

# Scenario for war in southern Africa is hastened by economic sanctions

by Roger Moore

The Oct. 20 crash of the Russian-piloted Tupolev presidential plane and death of Mozambique President Samora Machel and numbers of his ministers has dramatically brought again to world attention the erupting crisis in southern Africa. The attempt of the Soviets to get the Western industrial nations to cut their economic ties with South Africa, with help from the U.S. State Department, which organized the congressional override of President Reagan's sanctions veto, has encouraged an intensification of regional instability in southern Africa.

For the Front Line states (Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Angola, and Mozambique) to "put their money where their mouth is," as the American slang expression has it, on the sanctions question, they will need to commit economic suicide and cut their links from the only industrial economy and infrastructure in the region, that of South Africa. Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe have been goaded by their quite prosperous Commonwealth colleagues from Australia, Canada, and the British Royal House, to seek means to bypass their dependency on South Africa's rail and port system.

Two railroad lines—one in Mozambique, which is only partially usable, the other in Angola which has been inoperative since the beginning of the civil war in 1975—only way that that Mugabe and Kaunda could bypass the regional interdependencies centered on South Africa. The military effort to secure these two rail lines would guarantee a disastrous regional war. If this process is pushed further by the Soviets and the Commonwealth sanctions conspirators, then the miseries of war-torn Chad, Sudan, Uganda, and Ethiopia will look like paradise by comparison.

## The Beira corridor

The corridor is a combination road, oil pipeline, and railroad, of approximately 150 km length running from the Mozambique port of Beira into Zimbabwe to its capital, Harare. Even without the civil war, the rail line could not handle the full volume of Zimbabwe's exports, which otherwise go through South Africa. The line is delapidated and requires several hundred million dollars of work to rebuild

the roadbed. The port also lacks storage facilities, silos, and docking equipment, and the harbor itself would have to be dredged to permit larger-draft, more economical ships.

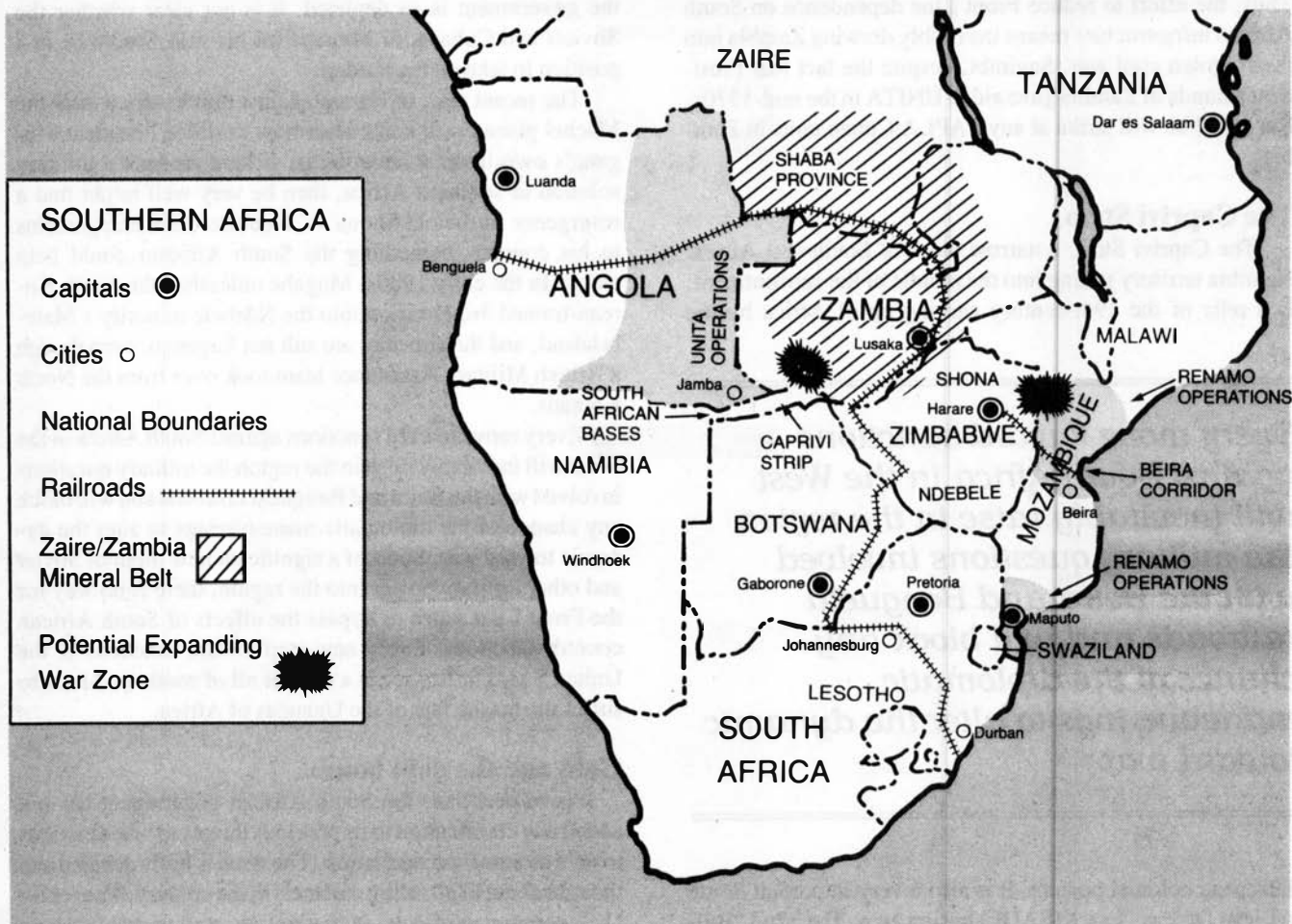
Another rail line from Zimbabwe runs south to the Mozambique capital and port, Maputo. This line ties into the rail line out of the Zaire and Zambia mineral and copper belt. It is testimony to the hypocrisy of International Monetary Fund and World Bank policy in the area that, for years, no significant money had been going into regional infrastructure. It has only been in connection with the sanctions drive to destroy the South African economy, that some money has come in, essentially only enough to encourage Mugabe and others to take the risk of regional war to break off from South Africa.

