

PHOTOGRAPHS OF A BEAMING president Samora Machel of Mozambique shaking hands with South Africa's P W Botha flashed around the world five months ago after the two men had signed the mutual non-aggression pact at Nkomati. United States diplomacy had produced a watershed in Africa's history comparable in drama to the coup in Portugal ten years earlier which brought the Marxist parties of Frelimo and the MPLA to power in two of Southern Africa's most important countries — Mozambique and Angola.

The man behind the scenes at Nkomati was Dr Chester Crocker, the United States Assistant Secretary of State for Africa — a clever and tenacious politician. For four years he has doggedly beavered away to give Ronald Reagan a pre-election foreign policy success on a continent of such small interest to this US administration that the Secretary of State cannot even remember the names of the capitals.

Dr Crocker's ambitious plan was a jigsaw with four main elements interlinked: an end to the undeclared wars raging across Southern Africa; Cuba's troops in Angola ousted; Namibia independent under a pro-western capitalist government; and the Marxist Frelimo and MPLA parties as part of the economic constellation of states focused around the US strategic ally — white-ruled South Africa.

### Constructive engagement

Central to Crocker's ambitious strategy to alter the history of Southern Africa was the US imperative need to stabilise South Africa. The method was to be Crocker's theory of 'constructive engagement' put into practice. When he was still an academic at Georgetown University Dr Crocker spelt out his 'Strategy for Change' in South Africa in an article in *Foreign Affairs*. 'Constructive engagement' was his recipe for 'evolutionary change as distinguished from a revolutionary cataclysm.' The African National Congress and its armed struggle for the freedom of South Africa was a threat which had to be countered.

Like the logical careful academic that he is Crocker in his paper built up the US case for closer diplomatic and economic ties with South Africa. Disengagement he said was not a possibility. The only chance of change was through many more carrots with some sticks in reserve. His logic did not address the illogical centrepiece of South African government policy — apartheid and bantustans. Dr Crocker apparently believed that apartheid would slowly wither away through reforms

The recent accord between South Africa and M most dramatic development in African politics for a d for Mozambique and a change of tactics for S this set of agreements, of which this was only part, a few m

# Redrawing the F Southern Africa in T

Victoria Brittain

pushed by a new appreciation in South Africa of US 'democratic systems and multi-racial society.' The ending of South Africa's pariah status in the world community would, he thought, increase the momentum of internal reform.

The long term US goal in South Africa which underlies all Crocker's initiatives is of course stability for its \$14 billion worth of private investment. A stable repressive capitalist multi-racial or black government, such as Haiti's or Malawi's, which would ensure the same kind of rate of profit on investment as apartheid has produced would be as acceptable to Washington as Mr Botha is.

### South Africa and the US

This is an underlying contradiction between the US and its racist ally. The white South African government has, of course, the very different goal of its own survival with its central policy — apartheid — intact.

The two allies' interests are identical for as long as South Africa's racist government is not too seriously challenged by instability inside the country, and also remains the dominant economic power in the southern half of the continent.

For ten destructive years after the independence of Mozambique and Angola South African-run, and US-backed, destabilisation of black African states which have shown resistance to the domination of their economies by western institutions has been the chosen political process to achieve the western allies' economic and strategic goals.

Until about a year ago the South African tactics of repression of blacks at home; military and political stalemate in Namibia under an illegal 100,000 man army of

occupation; and the progressive destabilisation of its neighbours suited both Pretoria and Washington fairly well. Both looked forward confidently to a let-up in the strain in the area with the collapse of the Frelimo and MPLA governments.

But that destructive policy option was increasingly expensive in terms both of cash and of US international relations. Also, Crocker believed it always carried the risk of an increasing Soviet commitment in the area which might swing the military balance against South Africa. And, most important in his approach to the hardline South African government, he argued that the ten years of attrition had brought black Southern Africa to its knees — negotiations would be on South Africa's terms.

### South Africa's acquiescence

The US idea of changing the all-out destruction strategy for diplomacy was slowly accepted by South Africa. This year the country's military budget was \$4 billion. The cost of the military campaign in Namibia alone last year was \$1 billion. (The same as the IMF's notorious loan to Pretoria last year.) The 45 multinational companies operating in Namibia were beginning to complain that the war was hurting profits. And some of the same powerful business interests within South Africa itself were beginning to question future stability and profitability of enterprises increasingly dogged by labour unrest and the tension following government crackdowns on the new political force, the United Democratic Front. The UDF was formally launched last August and is the most formidable political organisation the white South African government has had to deal with for 20 years because of its

bique was the  
 . It marked a setback  
 Africa. But  
 sion looks rather unstable.

