

THE SOVIET-CUBAN OFFENSIVE IN AFRICA

Walter Darnell Jacobs

One African expert recently described this as “the darkest hour in Africa’s history.” Another has said that the African continent is “being ground up and destroyed” and that it may well revert to bush. One of America’s most prominent security experts is reported to have said, “the locomotive of history is rolling (over southern Africa) and it will soon roll over us (the West).” All these are quotes from persons active in government service in the United States or Africa.

What is happening that has made these highly placed officials so pessimistic about Africa? Undoubtedly it is the success of the Soviet-Cuban thrust into Africa — the uninterrupted series of victories for the communist side and an almost equally regular series of Western reverses. The Soviets have established themselves strongly in the Horn of Africa, in Mozambique, in Angola, in Guinea, and elsewhere. They seem to have the initiative in Rhodesia, South West Africa, and South Africa.

There is little in the nature of communism as it is practiced in Cuba, in the U.S.S.R., or elsewhere that would appear to be attractive to Africa’s masses. As an ideology, Marxism-Leninism is proletarian-based and calls for the destruction of the family, religion, and tribal heritage. As an economic or developmental scheme, communism has consistently failed to transform lesser developed countries into developed countries.

The attraction of communism, or of Soviet great power politics in Africa, or of Cuban military and technical intervention there is its efficacy as a technique for the seizure.

This, of course, is what communism has been from the beginning. Lenin had a technique for the seizure of power in Russia in 1917; he had no plans for the organization or development of the post-Putsch country.

Since Lenin’s time the technique has varied. It has been refined and suited to the situation, the terrain, and the historical period. In the years since World War II the technique has depended on variations of the guerrilla war device coupled with a relentless psychological offensive.

Mao Tse-tung had a peasant-based theory which provided success in China. Che Guevara and Fidel Castro used another version of peasant warfare with a high dependance on psychological operations. Regis Debray suggests other variations and Carlos Marighella went, unsuccessfully, to urban guerrilla warfare in Brazil. Vo Nguyen Giap combined rural terrorism with regular warfare — supported by a world wide psychological offensive of impressive proportions — to win in Vietnam. Kwame Nkrumah put forth a combined African form of revolutionary warfare.

All these predecessors provide some lessons of value to the terrorists now assaulting Rhodesia, which country has become a key target for Soviet policy in Central Africa. Robert Gabriel Mugabe, Joshua Mqabuko Nyongolo Nkomo, Ndabaningi Sithole, and others have their own versions of how to fight the war.

The Patriotic Front, consisting of Mugabe's ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) and Nkomo's ZAPU (Zimbabwe African Peoples Union) has adapted the communist technique for the seizure of power to Rhodesia. The adaptation depends very markedly on Soviet material and political support and, possibly in the future, on Cuban support.

First, the target must be isolated. This has been accomplished. Rhodesia's enemies are united against her. Even her friends insist that the Rhodesians must change their system because it is evil. The government is habitually referred to, in both the West and the East, as an "illegal white minority rule." The first task of war against Rhodesia in order to seize power by force and violence is successfully concluded — although, of course, the psychological offensive will continue and will be intensified.

Second, the infrastructure of Rhodesia — its traditional tribal system of rule and the intricate system of local administration — must be destroyed. This is the task now being undertaken by the Patriotic Front and other terrorist organizations. In rough military terms Rhodesia is now defending four fronts, the northeast which borders Zambia on the Zambesi river and Mozambique (Operation Hurricane), the east which borders Mozambique (Operation Thrasher), the southeast which borders Mozambique, South Africa, and Botswana (Operation Repulse), and the southwest (Operation Tangent).

Rhodesia's neighbors Zambia, Botswana, and especially Mozambique serve as base areas for the training and supply of terrorists who are sent into Rhodesia with the mission of destroying the infrastructure. They attempt to do this by acts of terrorism in villages against chiefs and headmen

and by indiscriminate mutilation, murder, rape, arson, and ambush. They also attempt to persuade the local blacks not to accept Rhodesian administrative practices such as the dipping of cattle against rinderpest and other diseases or contour plowing to protect the lands against erosion and soil loss. They encourage the destructive farming practice of overgrazing by cattle herds and the running of herds communally so that these herds are now destroying large areas of good farm land in one of the world's great ecological disasters.

The sowing of land mines, which cannot discriminate between white and black, is a basic terrorist tactic. This has resulted in the Rhodesian Army becoming the most efficient anti-mine warfare organization in the world today. But the practice continues and people are still being killed as, for instance, a black nurse on a mercy mission.

The terrorists have been responsible for the massacre of nuns and priests and for the kidnapping of children from schools. These techniques seem to be designed to show that the government cannot protect all areas, as indeed it cannot.

Such practices have not brought the condemnation of the world on the Soviet-sponsored terrorists. This situation undoubtedly results from the efficiency of the Soviet psychological and political campaign in support of Mugabe and Nkomo.

