

# South Africa: The Other Imperialism

Peter Hellyer

British journalist Peter Hellyer, a close observer of the events taking place in the southern part of Africa, reveals in this article the South African version of a new, aggressive imperialism nurtured by the regime of Balthazar Vorster in his drive for power not only in Africa but even beyond that continent.

The three years spent by Hellyer as leader of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Great Britain have contributed to his experience in matters pertaining to the aims and maneuvers of the South African Government.

Calling on this knowledge, the British journalist shows how the South African regime has succeeded in controlling African governments at the service of the neo-colonialists and in neutralizing several independent governments.

Hellyer's article is also a warning to the South African peoples alerting them to the danger that the ever-increasing influence of the South African imperialists represents for their economies and their struggles for independence.

Hellyer is at present collaborating with the movements of solidarity with the peoples of South Africa in his country and also has a hand in the publication of the bimonthly newspaper *SYNIC*, which keeps a sharp eye on the struggles of the liberation movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

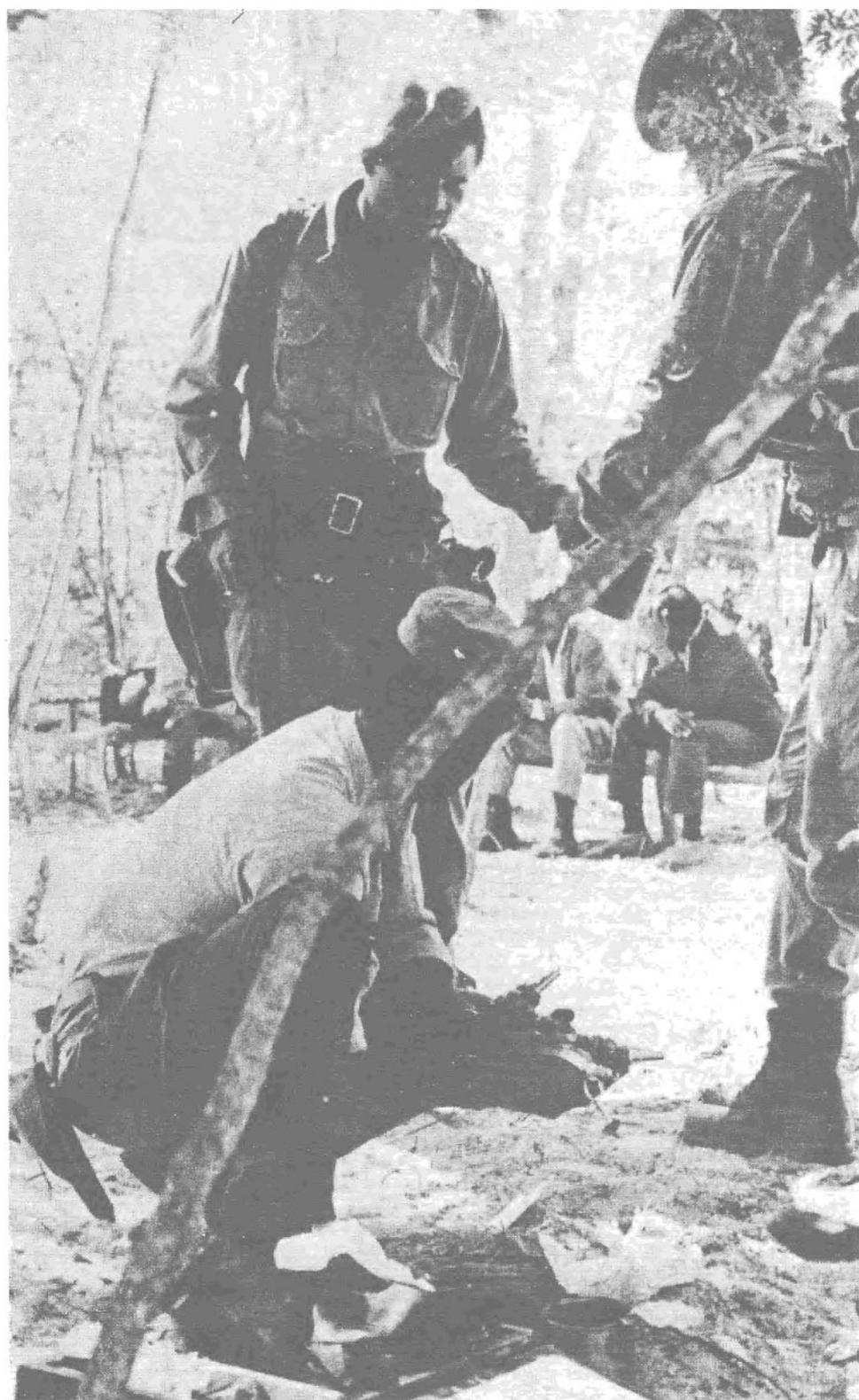
FACED with growing threats from the African nationalist movement, the fascist regime in South Africa has altered its policy over the past few years. No longer content merely with attempting to preserve its own position, the South African Government has moved over to a policy of expansionism into Africa, posing a direct threat to the independence and national integrity of the African nations. This new policy — the "outward-looking" policy of Balthazar Vorster — must be fully understood and countered: unless it is met with coherent and strong opposition, it will be able to hold up the advance of liberation in the African continent. The white *laager* mentality, that characterised the years immediately after the massacre at Sharpeville, when the regime felt itself to be in danger of losing its support from the imperialist powers, has vanished. In its place has come a new and ag-

