessmen. Edward Luttwak, another Reagan advisor from CSIS, received a similar trip in 1978.

The Republican Platform and the Candidate

The Republican platform position on southern Africa closely reflects the views of Chester Crocker who serves as chairman of the Africa subcommittee of the Republican National Committee's foreign policy group. It is nearly identical to the policy paper which he wrote for candidate George Bush earlier in the year. The statement's few short sentences are filled with pluses platitudes. There are no explicit policy recommendations, only broad ideals which could embrace a wide range of policies:

In Southern Africa, American policies must be guided by common sense and by our own humanitarian principles. Republicans believe that our history has meaning for Africa in demonstrating that a multiracial society with guarantees of individual rights is possible and can work. We must remain open and helpful to all parties, whether in the new Zimbabwe, in Namibia, or in the Republic of South Africa. A Republican Administration will not endorse situations or constitutions, in whatever society, which are racist in purpose or in effect. It will not expect miracles, but will press for genuine progress in achieving goals consistent with American ideals.

Reagan's own views about southern Africa are nearly as obscure as those in the party platform. Crocker admitted recently that Africa is "one of a number of important issues which the Governor has not looked at yet." He has already begun to bumble over the issue of South Africa as he has over the question of Taiwan. In August he told Jet Magazine that the current problems in South Africa "are not so much racial as they are tribal."

The Soviet and Cuban assistance to Angola is one issue which Reagan has addressed. In 1976 he decried the limited force which the US had used there: "We gave just enough support to one side to encourage it to fight and die but too little to give them a chance of winning." Again in 1980 Reagan told the Wall Street Journal: "Well, frankly, I would provide them UNITA with weapons ... I don't see anything wrong with someone who wants to free themselves from the rule of an outside power, which is Cubans and East Germans." Right-wing Senator Jesse Helms is reportedly waiting to wait until next year to remove all the restrictions on CIA covert action in Angola with the full weight of a Reagan presidency behind such a move. (See the accompanying article on the CIA in Angola.)

Unlike the Carter administration, Reagan will not engage in public posturing against South Africa. At a recent campaign stop Reagan said, "South Africa is an exciting place to me ... and they certainly don't need us to tell them how to solve their race problems." Reagan's sentiments on southern African issues sound similar to those expressed by Margaret Thatcher during her campaign for British Prime Minister. But upon taking office Thatcher did not follow through as had been expected by recognizing the Muzorewa government in Zimbabwe and establishing closer ties to South Africa. Instead, she appointed the more moderate triilateralist, Lord Carrington, to conduct foreign affairs. It was he who engineered the Lancaster House agreements. Already, Reagan has chosen a triilateralist running mate, George Bush, and could look in the same direction for a Secretary of State.

World realities dictated to Thatcher, the folly of recognizing the internal settlements in Zimbabwe and Namibia; these same realities will confront Reagan as well. Black African nations and the liberation movements did not harbor any illusions when dealing with Thatcher nor would they have any such illusions if they were dealing with Reagan. Reagan might even have a freer hand to conduct negotiations on Namibia since he would do so with a mandate from the right-wing of Congress which was a constant thorn in the side of Carter's southern Africa policy. Remember that it took a Richard Nixon to make the dramatic overture towards China.

Given the growing level of US cooperation with South Africa during the Carter administration, the lack of progress on the Namibia negotiations and the increasing polarization within South Africa, Andy Young may be correct when he says, "Even if, God forbid, Ronald Reagan did become President, our policies toward South Africa could not change significantly."

Will the CIA Intervene Again in Angola?

Six short years ago US aims in southern Africa were relatively simple and their chance of success appeared high—prevent a racist powderkeg from exploding and keep socialist liberation movements from gaining power. Portugal, Rhodesia and South Africa seemed to be a stable alliance which could insure the famous conclusion of the 1970 National Security Study Memorandum 39: “The whites are here to stay [in power] and the only way that constructive change can come is through them.” In 1975 following the Portuguese coup, when Americans still had fresh memories of our dismal and dishonorable record in Vietnam, the CIA launched a new paramilitary operation in Angola to keep the MPLA from gaining power—and lost. Their project was exposed, and Congress cut off the money and legislated that any future CIA action in Angola would require Congress approval.

Today, in three southern African countries liberation movements have gained political independence, and the
United States faces a dilemma. Defeating the socialist governments through naked intervention is no longer either possible or practical, yet the US wants to deny these countries to the Soviet Union and bring them into the western orbit. To increase its options for dealing with this dilemma, the Democratic administration wants to regain the authority to conduct covert CIA operations in Angola. The Congress may decide to let them have it.