Zimbabwe has deployed up to 10,000 troops into Mozambique to defend the corridor and also conduct operations with the Mozambique army against the Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana, *Renamo* (National Resistance Movement of Mozambique). Mozambique is in a total state of economic and governmental administration collapse, unable to control large parts of the country due to the civil war. Government troops are only able to control larger towns where they have barracks; therefore, any effort to secure the Beira corridor would have to involve foreign troops, as in Angola.

On several occasions the Zimbabweans have run joint military operations with Mozambique and have overrun *Renamo* bases deep in the bush, only to see *Renamo* reoccupy the areas after the Zimbabweans pulled out, leaving security to the Mozambique army. *Renamo* is reported to be backed by Portuguese exiles, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and, despite denials to the contrary, obviously South Africa. From a strictly military standpoint, *Renamo* has the ability to conduct repeated raids on the line, as well as against the work crews who are rehabilitating it. British companies connected to Special Air Service (SAS) veterans have recently gotten a contract to train elite Mozambique units to protect the line. But sources have estimated that up to 8,000 troops, of the caliber of the Cubans, would be required. It is not merely a question of posting troops along the rail line, but of pacifying the entire area.

In September, Presidents Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and

## Potential war zones in Southern Africa



Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe had met and let it be known they wanted to close their borders with Zaire and Malawi, because the two countries were reportedly permitting bases for UNITA and Renamo, respectively. (UNITA is the resistance group, led by Jonas Savimbi, conducting an armed struggle against the Soviet-puppet government in Angola.) Should this happen, Zaire would be forced to take strong action against Zambia, because most of Zaire's mineral exports from the Shaba Province run over rail through Zambia and Zimbabwe to South Africa. In 1978, East German military advisers in Angola organized an invasion of Shaba that was only stopped when French paratroopers were flown in.

According to South African diplomatic sources the International Monetary Fund is blackmailing President Mobutu of Zaire to break his ties with Savimbi and UNITA. They say: "South Africa is going to fall, get on the right side." Zaire's prime minister is charging that the IMF is refusing credits despite Zaire's fulfillment of IMF-dictated austerity measures. Malawi is the only African country that maintains full diplomatic relations with South Africa, including unspecified military matters.

### Benguela rail line

The Benguela rail line is the line by which Zaire and Zambia mineral belt exports used to be brought to the Angolan Atlantic port of Benguela. To open this rail line means a concerted military campaign to drive Savimbi's UNITA out of the Central Highlands. Otherwise it remains closed as it has been for the last 11 years. Throughout the summer, Savimbi has been warning Kaunda of Zambia not to permit Cuban and Angolan FAPLA (Angolan army) combat units into western Zambia's border area with Angola. In August, UNITA, with possible backing from South African aircraft, destroyed a major staging area in Cuito Cuanavale that the Soviet generals commanding the Cuban/FAPLA forces had planned as a jumping-off point for an offensive against Savimbi's southeastern Angola headquarters at Jamba. The destruction of supply dumps, radar facilities, MiG aircraft, and Soviet HIND helicopter gunships, has most probably put an end to this year's dry season offensive against Jamba.