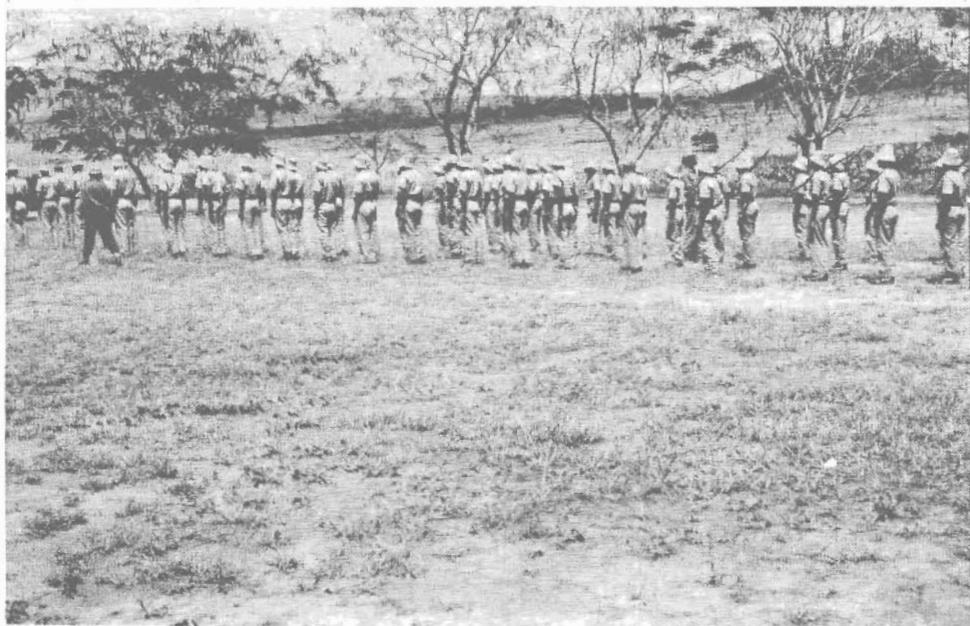
gressive imperialism, based in South Africa itself.

Piet Cillie, editor of the fascist paper *Die Burger*, which acts as a mouthpiece for the Vorster regime, explained the new position in an article in *Report from South Africa*, published in January 1969 by the South African Embassy in Britain.

We [the Afrikaners] have never relished the idea of being insular — an Israel in Africa, an ox-wagon *laager* or fortress. The *laager* serves its purpose in emergency, but can never be a way of life. It can be dispensed with once a nation has proved itself strong and worthy to be accepted as a power to live with.

The fascist regime describes its policy as being one of "good neighbourliness." Cillie puts the position more clearly again: "South Africa





can pack a lot of economic, technological, and cultural power [he omits to mention military] into her good neighbour policy. [...] There has been no such sweeping vision of South Africa's potential role in Africa since Cecil John Rhodes' old-time imperial dreams."