On June 17, 1980, North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms offered an amendment to the FY 1981 foreign aid authorization bill to repeal the ban on CIA covert operations in Angola, known as the Clark amendment. As so often happens on Capitol Hill, the liberals were caught off guard. Senator McGovern, who replaced Dick Clark of Iowa in 1978 as chairman of the Africa Subcommittee, was out of town; Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Frank Church, who, like McGovern, is targeted by the National Conservative Political Action Committee for defeat this November, left the Senate floor. Massachusetts Senator Paul Tsongas, a new addition to the Committee, was left to counter Helms. Everything happened very quickly. Tsongas proposed alternative language. Helms accepted his version, and it passed by a voice vote.

Observers were astonished by the co-operation between Helms and Tsongas, since Tsongas is one of the most liberal Senators and the principal advocate of normalizing relations with Angola, while Helms is one of the strongest ideological conservatives and a constant opponent of socialist countries in southern Africa. Tsongas wanted to avoid an up-or-down vote on the Clark amendment, but the language he proposed had almost the same effect as Helms's original proposal.

The Clark amendment provided that (1) the Congress, not just the President, would have to authorize any US military or paramilitary involvement in Angola; and (2) such an operation would be publicly debated in the process. The Helms-Tsongas amendment dropped both of these provisions. It said that no assistance could be given to any group to conduct military or paramilitary operations in Angola unless the President "determines that such assistance should be furnished in the national security interests of the United States" and he reports (in classified form) to the House and Senate Foreign Relations Committees the reason for the determination and a description of the aid. Since the President must find any CIA operations to be in the US national security interest and so report to the Congressional Intelligence Committees, the only special constraint remaining on future CIA actions in Angola would be that a few more people on the Foreign Relations Committees would have to be informed.

The History of US Intervention in Angola

To understand the latest American challenge to Angola, we must recall the history of US intervention there. After Portuguese army officers carried out a coup—largely because of their futile experience in three African colonial wars—Portugal pulled out of Angola in 1975. It constructed a "government of national unity" between MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA.

The coalition government never had a chance of truly uniting the country. The MPLA, led by Augustino Neto, had done the major portion of the fighting against the Portuguese. Like FRELIMO in Mozambique and ZAPU in Zimbabwe, most of its military support came from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It was the only one of the three Angolan movements which was both national in scope and non-racial in ideology. The FNLA, led by Holden Roberto, was based in Zaire and was closely tied to the Mobutu government. It was largely based on the traditional loyalties of the Bakongo tribe of northern Angola and had little unifying vision of a future new society for Angola. UNITA was formed by Jonas Savimbi and others as a break-away from the FNLA in 1966. UNITA was mostly a tribal movement supported by the Ovimbundu people in the southern part of the country. UNITA was the most ardently black nationalist of the movements but, ironically, it openly accepted South African military support in the war which broke out in 1975 among the three movements and their backers.

When the Portuguese pulled out, the US CIA stepped in to oppose the MPLA. It began giving support to the FNLA in early 1975 and, when FNLA lost ground, began supplying UNITA as well in July. The CIA intervened so massively that its operations could not be kept covert: it was passing money and arms to UNITA and FNLA, recruiting American mercenaries to fight alongside them, co-operating directly with South Africa's invading force, and engaging in illegal disinformation and propaganda campaigns within the United States and around the world. When someone in the CIA leaked information disclosing the appropriations bill in which the CIA had hidden money to expand its dirty tricks, Congress overwhelmingly passed an amendment championed by Dick Clark to cut off their funds. Even Senator Helms was part of the 54 to 22 majority that cut off the CIA's money in December, 1975.

Carter Follows Kissinger into Angola

The Carter White House put out mixed signals that it wanted to reintroduce the CIA into Angola. In May, 1978, one week after the revolt in Zaire's Shaba province which was organized from bases in Angola by the Front for the National
Liberation of the Congo, President Carter told Congressional leaders that too many Congressionally-imposed restrictions on the use of US "aid" were preventing the US from helping "beleaguered friendly governments." Carter referred specifically to the Clark amendment, but then he said that he would not ask for its repeal and that he did not intend to renew covert operations in Angola.

Senator Clark revealed that the Carter Administration did in fact have plans to intervene: Deputy National Security Advisor David Aaron and CIA Director Stansfield Turner had come to him a few weeks earlier proposing a program for indirect covert arms transfers to UNITA. Such plans were at least two months old, according to the Washington Post. And Elizabeth Drew wrote in the New Yorker that Brzezinski "has brought up the idea from time to time that perhaps the United States should cause trouble for Augustino Neto . . . perhaps by giving some support to Jonas Savimbi . . . ."

The National Security Council under Brzezinski was taking an identical approach to Angola and Zaire as it had under Kissinger. Brzezinski's statements at the end of May could have been written by his predecessor. "The intrusion of foreign military power to determine the outcome of specific and particular African conflicts is intolerable to international peace and is an insult to Africans themselves."