The visit of Castro to Africa and the simultaneous visit of Nikolai V. Podgorny, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., also indicate that support to the terrorist will not decrease but will accelerate. The unloading of massive military supporting supplies in the Mozambique port of Nacala is evidence of this acceleration. Further evidence is provided in the Soviet-Mozambique agreement for increased Soviet support of Samora Machel's underwriting of terrorism in Rhodesia.

Still further evidence of Soviet intervention to push for a favorable solution in Africa is manifest in the thrust from Angola into Zaire. This push has apparently not succeeded in doing much more than putting several irregulars into Shaba province. Militarily, the invasion was not very awesome but the reaction of the West to the invasion was. The United States failed to do more than expedite deliveries of non-military supplies (already destined for Zaire) and to send more Coca-Cola. The Soviet Union has come off without psychological damage and with some advantages, such as that of convincing Africans from the Mediterranean to the Cape that they plan new victories on the continent. In the West, only France improved its situation.

All is not going so smoothly for the Patriotic Front as the above might suggest. Nkomo and Mugabe are an odd couple for an alliance (although, to be sure, history has seen even stranger bedfellows). Already there are indications of struggle between them against the day when "majority rule" comes to Zimbabwe. Either of them would like to be the number one man at that time. Mugabe now has the greater force available. These are chiefly Shona-speaking peoples. Nkomo's force is smaller and chiefly from Matabeleland but his position, as an old man deserving respect in the African tradition, is probably stronger. Nkomo has been recruiting for his force by kidnapping school children. This tactic is designed to give Nkomo enough troops so that he will be able to fight successfully against Mugabe after "liberation." The prospect of a wide-ranging civil war between Matabeles and Shona-speaking people in Zimbabwe is real. Already forces representing Nkomo and Mugabe have clashed on Rhodesian territory with minor casualties.

In summary, the Soviet-Cuban assault on Central Africa depends on psychological-political operations throughout the world, and inside Africa. This activity is coordinated with terrorism designed to destroy the existing tribal infrastructure and governmental services. The economic bankruptcy of countries resisting communism and the inability of governments to deal with terrorism could provide a victory for the Soviet-Cuban forces. Orchestration of their efforts requires the coordination of terrorism, economic warfare and psychological and propaganda efforts.

Henry Kissinger has departed from the public scene for a while but his program for the settlement of the Rhodesian question was the great mover and still influences current Anglo-American initiatives. It is true that Dr. David Owen, the British Foreign Secretary, has refined the Kissinger proposals somewhat during his April 1977 visit to Africa. Nevertheless, an understanding of what the West is suggesting can come only from a quick reexamination of what Kissinger proposed and what happened in Africa and especially in Rhodesia as a result.

In 1976 Kissinger called for majority rule in Rhodesia. He did not define majority rule and it has still not been defined. Does it mean simply black rule in Rhodesia?

If so, does it mean joint Matabele-Mashona rule? If it means that, war between the Nkomo and Mugabe factions can hardly be far behind. If it means rule by one major (but not majority) black group then genocide of the groups out of power would likely follow. Majority rule, in short,

is a rather amorphous concept even today.

Kissinger's other proposals were follow-ons: No U.S. support for the Smith government at any stage, strict observance of UN mandatory sanctions, communication of the Kissinger program to Salisbury, and advice to American citizens not to travel in Rhodesia and advice to those living there to get out. There were other provisions: the U.S. would help Mozambique because it had closed its border with Rhodesia, the U.S. would provide funds to other states who imitated Mozambique and closed their borders with Rhodesia, relief would be provided to refugees from Rhodesia, promises of aid to the post-Smith government, and protection for minority rights.

The so-called Front-Line Presidents (Sir Seretse Khama of Botswana, Dr. Antonio Agostinho Neto of Angola, Samora Moises Machel of Mozambique, Julius Kambarage Nyerere of Tanzania, and Kenneth David Kaunda of Zambia) immediately rejected the Kissinger program. (At least two of the "front-line" countries — Angola and Tanzania — are not on the front lines — but no one seemed to object to their primary role in determining the future of Rhodesia.)

For his part, Ian Smith accepted the entire Kissinger package including majority rule within two years. This must be one of the most dramatic actions in African politics in our time. Smith's acceptance was conditional on three points: first, there would be an immediate cessation of terrorism, second, the lifting of sanctions, and third, financial aid to Rhodesia. Smith was assured by Kissinger that all these conditions would be fulfilled. Kissinger also led Smith to believe that the front-line presidents had accepted all provisions and conditions. In fact, they had not and almost immediately stated that the package was unacceptable.

Nevertheless, a conference of interested Rhodesian parties followed in Geneva. It proved abortive because of the Mugabe demand for immediate transfer of power to the Patriotic Front.

It was in the midst of the resulting impasse that Owen made his five-nation (not including Rhodesia) safari to Africa. He met Smith and Vorster in Cape Town. He then came up with a three-part program which was straight-away supported by the U.S. Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance.

The Anglo-American initiative envisions: 1) continuation of current diplomatic activities with the aim of getting all parties to a new conference after intensive preparation at committee levels, 2) the conference to decide questions of the franchise, independence date, future White representation through the first post-independence parliament, and a plan to end the

terrorist war and to absorb the terrorists (or guerrillas or freedom fighters, as one will) into the life of the country, and 3) provision for an electoral process with the government to be turned over to the party winning the independence election under a constitution guaranteed by the United States and Great Britain.