This new policy of expansionism by the South African regime falls into different fields: the diplomatic, the military, the economic, and the cultural. In all of them, there have been a series of events and developments which fill out the picture of an aggressive state at the South of the continent, seeking to establish its own colonialist and neocolonialist empire in Africa. H. J. Simon, writing in **South West Africa: A Travesty of Trust**, edited by Ruth First and Ronald Segal, states: "Once a colony, South Africa has spawned its own brood of client states and dependencies."

The inner belt of African countries in the South have, of course, been the first to feel the rapaciousness of the South Africans. South-West Africa has been virtually incorporated into the Republic of South Africa, and the economic, social, and political system there varies only in minor details from that in the apartheid state itself. Six SWAPO (South-West African Peoples Organisation) fighters have recently been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for taking up arms against the fascist oppression in their country. They were sentenced under a South African "Terrorist" Law which had been illegally extended to their country. The white clique ruling by terror in Zimbabwe has been forced into the arms of the South African regime by its own weakness, and

its inability to survive, either economically or militarily without massive support from the friendly South. The Portuguese colonialists ruling by terror in Mozambique and Angola are likewise unable to continue any form of presence in the country without growing support from the South African regime. South African troops are operating in Angola and in Mozambique — they have not only been seen in action, but have also had casualties inflicted upon them by the liberation forces in those countries.

South African capitalism has, of course, benefited from the ties with these other countries under white rule: the massive South African participation in the dam projects in Tete Province in Mozambique (the Cabora Bassa dam) and on the border between South-West Africa and Angola (the Kunene project) is but one of the fields in which the economic life of these countries is being placed in a stranglehold by South African interests. The oil exploration in Angola, and the diamond industry there, the mineral exploitation in Mozambique — further examples of the same process. South-West Africa (or, to give it its proper name, Namibia) is economically totally tied to the South African economy, from the control of its minerals to the agricultural and fishery industries, to the routing of communications and, therefore, the vast majority of the country's trade through South Africa.

The development of the "Unholy Alliance" in Southern Africa, between the white minority regimes, however, has been a feature of the area for some years, with regular military consultation between them being extended, with the growth of the liberation struggle. to active

military cooperation. What is of equal importance for Africa is the process by which the South African regime has been able to extend its influence into African countries which are nominally politically independent, thus subverting the unity of the African peoples against colonialism and imperialism.

For three countries, the former "High Commission Territories," this has been a process which although regrettable, was to be expected. Lesotho, Swaziland, and Botswana — although British colonies — were closely tied to South Africa before independence. Their economies were linked in a customs union to South Africa, their international communications relied on the goodwill of South Africa, and in the case of Botswana, her administration, until shortly before independence, was conducted from a town in South Africa. Moreover, their governments have been politically reactionary from the start. The Lesotho and Swaziland governments have strong South African advisers, and are feudalist in character. The Botswana Government is not in quite such a difficult position, since it does have a narrow border with Zambia, and its President, due to his own marriage to a white woman, has had first hand experience with the South African racial situation. Nevertheless, even Botswana, which does not have such compelling economic reasons for collaboration with the fascist regime, has taken a position of friendliness toward it. When some guerrillas from the African National Congress strayed by chance into Botswana, they were given prison sentences, even though they had surrendered voluntarily to the police. The rest of Africa cannot expect the three countries to launch

armed struggle against South Africa — their own weakness would make this tantamount to suicide: what it does have a right to expect is that these countries will not actively hamper the liberation struggle.

The South African counterattack against Africa, however, has gone further north than this. The prime example is the Government of Malawi. Almost from the date of Malawian independence, the Banda government has strengthened its links with the South Africans. Those members of the Malawi Government who opposed the process were pushed out and their followers persecuted. Malawi opened the first African diplomatic mission in Pretoria, and there have been regular visits by Malawian Government officials and South African officials to the respective countries.