To justify American logistical support for 10,000 French and Belgian paratroopers in Zaire, President Carter accused Cuba of training and equipping the rebels responsible for the uprising in Zaire—which was by this time almost completely over—and claimed that Castro knew about and could have stopped the insurgency had he chosen to do so. President Castro flatly denied the allegation. Carter's charge lacked credibility. Senior members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee noted that Carter seemed to have simply produced new evidence of Cuban involvement in response to the domestic political controversy; Secretary Vance had told reporters only a few days earlier that the US had no evidence of Cubans having trained the Zaire rebels.

African countries were angry about the western interventionist "rescue operation" in Zaire, as they had been about CIA activity in Angola in 1975-76. Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere stated in a major speech in early June: "The danger to Africa does not come just from nations in the Eastern bloc. Current developments show that the greater immediate danger to Africa's freedom come from nations in the Western bloc."

Carter's complaints about the Clark amendment and his bungled manufacturing of evidence of Cuban foul play were ineffectual with the Congress. Senator Clark was incensed that high Administration officials were asking him to look the other way while they violated the law embodied in the Clark amendment. Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd and other Congressional leaders were angry that the President was blaming the Congress for timidity without even sending them a formal request to repeal legislation about which he was complaining. And Senator McGovern was alarmed that the White House announced that the Administration "would not oppose" the new Senate language. African reaction was immediate. Editorials in Nigerian and Angolan newspapers condemned the Helms-Tsongas amendment, and several government officials expressed their opposition to Vice President Mondale on his July trip to Nigeria, Cape Verde, Senegal and Niger. The US, along with Great Britain and France, also abstained on a UN Security Council resolution condemning South Africa's attack into Angola, which passed unanimously on July 26. The resolution called for future action against South Africa under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. This would mean economic sanctions, which the United States has never been willing to support.

Why did the Carter Administration decide to go along with Senator Helms' initiative to get rid of the Clark amendment, even though it meant associating the United States with South Africa's attack, threatening to worsen relations with important African countries, and damaging any remaining chance for completing the Namibia negotiations before the November election? Firstly, the CIA was still interested in becoming reinvolved in Angola. According to a former high CIA official, the Agency had three priority areas in the spring of 1980: Angola, Afghanistan and Jamaica. Secondly, the Administration was pushing for an overall loosening of Congressional oversight of CIA covert actions. Thirdly, US-Soviet relations had deteriorated since the previous fight over the Clark amendment in 1978. Many American politicians interpreted the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December, 1979 as the latest of Soviet expansionist actions that had started in Angola in 1975. After Afghanistan, the Carter Administration had indefinitely postponed the Senate SALT II ratification debate, so there was no longer any constraint on anti-Soviet attacks during the Presidential electioneering period.

There are two sides to US relations with Angola during this

credibility. South Africa credited UNITA with some of the attacks in the western and eastern border areas which Angolan military officials said were actually carried out by South African troops. One month before the raids, South Africa had tried to complicate the Namibia negotiations by insisting to United Nations Secretary General Waldheim that UNITA become a party to the discussions of the demilitarized zone. Now, all of a sudden, UNITA looked militarily stronger in the border areas.

Over objections from the State Department, the Carter Administration decided to go along with Senator Helms' initiative to get rid of the Clark amendment, even though it meant associating the United States with South Africa's attack, threatening to worsen relations with important African countries, and damaging any remaining chance for completing the Namibia negotiations before the November election? Firstly, the CIA was still interested in becoming reinvolved in Angola. According to a former high CIA official, the Agency had three priority areas in the spring of 1980: Angola, Afghanistan and Jamaica. Secondly, the Administration was pushing for an overall loosening of Congressional oversight of CIA covert actions. Thirdly, US-Soviet relations had deteriorated since the previous fight over the Clark amendment in 1978. Many American politicians interpreted the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December, 1979 as the latest of Soviet expansionist actions that had started in Angola in 1975. After Afghanistan, the Carter Administration had indefinitely postponed the Senate SALT II ratification debate, so there was no longer any constraint on anti-Soviet attacks during the Presidential electioneering period.

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1 This fact suggests that the CIA is already active in Angola, in spite of the Clark amendment. We know that National Security Advisor Brzezinski proposed in 1978 that the Clark amendment be violated. In addition, the Clark amendment covers only aid to any group to

other forms of assistance and paramilitary operations in Angola. Presumably other forms of assistance and propaganda campaigns are legal.
by the Senate-Guard has intervened Angolan territory as soon as Namibia gains independence. Angola cannot defend its territory against South African troops attacking from Namibia without Cuban troops—troops whose presence has always been the excuse for America’s refusal to recognize the Angolan government. Angolan Foreign Minister Paulo George said in July that they would end Congressional authority over CIA operations in Angola, depends entirely on the decision of the House-Senate conference committee on the FY 1981 foreign aid authorization bill. As we went to press, no date had been set for the conference to meet. The conference might not meet until after the November election.