The shortcomings of the Owen-Vance proposal are clear. If the black leaders do not cooperate fully, or if they demand immediate unverified rule by one or another group (e. g., the Patriotic Front), the conference will fail. As a minimum, the British and American governments should deplore the continuation of terrorist warfare while the negotiations are in progress. There is no evidence that either Vance or Owen, purported supporters of a peaceful solution in Rhodesia, are willing to do this.

Also involved is Vance's insistence that "nationalist" movement leaders be included in any negotiations. In spite of the continuation of terrorist war, Smith has repeatedly dealt with "nationalist" leaders. He had lengthy negotiations with Nkomo inside Rhodesia. He dealt not only with Nkomo but also with Mugabe and other "nationalist" leaders at the Geneva conference. And he has repeated his willingness to negotiate with any Black leader who demonstrates support inside the country.

The problem, of course, is to determine who the supported Black leaders are. In addition to the Patriotic Front of Mugabe and Nkomo there are a number of other groups who claim to represent Black members of the population. These include: 1) Bishop Abel Tendeyaki Muzorewa's United African National Council [the UANC rejected the Kissinger package], 2) Sithole's faction of the ANC which claims to represent the "true ZANU" but which has been inactive lately, 3) Nkomo's faction of the ANC, 4) Mugabe's Zimbabwe Peoples Army, and 5) Senator Chief Chirau's Zimbabwe United Peoples Organization. Of these only Muzorewa's UANC and Chief Chirau's ZUPO can be said to have demonstrated any popular support, however small, inside Rhodesia. The others are based on recruitment through terrorism and transfer of power through violence and bloodshed.

With the exception of Chief Chirau, these are the leaders of "nationalist movements" that Vance insists should be included in negotiations by Smith. Smith insists that their bona fides to negotiate in the name of Rhodesian Blacks should be affirmed by some device other than participation in terrorism or support by the Soviet Union.

If the Soviet-Cuban assault is allowed to triumph, Rhodesia has only as much survivability as its enemies will permit it and as it can provide for

itself. If the West acquiesces in the Soviet-Cuban assault the prognosis for Rhodesian survival is poor indeed. In place of Rhodesia will be created a Marxist-dominated Zimbabwe with Soviet influence in Africa extended to the banks of the Limpopo and Western influence shrunk to a precarious foothold near the Cape of Good Hope perimeter — if the surviving South African Government permits that foothold.

Should the Anglo-American initiative succeed, Mugabe and Nkomo would undoubtedly be represented in the new government of “Zimbabwe”. It is likely that internal collapse of the economy and administration would ensue. The pattern of Mozambique, Angola, and some other African countries would be repeated. Civil war would be likely. Vast infusions of foreign aid and assistance would be needed. The Soviet saddle across Africa would be complete. The “blessed silence” that some so welcomed in Vietnam would descend on Zimbabwe. Unless Owen and Vance can find some formula for the transfer of power to a popularly elected government the future of Rhodesia under their formula is dark. With no protection for White minority rights, with no protection for the minority rights of black racial groupings not in power, and with the collapse of the agricultural, industrial, and trading economy, Rhodesia could rapidly revert to the bush as we have been warned all Africa might. Soviet domination of other Central African countries would obviously be facilitated, and the sum total effect would be little different from an outright Soviet-Cuban military victory.

BOOK REVIEWS

RICHARD E. WAGNER

Inheritance and the State

American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C., 1977

One of the major techniques by which socialism succeeded in winning control of Great Britain was through inheritance taxes. Now in the U.S.A. inheritance and estate tax laws of federal and state governments are destroying the ability of Americans to accumulate wealth and make their families financially independent of government.

In fact, according to Richard E. Wagner, writing in *Inheritance and the State*, "the progressive taxation of incomes and estates produces results that are clearly inconsistent with the desire to make it possible for all individuals to have reasonable opportunities to become wealthy."

Calling present tax laws "possibly even masochistic," Wagner says that "the penalties placed on the relatively fortunate rebound to the harm of the relatively less fortunate as well."

Explaining that: "High marginal rates of tax reduce the willingness of investors to undertake risky investments, which decreases the rate of mobility of individuals within the distribution of income," he concludes that: "Consequently, the wealthy and the poor are less likely to become wealthy than they would otherwise be."

Wagner is a professor of economics at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and the author of several books and numerous articles on taxes and the economy.

Taxes on the transfer of wealth at death are based on an extreme individualism at the expense of the concept of the family. "One primary impetus for imposing taxes upon the occasion of a person's death has been.... the desire to reduce the degree of inequality (between individuals) in the distribution of wealth," he says.

"But the taxation of wealth transfers also diminishes the incentive to accumulate capital to pass on to heirs. In consequence, the productive capacity of the nation is lowered, and, moreover, the character of the social order as it evolves historically may be modified."

Wagner also discusses such topics as the taxation of capital gains, the