The April 1967 edition of **Report from South Africa** states: "The visit to South Africa last month of three Malawian Cabinet Ministers was, to many people, the first acceptable evidence that South Africa really meant what she has been saying for some time: that she wished to extend the hand of friendship to the independent black states of Africa." This hand of friendship has meant that Malawi has helped the South Africans to recruit Malawians for slave labour in South Africa's mines: South African police and military advisers operate openly in Malawi, both to help Banda maintain his position, and also to aid the Portuguese in their fight against FRELIMO in Mozambique; the new capital for Malawi, being built not for the economic advancement of Malawi, but for the personal gratification of Banda, is being financed by South

African money.

South Africa has reaped a useful harvest from her subversion of these four African states, and from the willingness of their governments to cooperate with her. The defence of the white regimes has been helped by the ready access which South African police and intelligence services have to the territories of these countries. Moreover, there are now African countries which are prepared to stand up against any diplomatic offensive against the South African regime. Whether in the Organisation of African Unity or in the United Nations, the South Africans can rely on these governments to speak out against any strong measures suggested against the white regimes. Malawi, at the meetings of Commonwealth countries in London supports the British Government in opposing Tanzanian and Zambian calls for effective measures against the Smith regime in Zimbabwe. At the United Nations, Malawi joins with Britain in abstaining on resolutions condemning South Africa. Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland do not vote for the motions either though they often stay away from the debate instead of declaring their support for the South Africans openly. Banda of Malawi and Jonathan of Lesotho regularly trumpet attacks against "communist-inspired terrorists that seek to disturb the peace in Southern Africa."

South of a line drawn across the top of Mozambique, Malawi, Rhodesia, and Angola, the South Africans can rely on total domination of the regimes in the countries, whether the countries are ruled by Africans or by settler minorities. Their control is being challenged

increasingly by the liberation movements — the spreading of the guerrillas of ANC-ZAPU in Zimbabwe, of FRELIMO in Mozambique, of MPLA in Angola and of SWAPO in Namibia are posing a threat which is being opposed with growing hysteria by the white regimes, led by the South Africans. It is not only in this area, however, that the South Africans are displaying their expansionist ambitions and activities. Martin Spring, Features Editor of the **Financial Mail** in Johannesburg, wrote in April 1969:

Decolonisation has left a vacuum in black Africa which South Africa is quietly moving out to fill. South Africans are playing an important role as expatriate experts vital in the newly independent nations. Their money is financing the projects. And their intelligence men are building a chain of listening posts across the continent. This new "outward-looking" policy has been spectacularly successful in countries like Malawi, Swaziland, Botswana, and Lesotho. But bridges are now being built to nations like Malagasy, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Congo (Kinshasa) — even Kenya and Uganda.

It is no coincidence that this clear revelation of South African policy should be written by a financial journalist. South African companies, or companies which have a large South African financial participation, such as Anglo-American or Lonrho, have widespread investments in independent Africa, and not just those countries near to the white-dominated South.

The danger to African independence of a South African influence in their economies is obvious. Those countries which allow ca-

pitalist firms to continue to exploit their resources will inevitably allow South African firms to get involved. The governments of the French-speaking states of West Africa are permitting the South Africans to spread their investments into that part of the continent. Countries which are paying lip service to the ideals of opposition to racialism and support for liberation are at the same time stepping up their trade with South Africa. The diamond mines of Sierra Leone are connected to the international diamond syndicate, controlled by the De Beers Corporation, based in South Africa. Some African politicians are even prepared to identify themselves openly with this process of South African economic penetration into their countries. When Anton Rupert, the Afrikaner boss of the Rembrandt Tobacco Corporation, which has widespread interests in Southern Africa, wanted to set up a subsidiary in Kenya, a member of the Kenyan Government resigned from his position in order to become chairman of the new company. This later collapsed, but South African economic influence remains in Kenya. This perhaps explains a remark attributed to Leabua Jonathan of Lesotho when discussing his relations with the Pretoria regime: "I am not the only one who thinks this way. The majority of the African leaders, including President Kenyatta of Kenya, now consider that this is the realistic and practical solution."