## Front Line: Transition

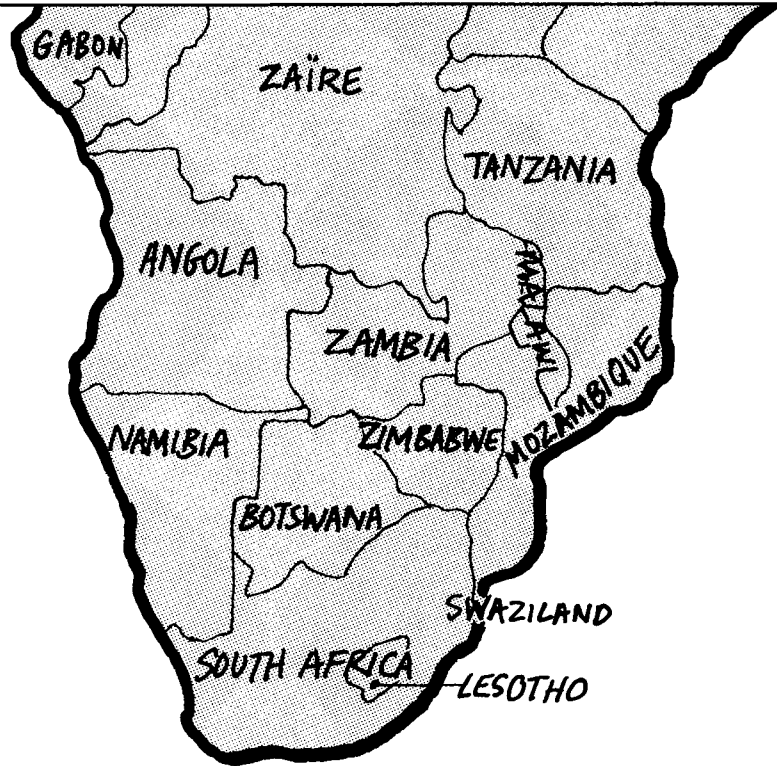
grassroots support and the moderate image of its membership. The organisations grouped inside the UDF include churches and trade unions. The UDF's successful open campaign against the South African government's 'reforms' has made nonsense of western propaganda that fundamental change is underway in South Africa.

At the same time the slow build-up in ANC sabotage attacks on economic targets was a jolting reminder of what violent change would mean to the South African economy. A wave of desertions by young white conscripts unwilling to fight in northern Namibia and Angola brought a new note of dissent and strain into white suburbia. Gradually the previously unthinkable idea of peace with black Marxist neighbours began to appear in the South African press. With the emphasis on capitulation by economically weak black states the all-important white South African business community bought Crocker's idea.

Meanwhile Crocker's wish for a foreign policy success for the Reagan administration increased. US relations across the Third World were in deeper trouble than since the Vietnam war: the CIA's wars in Central America were going badly, US involvement in the Middle East was a disaster, in Latin America debts threatened to bring down US banks and client governments, in Africa drought compounded economic crises and pro-western governments were shaking from Kenya and Somalia to Sudan, Chad, Morocco and Liberia.

### Mozambique's vulnerability

For all those on the other side of Pretoria's undeclared wars — Mozambique, Angola,



Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Swaziland and Tanzania — the need for peace was more acute than ever. Assassinations, kidnappings and economic sabotage had weakened them all. Dr Crocker's peace plan, although initially regarded with deep scepticism by the frontline states, was cautiously welcomed by some leaders, most significantly Samora Machel himself, as the only alternative to the status quo.

Mozambique with its long border with South Africa and an economy closely tied to South Africa's since the days of Portuguese colonialism had proved highly vulnerable to South Africa's destruction tactics.

---

**That destructive policy  
 option was increasingly  
 expensive in terms both of  
 cash and of US  
 international relations**

---

The Mozambique National Resistance Movement,<sup>1</sup> a puppet opposition to Frelimo set up by the former Rhodesian Special Branch chief, Ken Flowers, in 1976, burned crops, terrorised and mutilated peasants, ambushed transport, mined roads, railways and the oil pipeline.

