For more than a decade, Portugal has been engaged in a bitter struggle with nationalist guerrilla forces in the African territories of Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique. This struggle, in support of a seemingly anachronistic colonial policy, has drained men and resources from a country which is the most economically undeveloped in Europe. Over half of Portugal's budget has been committed solely to defence. Needless to say, this effort was not made simply to satisfy the pride of an imperial past. It is true that since the sixteenth century, when the Portuguese national poet, Camoens, celebrated the voyages of Vasco da Gama, the theme of empire has been a dominant one in the national ideology of Portugal. But it is also true that there were sound economic reasons for Portugal's continued colonial presence in Africa. Increasingly, however, with the continuing success of the guerrilla forces, particularly of the Party for the Independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands (PAIGC), and of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), it became clear that the costs of a continuing colonial presence were outweighing its benefits. (1)

In the final analysis, a military command, weary of defeat, pessimistic regarding the
possibility of any military solution, and exasperated by the policies of a government that could not perceive the need for change, took matters into their own hands. The coup which toppled Dr. Caetano, and brought to power a reformist military junta headed by General Spinola, thus marked the beginning of a new era for the Portuguese colonies in Africa. The new government of Portugal has committed itself to ending the wars in Africa, and has offered full independence to those countries it has sought for so long to dominate. Thus, even while the situation in Portugal is still in a state of flux, the date of Guinea-Bissau’s independence has come and gone (September 10), negotiations are under way between FRELIMO and Portuguese officials, and plans for the future of Angola are being framed.

In the light of all these developments it perhaps seems precipitate to attempt an analysis just now. However, despite Portugal’s withdrawal, this does not mean, unfortunately, that the goals of the liberation movements can be immediately realised in all cases. For Portugal’s relationship with its erstwhile colonies cannot be considered in isolation from the global pattern of capitalist relations. Portuguese colonialism intermeshed with the general framework of imperialist relations in Africa, most particularly in Southern Africa. Thus, while the coup will signal Portugal’s departure from the scene, it will not signal the end of the broader imperialist pattern. An analysis of the specific nature of Portuguese colonialism, and of the predominant underlying relationships that will emerge more clearly with the latter’s demise, may aid us in charting the parameters of future development. (2)

PORTUGUESE COLONIALISM

It was the Portuguese who were instrumental in ‘discovering’ Africa in the fifteenth century. They were quick to realise that profit was to be had from traffic both in precious metals and human beings. The first cargo of slaves and gold arrived in Lisbon in 1441. Portugal continued as one of the chief European exploiters of the continent throughout the succeeding centuries. The Portuguese presence, until the nineteenth century, was based, in the main, on coastal trading stations. However, the territorial division of the continent in the latter part of that century gave the hinterlands behind these trading posts to Portugal. It must be noted that Portugal gained territory not in proportion to her economic or military strengths, but as the result of bargaining between the great colonial powers of that time, Britain, France and Germany, each unwilling to cede more territory to the others than was necessary. Thus Portugal, a country of some 35,000 square miles in area, entered the twentieth century controlling some 800,000 square miles of Africa, but in a position of weakness relative to the other colonial powers. It is precisely this weakness that accounts for the contemporary nature of Portuguese colonialism.

The changing pattern of global economic and political relations after 1945, coupled with a rising tide of nationalism in the colonial territories, dictated new strategies for the colonial powers. The grant of political independence, while stilling nationalist protests and removing the increasing burden of garrisoning distant colonies, left untouched, or even improved, the economic benefits accruing to the industrialised capitalist world. Thus, the transition from colonial to neo-colonial relations was effected with rapidity. As this process continued, Portugal appeared increasingly anachronistic in her attitude of intransigence towards any demand for independence from her colonial possessions. But her position was not based simply on a reactionary attitude towards empire, but on her weakness, a weakness that precluded her choice of the neo-colonial option. Portugal, with her undeveloped economy, without a substantial financial or industrial infrastructure, was in no position to compete with America, Britain or France as a neo-colonial power. Yet, at the same time, Portugal needed the contribution made by Africa to her balance of payments. Without the ‘overseas provinces’ she would have been in considerable economic difficulty. In addition the Portuguese ruling class would not willingly have foregone the profits to be obtained from the diamonds, iron ore, and other resources of ‘Portuguese’ Africa. Thus, since to have granted political independence to her colonies would have meant
giving over those economic advantages to a stronger power, Portuguese colonialism remained unchanged. As Amilcar Cabral, the revolutionary theorist and leader of PAIGC noted on this point in 1965:

"The main characteristic of present-day Portuguese colonialism is a simple fact: Portuguese colonialism, or if you prefer the Portuguese economic infrastructure, cannot allow itself the luxury of being neo-colonialist." (3)

Portugal's continued colonial presence in Africa has not, of course, prevented the penetration of international capital. On the contrary, British, American and South African interests are heavily involved in Mozambique and Angola. The principal banking operation in these two countries is jointly controlled by the Portuguese Totta-Alianza and the Standard Bank of South Africa. Gulf Oil operates in Mozambique, in Angola and, most importantly, in the enclave of Cabinda, where a series of strikes since 1966 seems likely to make it the most important oil producing region south of the Sahara. The Anglo-American Corporation, based in South Africa, but chiefly involving British capital, controls Angolan diamond production, and owns the Benguela railway which transports Zambian copper to the Angolan port of Lobito. The Sena Sugar Estates in Mozambique represent yet another British investment. However, this penetration of foreign capital meant no lessening in Portugal's interest in retaining control over her African colonies. For, while Lisbon was the centre of empire, the capital that was flowing into Africa brought benefits to Portugal. Contracts had to be made through the Portuguese authorities, and joint activities involved Portuguese capital in lucrative ventures. If political independence replaced colonialism in Africa then Lisbon's role as middleman would disappear, and there would be a real possibility that Portugal would be excluded from the economic benefits of the operations in Angola, Cabinda and Mozambique.

Portugal, then, unable to take up the neo-colonial option, had continuing reasons for retaining a colonial presence in Africa. But there was another side to the picture. Due to the operation of nationalist guerrilla forces in all of Portugal's African territories, the cost of maintaining that presence was escalating continually. The armed struggle in these territories was directly engendered by Portugal's refusal to regard independence as politically negotiable. The first resistance erupted in Angola in 1961, led by the Union of the Angolan Population (UPA). Within six months 25,000 Portuguese troops were in the process of reconquering the areas that had been lost to the freedom fighters. Since that time, the situation in Angola has been one of fluctuating fortunes for the nationalist forces, linked to fratricidal conflict between competing nationalist groups. The main groups involved in a struggle for power have been Holden Roberto's National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), successor to the UPA, Jonas Savimba's National Union for Total Independence (UNITA) and, the most radical of the three, Dr. Agostino Neto's Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). The conflicts between these groups have involved not only party splits, but also fruitless clashes between the military wings of the parties. Obviously, this internecine struggle has been of great value to Portugal, and has enabled her to attain a greater measure of military success in Angola than in any other area. Nevertheless the constant threat of guerrilla activity has tied down a Portuguese army of 70,000 men in the country.

The position in Guinea-Bissau has been discouraging in the extreme for the Portuguese. The PAIGC, under the leadership of Amilcar Cabral, has achieved great progress since armed struggle began in January 1963. [Cabral, however, was assassinated in 1973 by Portuguese agents.] At the time of the coup in Portugal, the PAIGC controlled 60 to 70 per cent of the territory of Guinea-Bissau and administered over 50 per cent of the population. Portuguese control has effectively been reduced to the capital and certain garrison towns. In the liberated areas the PAIGC embarked on a great program of political mobilisation and social reform, setting up co-operatives, schools and hospitals and introducing innovative agricultural techniques. In their attempt to maintain control, the Portuguese stationed 40,000
men in the country. The basic reason for the continuing Portuguese commitment to Guinea-Bissau was one that derived from the domino theory applied by the US to South-east Asia. There was little profit to be had from Guinea-Bissau in the first place, and nationalist success made it an enormous and increasing liability. But it was argued that if independence were given to Guinea-Bissau it would be difficult to resist similar demands from Angola and Mozambique. However, given the position on the ground, it is hardly surprising that, in the wake of the coup, Portugal has almost immediately recognised the country's independence.