Another country which has fallen into the net of South African intrigues has been Malagasy. This island state, which is recognised as being of military and strategic significance, has shown itself prepared to collaborate with the white regimes. Not only has it responded

eagerly to the South African offers of economic aid, but there are also strong indications that the South African Government has now established military intelligence units on the island. The participation by Malagasy in the sporting events held in Rhodesia was dismissed by some as of little relevance. In itself, this may be true, but this participation gave some indication of the extent to which the South African policy has succeeded in undermining the independence of this country, led as it is by a regime which has no socialist or revolutionary perspective. Similar evidence can be brought forward in the case of Congo (Kinshasa). The collaboration of the latter with the Americans and with counterrevolutionary Cubans is well known. Since the Katanga secession, however, the South Africans have also been involved in the country, not only in the economic field, with the mineral interests, but also in the political and military field.

The economic, cultural, and diplomatic offensive by the South African regime has, therefore, achieved significant results in a number of African countries. Where the attempts have been firmly rebuffed, however, the South Africans have turned to military and similar means. Where they are unable to wean an African government away from its commitment to liberation in Southern Africa, they try to overthrow it; where they are able to cause disruption in an African country by supporting opposition elements, they will take this course also.

For nearly ten years now, the South Africans have been participating in military adventures

against the independent states of Africa. The first example is that of Congo (Kinshasa), in the days of Lumumba and the Tshombe attempt to secede with Katanga. The collaboration of the white regime in Rhodesia with Tshombe, and that of the British and Belgian Governments is well known. What is sometimes forgotten is that there were South Africans fighting in Tshombe's mercenary forces, having been openly recruited in Johannesburg and other South African cities. This support by the South Africans for Tshombe was not at an open governmental level — in the years immediately after the massacre of Sharpeville, the South African regime was aware of the massive international protest that such an open interference in the internal affairs of an African state would create. Nevertheless, Tshombe was helped by the South Africans, and the white regime in the South laid, therefore, the basis for its more recent penetration in economic and diplomatic terms into the whole of the Congo. Should the Mobutu regime forget its position, and attempt to follow a genuinely anticolonialist line, then it knows well that there are South African mercenaries just over the border in Angola ready to attack again. The only way that the regime in the Congo can hope to oppose the South Africans and the other white minority regimes effectively is by taking a firm anticolonialist position. This can never be done by the Mobutu group, tied as they are to the United States.

Wherever mercenaries appear in Africa, then the South Africans appear there also, to play their part in undermining the stability

and independence of Africa. The civil war in Nigeria had South Africans on both sides — employed as pilots by one, and selling arms to the other. The South African Government is well aware of the potential of Nigeria — with the largest population of any country on the African continent, and a wealth of resources — and if this state can be crippled economically and politically, or at least set back for some years, then the position of South Africa will be benefited. While Africa fights itself, the liberation of the South will not come.

There are some countries, however, that cannot be subverted by South African activity due to their progressive regimes and the support that these enjoy from the mass of the population. Two examples stand out — Tanzania and Zambia. The technique of South African operations against these two countries is well worth studying, especially since they are in the front line against the minority racist regimes. South African spies are regularly uncovered in Zambia, especially along the Copper Belt, and there is evidence that they have been engaged in sabotage activities. South African planes fly over Tanzanian and Zambian territory, photographing activities for the military bosses in South Africa. Troops from Namibia or Zimbabwe cross the border into Zambia for raids against villages, or to chase freedom fighters. Local leaders of the governing parties, TANU [Tanzanian African National Union] and UNIP [United National Independence Party] living near the borders are in danger of being kidnapped, as happened to the UNIP leaders captured by the Portuguese in their attacks on Zambia at the end of July of last year.

Freedom fighters operating from these countries, or engaged in the organisation of their offices there, are forever under the threat of secret attacks on them. The assassination of Eduardo Mondlane in February 1969 was but one of many attempts against the lives of leaders of the liberation movements — their offices in Lusaka especially are always in danger of attacks, or of burglaries aimed at discovering information about the operations of the liberation forces.

African politicians in these countries are approached by South African agents, who attempt to subvert them. In Zambia, the opposition party, the African National Congress, led by Harry Nkumbula, has been partly financed by the white regimes since the Katanga secession attempt before Zambia attained its independence. During the elections in Zambia at the end of 1968, much of the ANC's election activity was made possible through the money which it had received from South African sources. Similar attempts, though unsuccessful, to subvert Tanzanian politicians have also been uncovered, and they have a wide intelligence network in both countries — as was revealed by the recent defection of one of their agents.