MNR has no political ideology and no credible leadership. But South African officers led its bands of former Portuguese

collaborators. South Africa supplied arms, food, planes, helicopters, boats, rail links and training camps for the guerrillas. By late 1983 MNR was operating freely over about three quarters of the country. Machel visited Western Europe in a desperate attempt to get the West to put pressure on South Africa to lay off and to back Frelimo with arms supplies. When nothing concrete resulted Machel told his Eastern bloc allies that he would have to sign a peace pact with South Africa or see Frelimo collapse.

### The Nkomati accord

The peace pact was the Nkomati accord which pledged non-aggression by both sides. South Africa infiltrated 1,000 MNR guerrillas into Mozambique just before signing and promised to cut off MNR's access to supplies and to their powerful propaganda radio. Mozambique promised to stop ANC guerrillas using the country as a conduit into South Africa. Publicly Machel promised that moral and diplomatic support for the ANC would remain unchanged.

However, the Mozambican army raided the homes of leading ANC members, the Frelimo government abruptly expelled most of the ANC militants from Maputo and, most significantly, began to describe Africa's most important liberation move-

<sup>1</sup> For an authoritative analysis of the history and practice of MNR see Paul Fauvet in current *Review of African Political Economy* no 30.

ment as 'a human rights movement'<sup>2</sup>. This form of words is the US formulation used to undercut the common African material support for armed struggle inside South Africa. Within the OAU, countries like Nigeria, Tanzania, Ghana and Algeria were quick to force a reaffirmation of support for the ANC's policies — including the legitimacy of armed struggle to overthrow apartheid.

The United States had carefully repaired Mozambique's confidence before pushing them towards signing Nkomati and facing the inevitable ANC criticisms of 'the setback to the liberation struggle' as ANC officials describe it. The expulsion of two CIA agents in 1981 had brought relations to freezing point. But through numerous economic relationships, confidence built up with some sections of the

---

### The US idea of changing the all-out destruction strategy for diplomacy was slowly accepted by South Africa

---

government, and a US ambassador was appointed to Maputo last year. Even so Frelimo signed Nkomati only as part of an interlocking jigsaw of changing relations between South Africa and all its neighbours — especially Namibia. Hence Machel's determined characterisation of the pact as a diplomatic triumph for Africa. However, the other frontline states did not see it that way and refused his invitations to be present at the signing of Nkomati.

#### The Namibian carrot

Shuttle diplomacy à la Kissinger has had a bad name in Southern Africa from the days when he, as Secretary of State, over-promised and under-delivered to all parties in the war for Zimbabwe's independence. However in the latest round which led to Nkomati, Crocker and his deputy Frank Wisner did manage to build credibility in some government circles in Mozambique, Lusaka and Angola — particularly on the issue of their commitment to getting independence to Namibia under UN resolution 435. (This provides for a ceasefire followed by UN-supervised elections.) The five nation western contact group failed to persuade South Africa to implement this, the United Nations failed, but Crocker believed he held the card over South Africa which could win — construc-

tive engagement with all the carrots of US capital.

Swapo's Sam Nujoma visited Washington and was well received. Crocker himself repeatedly tried to persuade the South African government that Swapo would be a weak and pliant neighbour and no serious marxist threat. He pointed to Mozambique's non-aggression pact as a pattern which could ensure South Africa that the ANC could be choked off on all sides. The US never took the South African-backed so-called internal parties seriously as a basis for an independent Namibia though Pretoria has tried desperately to keep them in all negotiations on Namibian independence. Pretoria's slow flirtation with the idea of implementing UN resolution 435 and opening the door to a Swapo-dominated government instead of the war in Namibia continues. It is too early to say whether Pretoria will in fact move towards Namibian independence before it sees tangible results of the long destruction it has wrought in Angola.

#### The Angolan dimension

In Lusaka in February Angola and South Africa agreed to set up a joint monitoring force to over-see the South African army's retreat from Cunene province which they had occupied and devastated since 1981. The *quid pro quo* allegedly offered by the Angolans (though *they* have never said this publicly) was to prevent Swapo guerrillas infiltrating into northern Namibia through Cunene. Swapo was not a party to the Lusaka agreement. There was no ceasefire in northern Namibia's war zone. Nor were the MPLA prepared to sign a non-aggression pact with South Africa as Pretoria would have liked. As one Angolan official put it, 'how do you agree not to aggress someone you have never aggressed nor intended to?'

The triangular Angola/Namibia/South African relationship is the most complicated part of Dr Crocker's diplomatic web. The spider in it is Jonas Savimbi and Unita which is proving a severe embarrassment to Crocker.