In June 1963, three exiled Mozambiquan parties merged to form FRELIMO and, after two years of political preparation, they launched a military campaign. The front has had a continuing history of military success. Just prior to the coup, Marcelino Dos Santos, Vice-President of FRELIMO, estimated that FRELIMO controlled 24 per cent of the territory of Mozambique, (In the provinces of Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Tete in the north of the country) and one million people from a population of seven million. In the liberated areas of Mozambique, as in Guinea-Bissau, various programs of political mobilisation and of social and educational reform have been introduced. Repressive activities by the Portuguese military, recently highlighted by the disclosure by missionaries of massacres in Mozambique, have only served to mobilise and politicise the people. Thus, despite a commitment of over 60,000 troops, despite aid, both direct and indirect, from Rhodesia and South Africa, the position of Portugal has been growing increasingly untenable in Mozambique. The chief area of conflict in latter months has been in Tete province and, in particular, the site of the Cabora Bassa dam on the Zambesi River. This hydro-electric project, financed by a consortium headed by South Africa, aimed at the provision of electric power that would be fed directly into the South African national grid. This highlights both the involvement of South African interests in the region and the conflict between those interests and nationalist activity, a point that will be developed later.

In general then, the military situation of Portugal in Africa at the beginning of this year was rapidly deteriorating, and the immense cost of continuing the struggle against the forces of nationalism was outweighing the benefits of upholding the structure of colonialism. As William Minter has noted:

"The military effort, moreover, has proved an increasing strain on Portugal's resources, financial and human. By 1970 the total number of Portuguese troops in Africa was estimated at about 160,000, or more than double the 1964 level. In proportion to Portugal's population, this is a troop level more than five times that of the United States in Vietnam at its highest." (4)

It was this situation, and the contradictions and tensions to which it gave rise in metropolitan Portugal, that directly engendered the coup.

Two other aspects of Portuguese colonialism need to be recorded. Firstly, it must be noted that the Portuguese military effort has been supported, not only by obvious allies like Rhodesia and South Africa, but by the Western military alliance in general. Without NATO arms, NATO supplies and NATO training it is doubtful whether Portugal could have sustained its military effort at the level of past years. Far from expressing any disapproval at Portugal's use of resources provided by NATO, the latter indicated at least its complaisance by moving NATO Command HQ to Lisbon in 1967. Secondly, note must be taken of the fact that, in order to help maintain control of Angola and Mozambique, Portugal encouraged the settlement of Portuguese in these territories. Currently, there are approximately 550,000 Europeans in Angola and approximately 200,000 in Mozambique. Their presence in these areas is of crucial importance in considering possible future developments.

AFTER THE COUP: THE BASIC CONTRADICTION

Clearly the main concern of the Portuguese now is to divest themselves of the burd-
en of their African colonies as rapidly as possible, and to turn their attention to the problems of development and social change in Portugal itself. What then of the future of their erstwhile colonies? Such a question brings us to a consideration of the relationships and contradictions that will determine the broad pattern of future events. They are relationships and contradictions that have been lying below the surface of a Portuguese colonial presence that has, in the past, tended to mask their significance. The chief contradiction, at least in Southern and Central Africa, is between the forces of African nationalism on the one hand, and of the hegemony of South African capitalism, linked as it is to the continuance of white supremacy, on the other. This contradiction, mediated and masked by the Portuguese presence, will, with Portugal's withdrawal, now become more obviously the chief factor conditioning political and economic developments in the region.