The South African regime offers financial inducements to the governments of Zambia and Tanzania to abandon their political position, and to abandon the assistance which they give to the liberation movements. Their geographical position makes them of the utmost importance — if the governments of Kaunda and Nyerere were to be replaced by puppet regimes like that of Banda in Malawi, then the liberation of Southern Africa would receive a severe setback.

Balthazar Vorster, convicted Nazi, and Primer Minister of South Africa has explained his position fully to the Zambian Government: "If you want to try violence, as you have advised other states in Africa, we will hit you so hard that you will never forget it." If Zambia abandons her principled position, she is safe; if she does not, and if she continues to assist the liberation forces, then she is likely to face an open South African military aggression.

Until now, South African expansionism has confined its weapons to those of subversion, and diplomatic and economic pressure, with only a few relatively minor military incursions. However, the threat of open attack has been made. The programme of arms development by the South African regime over the past few years shows that this is no empty threat. Recognising the possible difficulties of getting all of her arms supplies from other countries, South Africa has started her own arms industry. Since 1967, jet planes have been built in the country that are capable of use as fighters, light bombers or as spy planes. The Armaments Development and Production Corporation of South Africa, set up in 1966, has now made the regime self-sufficient in small arms, antitank mines and napalm, and self-sufficiency is rapidly being approached in all weapons. The nuclear cooperation with West Germany and France is being increased, and the research establishment in Namibia, established with the West German regime, points to the danger that South Africa will soon be able to manufacture her own nuclear bomb. The conventional mil-

itary power of the South African regime is more than that of any other state in Africa, and has increased greatly since 1962. In 1962-63, for example, the "defence" expenditure of South Africa was 129 million rands<sup>1</sup> — for 1968-69, the estimate was 252.2 million rands. The budget for arms production increased from 368 000 rands in 1960-61 to 44 900 000 rands in 1966-67. United Nations statistics suggest that in 1967, the South African regular army consisted of nearly 30 000 men, with a further 60 000 territorials. There are also more than 20 000 conscripts, 30 000 police, and a police reserve of 15 000. Secret weapons are being produced to add to the effectiveness of this army. Poison gas, guided missiles, napalm — all the weapons for an army designed for aggression are being produced in South Africa.

It should not be thought that this massive buildup and this outward spreading of South Africa's links applies only to Africa. There have been growing ties with the dictatorships in Argentina and Brazil, leading to rumours of a secret counterpart to NATO, to cover the South Atlantic. Commenting in April 1969 on a visit by Dr. Muller, the South African Foreign Minister, to Argentina and Brazil, the Johannesburg *Star* stated: "He certainly discussed common security concerns with the Government of Argentina — a pragmatically-minded country, whose navy has already taken part in joint exercises with South Africa's." Similar links are being forged with Australia. Of more importance; however, are the links with Israel. The protestations of antifascism, and the votes at the

United Nations against South Africa, which Israel is so proud of citing, have not stopped military collaboration between them. The Chief of Staff of the Israeli Air Force spoke to the South African military college shortly after the June War, outlining the tactics for a blitzkrieg. South African military personnel are currently operating with Israeli troops against the Palestinian resistance. Ben Gurion recently visited South Africa for discussions with Vorster. The opening of a direct air link between Tel Aviv and Johannesburg serves merely to underline the growing cooperation between these two countries, both of which are based upon the racial exploitation of the local population.

South Africa's military threat to the rest of Africa, and her increasing links with other fascist regimes, become steadily more overt. The Vorster regime has achieved some significant successes with its "good neighbour" policy, as the puppet status of Lesotho or Malawi shows, or as can be seen from the development of economic links with other independent African countries, such as Kenya or Congo (Kinshasa). As the fascist regime comes under increasing pressure from the liberation movements, then it will prepare to launch open aggression against those African countries which are actively supporting the liberation movements. South Africa is the major enemy of Africa today and the progressive governments in Africa will take the brunt of the expansionism of the Vorster regime. Unless the fascists are repulsed, all of Africa and the Third World will suffer.

<sup>1</sup> One rand equals approximately US \$1.40.  
(Ed. note)