Like MNR on the other side of the continent, Unita is led by South African officers and South African funded mercenaries. It is supplied by South Africa's arms, planes, helicopters, parachute drops of food, and radio links. The history of Unita's relations with South Africa, the United States and Zaire ten years ago detailed in John Stockwell's book *In Search of Enemies* is impossible to ignore today in any serious look at destabilisation in Angola. Savimbi's activities are casting a

heavy shadow over Dr Crocker's efforts to portray Washington as working for peace in the area.

Savimbi's own slogans put up in his 'capital' at Jamba on the South African border for every visiting diplomat or journalist to see say it all, 'Russians, Czechs, Cubans, go home. Unita, key to Angola. Angola, key to Africa. Africa, key to the West.'

The West created what Unita is today from a force which was a hopeless loser ten years ago, as Stockwell's book makes clear. After his first secret visit to Angola through Zaire during the independence war against Portugal, he advised the CIA that 'Unita had no logistical systems, the poorest of internal communications, no organisation or leadership below the level of major.' Today Unita has officers trained in Morocco by Americans, and high standard logistics and communications through both South Africa and Israeli advised camps in Zaire — another key US ally in Africa.

#### Angola — the most important target

Unita's propaganda campaign is organised through Lisbon which had emerged as an important US proxy in Crocker's diplomatic jigsaw of the last year. Through carefully written and skilfully timed military communiques Unita's Lisbon office has used the major western news agencies to build up a picture in the western media of Unita as a credible popular force with a substantial control area over the population of eastern and southern Angola. Spe-

---

### Mozambique . . . had proved highly vulnerable to South Africa's destruction tactics

---

cial flights through Zaire or South Africa have been laid on for trusted conservative journalists who have put flesh on the military communiques with long interviews with Savimbi and splash colour stories from Jamba.

Never has this poem been so apposite:

You cannot hope to bribe or twist,  
Thank God, the British journalist:  
But seeing what the man will do,  
Unbribed, there's no occasion to.

The American hand in the propaganda war in Southern Africa is usually covert. But sometimes it shows. The *Sunday Times* in February, for instance, had a major article on the progress of Dr Crocker's



Oliver Tambo (left), president of African National Congress and Samora Machel (right) president of Mozambique

moves in Southern Africa. 'Deal will erode Soviet power in Africa.' The thesis was backed by a document supposedly captured in Grenada six months before by the Americans. It was said to be a record of a conversation between the Angolan Foreign Minister and a Grenadian official in which Paulo Jorge supposedly described his government's 'disillusion with Swapo, which it blamed for much of the deterioration in the Angolan economy.' It is impossible to believe that the *Sunday Times* could have believed such a crude, and conveniently available, document was genuine.

The MPLA, fighting a real war including assassinations of Cuban workers and British university teachers, more or less gave up on the dirty propaganda war being won by the western press.

But the artificial weight being given to Unita by the western press and western governments may yet prove to be the most dangerous aspect of the unfolding changes in the whole southern African region.

---

### The other frontline states ... refused his invitations to be present at the signing of Nkomati

---

Pretoria's real price for Namibian independence is, as it always has been, withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and a place in the MPLA government for Unita. The US goal is the same, although they do not admit it.

Angola, because of its potential econo-

mic strength from its oil and diamonds, and the moral authority its government has in the Third World, is one of the most important targets of imperialism in Africa. The long war by US proxies has sapped the MPLA's strength. US capitalism has ceaselessly wooed sections of the MPLA and tried to erode the government's unity and ideological clarity.

Since the joint South African/Angolan monitoring commission began work in February, South Africa has demonstrated consistent bad faith. The promise to withdraw by the end of March has still not been met four months later. Much more serious has been the South Africans' build-up of Unita during this period and the South African Defence Force's movement of

---

<sup>2</sup> Economics Minister Jacinto Veloso

heavy weapons onto the southern Angola/Namibia border.

**An unclear future**

Here again Washington and Pretoria differ in their tactics with Washington favouring a softer line towards Luanda — at least in public — in order to keep Crocker's jigsaw from falling apart.