Status Report on Angola Amendment

The fate of the Helms-Tsongas amendment, which would end Congressional authority over CIA operations in Angola, depends entirely on the decision of the House-Senate conference committee on the FY 1981 foreign aid authorization bill. As we went to press, no date had been set for the conference to meet. The conference might not meet until after the November election.
Announcement

Ted Lockwood retired from the post of Executive Director of the Washington Office on Africa on June 30th. He opened the office eight years ago as the first director. Mr. Lockwood is now developing educational work on southern Africa, as director of the Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund.

The Board of Directors has elected Jean Sindab to be the new director. Ms. Sindab is completing her Ph.D. in political science from Yale University, having spent a year in Zambia doing research. She will assume her post on October 1.

Newsbriefs

Nuclear Blast or Meteoroid?

What do the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) have in common? For one thing, they all believe that the unusual “event” which occurred last September 22nd off the coast of South Africa was a nuclear explosion. It showed up as an intense flash of light on the two “bhangmeters” aboard the US Vela reconnaissance satellite.

But the special White House panel of experts disagreed with all of them, concluding that “the September 22 signal was probably not from a nuclear explosion.” The White House released its report after a six-month delay on July 15, the same day that the contents of the DIA report were leaked to the press.

News of the actual event was kept from the public for more than a month before it was reported by ABC correspondent John Scali, who received the story from sources in the State Department. Although a nuclear explosion was suspected from the very beginning, the administration expressed its reservations and convened a special White House panel in November to discover the cause of the event. The White House report, due to be released in January, was held up because its tentative conclusion that the origin of the event was “indeterminable” could not compete with the mounting evidence of a nuclear explosion. The panel kept looking for some plausible alternative explanation. First, they entertained the theory that the flash of light was caused by a “superbolt” of lightning. This explanation had to be discarded, however, because a “superbolt” would produce only a single flash of light, not the double flash characteristic of a nuclear explosion which the Vela recorded. Finally, the White House panel settled on a “zoo event,” a light signal of unknown origin, which was attributed to “an impact of a small meteoroid on the satellite.”

The defense and intelligence agencies still insist that the Vela recorded a nuclear blast. They cite the Vela’s record of sighting 41 previous explosions all of which were later confirmed. Even the White House panel admitted that a Vela instrument malfunction “appears highly unlikely.” Other evidence also indicates the likelihood of a nuclear explosion. The CIA reported that a task force of South African warships was conducting a secret exercise in the South Atlantic on the night of September 22. Citing sources in Tel Aviv, CBS News reported that the nuclear explosion was the result of cooperation between Israel and South Africa. The world’s most sensitive radarscope in Arecibo, Puerto Rico detected a “ripple” in the ionosphere moving from the southeast a few hours after the satellite saw the double flash. Finally, Navy sensors at two locations detected pulses of underwater sound “at the right times” with the “approximate characteristics of a nuclear explosion.”

The delayed and inconclusive report from the White House and the conflicting reports of the other agencies have helped the South African government to escape the world-wide condemnation that would accompany confirmation of a nuclear blast. ■

Solarz Prepares South Africa Legislation

Stephen Solarz, the Brooklyn Representative who chairs the House of Representatives Africa Subcommittee, has spent the last five months preparing the groundwork for legislation on South Africa to introduce in the new session of Congress next year.

Two months of hearings on US corporate involvement in South Africa held by his Subcommittee on Africa this summer revealed little new. Rev. Leon Sullivan, a black Baptist minister and Board member of General Motors, defended his fair employment code approach as an alternative to a call for corporate divestment. Sullivan admitted that the record of corporate compliance is not good, and he endorsed Chairman Solarz’ proposal to make the code legally mandatory by withholding certain US government benefits from companies that don’t comply.

Solarz lobbied other witnesses hard to agree to this approach, but the corporate representatives wanted no government interference and spokespeople for church groups and black organizations—including the Washington Office on Africa—maintained that it didn’t go far enough.

After the hearing, in July Solarz took his fourth trip to South Africa, which lasted eight days. He sensed a growing feeling among Africans that peaceful change is not possible. Specifically, Solarz said that Prime Minister Botha’s unfulfilled promises of reform during the last year have added to this belief.

Solarz told South African journalists that he is considering the following four policy options:

- establishing enforcement procedures for the Sullivan employment code, perhaps including African trade union representatives in the monitoring procedure;
- prohibiting future loans from US banks, but only loans to the government;
- establishing a fund for “hundreds of scholarships” for Africans from the country to come to the US for undergraduate studies; and
- denying visas to “comparably placed whites” if the South African government refuses to issue passports to Africans wishing to visit the US. ■

Washington Office on Africa

110 Maryland Avenue, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
(202) 546-7961

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Written by: David Neigus and Christine Root.