The talk now is to abandon the effort of driving Savimbi out of Angola, and instead concentrate on securing the Benguela rail line. This effort would require a pincer move of

Cuban/FAPLA troops coming behind UNITA out of Zambia. Thus, the effort to reduce Front Line dependence on South African infrastructure means inevitably drawing Zambia into the Angolan civil war. Savimbi, despite the fact that President Kaunda of Zambia gave aid to UNITA in the mid-1970s, has stated he will strike at any FAPLA/Cuban units in Zambia.

### **The Caprivi Strip**

The Caprivi Strip, a narrow piece of Southwest Africa/Namibia territory jutting into the middle of the subcontinent, is a relic of the 19th-century carving up of Africa by the

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European colonial powers. It is also a very important South African Defense Force (SADF) basing area. The 32nd "Buffalo" Battalion of the SADF, made up of Angolan refugees from the FNLA movement, is based here. This unit has been involved in much action against SWAPO (the Soviet-controlled South West African People's Organization) and represents a reserve force if UNITA runs into serious trouble. Several airstrips plus a new road network currently under construction make it an important military area. A brief look at the map makes clear that it is the military jumping-off point available if operations are to be conducted into Zambia against FAPLA/Cuban troops. It is probably the case that the South African raids this summer against facilities of the Soviet-directed African National Congress (ANC) in Lusaka and Harare were launched out of Caprivi.

Over the month of October, Savimbi appealed repeatedly to President Dos Santos of Angola to accept that there is no military solution to the civil war, and to negotiate. In Mozambique there is a potential, however difficult, that a new leader in Maputo might undertake the first steps toward talks with Renamo. In fact, the South Africans justified their continuing ties to Renamo despite the 1984 Nkomati Accord, where the African National Congress was kicked out of Mozambique, by claiming it was for purposes of furthering Renamo will-

ingness to negotiate with Machel. The military situation of the government is so depleted, it is not clear whether the Soviets and Cubans, or Mugabe for his side, would be in a position to take on the burden.

The recent riots in Harare against South Africa after the Machel plane crash make clear how unstable President Mugabe's own internal situation is. If he does seek a military solution in southern Africa, then he very well might find a resurgence of the old Shona vs. Ndebele tribal antagonisms in his country, something the South Africans could help along. In the early 1980s, Mugabe unleashed the North Korean-trained 3rd Division into the Ndebele minority's Matebeland, and the atrocities are still not forgotten, even though a British Military Assistance team took over from the North Koreans.

Every move toward sanctions against South Africa in the West will inevitably raise in the region the military questions involved with the Beira and Benguela railroads and will block any chance of the diplomatic maneuverings to alter the dynamic toward war. Short of a significant new input of Soviet and other military power into the region, there is no way for the Front Line states to bypass the effects of South African counter-sanctions. Every new step toward sanctions in the United States or Europe is a call for all of southern Africa to suffer the insane fate of the Ugandas of Africa.

### **Gold and the debt bomb**

As of deadline, the South African government has not added any clarification to its previous threats to link sanctions to debt moratorium retaliation. The issue is hotly debated and thought about in all ruling channels in the country. The recent U.S. corporate pullouts, in themselves, will probably not be the trigger. The General Motors, IBM, and Honeywell "pullouts" actually involve mere ownership changes, and no removal of physical assets. The moves are probably more closely related to economic warfare efforts seeking to panic flight capital out of the country. Even though the South African Reserve Bank placed ads in newspaper financial pages internationally under the title, "South African Economy Poised for Recovery," their real strategy is directly tied to the emerging chaos in the international financial system.

For the time being, gold plays a more central role in counter-strategy than the debt moratorium itself. There is a *de facto* coordination between South Africa and Japan in re-establishing gold in international monetary affairs. South African sources report that plans are afoot for expansion of South African gold mines. The Japanese are purchasing tremendous quantities of South African gold as part of their plans to deal with the dollar crisis.

But as one source reported, "The government has to make serious decisions on the debt in the coming weeks. The debtor has power over the creditor; it is our best ammunition. We should do exactly as Garcia of Peru says: 'If you destroy our economy how do you expect us to pay?'"