In the five months since Nkomati was hailed as a triumph by the Americans there have been serious signs of its breaking down on every front. In Mozambique MNR have been more active than ever and it is increasingly difficult to believe, as the Mozambican government still does for public consumption, that South Africa is no longer involved. In May Savimbi secretly met Dr Crocker and the South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha in Cape Town. Both Savimbi and South Africa told Crocker they wanted to raise the stakes for peace. South Africa's demands to Angola for a non-aggression pact and the same kind of economic links as Maputo has agreed to follow. South Africa suggested joint development of Angola's Ruacana hydro-electric scheme. Angola has no incentive to agree to such a scheme, though as Savimbi says, if only Unita was

in the government there would be no more barriers to such 'development' of Angola's economy.

**The MPLA . . . more or less gave up on the dirty propagandawar being won by the western press**

The Americans have boasted that Samora Machel has become their most important ally in Africa. Nkomati was to have set a pattern for non-aggression pacts. But even Lesotho and Botswana have not agreed to sign. And US feelers to the ANC to give up the armed struggle and negotiate have been rebuffed. African governments which train ANC fighters have shown no readiness to change their policies. South Africa remains a pariah for the rest of the world.

The US has miscalculated the importance of the UDF inside South Africa. It is not, as they hope, an organisation which can be coopted and used to outflank the ANC. Scholarships to the US come thick and fast these days to trade unionists, students, churchmen and even the ANC's

exiled rival, the Pan African Congress. But the young men and women who left South Africa after Soweto and converged on the ANC for military training are not candidates for coopting into Dr Crocker's constructive engagement. Many of them have been infiltrated back into South Africa already. As the former correspondent of the *Wall Street Journal* writes in a new book which should deeply worry Dr Crocker, 'Wherever white people gather in South Africa the fear of Revolution is pervasive. Wherever black people gather there is hope for *amandla* (power) coupled with a fear of violence.'<sup>3</sup>

The liberation struggle inside South Africa has been set back in the immediate aftermath of Nkomati, but it has bought Frelimo a breathing space. It remains to be seen whether Pretoria dares to take off the pressure on the other side — on Angola and Namibia. And whether Dr Crocker will ever use any of the sticks he holds to force some changes on the apartheid regime which, as he knows, is an unstable link in imperialism's control of southern Africa.

<sup>3</sup> June Goodwin Cry *Amandla* Holmes and Meier New York.



**Wilting in the heat of Thatcherism? Sweltering in Sunny Bulgaria? . . .**

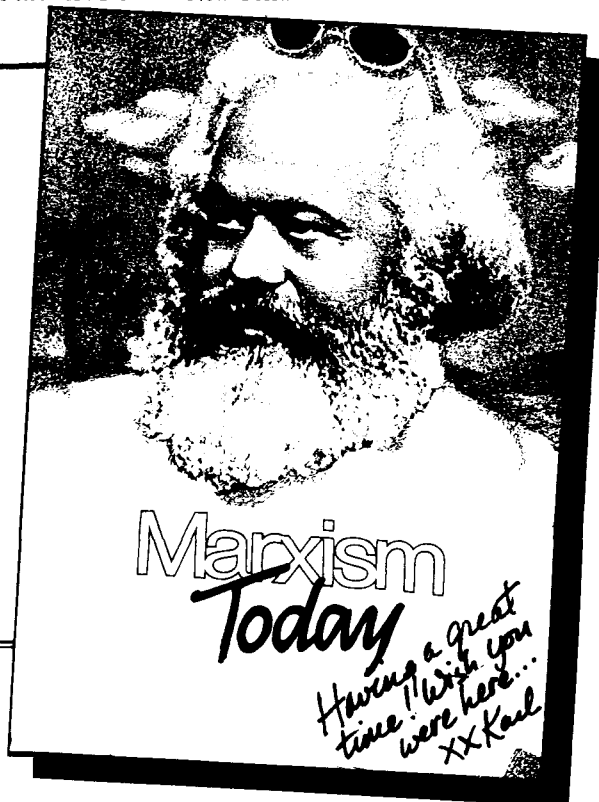
Then our special sun-kit subscription pack is for you. Just think: a special **Marxism Today** air-conditioned T-shirt at knock-down price (£2 instead of £3), plus a year's supply of cool analysis, all for only £11 (£9 for students)\*.

**Subscribe now and beat the heat:**

Please send me my *Marxism Today* T-shirt (state size: Large/Medium) along with one year's subscription to **Marxism Today** beginning \_\_\_\_\_  
I enclose a cheque/PO for \_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_



\* Offer applies to UK and Ireland residents only, and closes 1 October 1984.

Send (no stamp required) to: **Marxism Today** subscriptions, FREEPOST, London EC1B 1JB.