It is necessary to examine both sides of this contradiction in more detail. The focus of attention will now be exclusively on Southern Africa. Guinea-Bissau in West Africa, small, virtually controlled by the nationalist movement for some years past, lacking a settler community and having no immediate economic resources to tempt international capital, lies outside the main concentration of the present discussion. A newly independent Guinea-Bissau, with its exemplary history of revolutionary nationalism will, no doubt, have much to contribute to the development of a continent in sad need of new directions and encouraging social experiments. But, given its geographic position, and the specific nature of its national struggle, it will not figure in the Southern African context, where future struggle lies.

Two opposing tendencies emerge from the contradiction in this region. On the one hand the interests of South Africa dictate the necessity of a neo-colonial solution to the problem posed by the collapse of Portuguese colonialism, South Africa has a hegemonic position in Southern Africa, and what has been variously described as the 'Southern African Fortress' and the 'Southern African complex' includes Angola and Mozambique, as well as Rhodesia, South-West Africa, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. South Africa's interest lies in securing the stability of this region under her continued control. Thus, from her standpoint, the administrations which succeed the Portuguese in Angola and Mozambique must be capable of being controlled from Pretoria, directly or indirectly, and must see their interests as congruent with those of South Africa. On the other hand the nationalist groups, most particularly FRELIMO and MPLA, have, in the course of the extended struggle against the Portuguese, become increasingly radicalised. They are clearly aware of the dangers of neo-colonialism, and are committed to a revolutionary nationalism that demands the overthrow of capitalism as a "logical" conclusion to the struggle for independence. (5)

South Africa represents a major area of investment by the capitalist world. In 1970 Sterling Area investment stood at 1,983 million pounds. (6) Five hundred British companies and three hundred American owned subsidiaries operated within South Africa, and between 1965 and 1970 she received a net total of 982 million pounds from Western capitalist countries. (7)

In short, as Arrighi and Saul have pointed out, the Southern African complex represents the most important region in Africa to Western capitalist interests. Its developed industrial and technological infrastructure, its mineral wealth and its plentiful supply of cheap labor make it an attractive proposition for investment. (8) At the same time, it provides a base from where Western capital interests can penetrate upwards into the rest of Africa. As Arrighi and Saul note with regard to the implications of this position: "In consequence, their [Western capitalist interests] main concern vis-a-vis independent Africa is to prevent the growth of strong politico-economic systems independent of Western capitalist hegemony in the countries bordering on the Southern African complex (Congo, Malawi and Tanzania) which could, among other things, seriously threaten (through their support for the increasingly radical liberation movements) white rule in Southern Africa." (9) What is true for coun-
tries bordering the ‘Southern African Complex’ is obviously axiomatic for countries such as Angola and Mozambique that are part of that complex.

The agency for securing the ends of Western capital is the state apparatus of South Africa. But South Africa is not simply a client of Western capital, for indigenous South African capital has been increasing in strength for some time past. South Africa has “developed its own industrial base by setting up government corporations in basic industries, by investing in infrastructure, and by forcing or enticing foreign capital to accept a measure of local participation and control” (10). Increasingly South African capital has been involved in development projects in Southern Africa, alone or in conjunction with foreign capital. There is a degree of autonomous industrial development occurring that suggests parallels with Brazil. And as Brazil is to Latin America, so South Africa is to Africa, a developing sub-imperialist power, capable of taking the initiative in terms of the expansion of its capital and provision for its security. Clearly, the interests of South Africa in this respect are coincidental with the interests of Western capitalism, and require a continuing South African dominance of Southern and Central Africa. The idea that South Africa’s ‘natural hinterland’ extends well beyond its physical boundaries is one that is frequently alluded to by South African politicians. This notion was concretely, if less subtly, expressed in the journal ‘Africa South’ in 1968:

“Our economic and political objectives in Southern Africa are to harness all natural and human resources from Table Mountain to the border of the Congo River.” (11)

Yet, while South Africa seeks to maintain her dominant position in Southern and Central Africa, she is also desirous of minimising her open conflicts with independent African countries, and with liberation movements based on their territory. While South African ‘police’ have been fighting alongside Rhodesian forces in the Zambesi valley, South African diplomats have been making friendly overtures towards black African states. The reason for such apparently ambiguous behaviour is not hard to find. The natural market for the products of the expanding South African economy, and the natural outlet for both South African capital, and foreign capital based in South Africa, all lie to the north of the Zambesi. The general position is well summarised by First, Steele and Gurney:

“...South Africa’s own reasons for expansion and an aggressive strategy against independent Africa coincide happily with the interests of Western investors and Western powers in general. They are anxious to avoid confrontation with liberation movements; above all, they want a political climate in Southern and Central Africa in which penetration by outside capital can be pursued without opposition.” (12)

It is this general strategy that accounts for the low profile South Africa has adopted with regard to current events in Angola and Mozambique. But this should not be taken as any indication of a lack of concern, nor of an unwillingness to intervene to secure her interests in the region. Those interests demand, and will continue to demand, a neo-colonial settlement in Angola and Mozambique.

South Africa’s interest in securing the accession to power in the former Portuguese colonies of moderate and manipulable leaders, stemming from the nature of the broad socio-economic situation, is heightened considerably by strategic considerations relating to counter-insurgency. To date South Africa has been insulated from guerrilla attacks by the buffer zones of Angola, Mozambique and Rhodesia. In effect this has meant that South Africa has been able to gain experience in counter-insurgency operations, fighting ZANO/ZAPU (13) and ANC (14) forces along the Zambesi River marking Rhodesia’s northern frontier. But many hundreds of miles have separated this activity from the towns and farms of the Transvaal. Meanwhile in Angola and Mozambique the Portuguese were relied on to contain guerrilla activity, and to protect the flanks of the white fortress of Southern Africa.

Despite the success of FRELIMO forces in the northern provinces of Mozambique,
the line of their advance has been held at the Zambesi. The geographical position of Mozambique is such that the southernmost areas of the country extend to within 200 miles of Johannesburg and Pretoria. Obviously, no South African government could view with equanimity the prospect of guerrilla forces operating in such close proximity to the major industrial and population centres of South Africa. It is thus provided with an additional incentive, if one were indeed required, to ensure that the future government of Mozambique will be of a character that will preclude this possibility. A similar set of considerations apply to the Angolan flank. Already South Africa has to contend with the activities of the South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO), fighting against its continued illegal occupation of Namibia. A radical African government in Angola, to the immediate north of South West Africa, would mean a weakening of South Africa’s strategic position in this area. In the light of all this, one could suggest that a litmus test of the type of settlement finally agreed to for Angola and Mozambique will be of whether not the guerrillas are permitted to base themselves in these countries. It is hard to be sanguine about the prospects of such an arrangement.

Dr. Mulder, South Africa’s Minister of the Interior and Information said in Salisbury on August 30, 1973: “South Africa prefers the front line against terrorism to be the Zambesi rather than the Limpopo.” It is a preference that is unlikely to change.

But, if the general character of South African hegemony in Southern Africa creates pressures for a neo-colonial settlement in Angola and Mozambique, another contradictory pressure is present, particularly in Mozambique. The years of guerrilla struggle, necessitated by Portuguese intransigence, have engendered a maturation of political consciousness in the nationalist parties that were involved. This is particularly true of the PAIGC and FRELIMO. These movements will not so readily fall prey to the pitfall of neo-colonialism as did so many other African nationalist movements of the 1950s. Amilcar Cabral wrote in 1965:

“The neo-colonial situation ...... is not resolved by a nationalist solution, it demands the destruction of the capitalist structure implanted in the national territory by imperialism, and correctly postulates a socialist solution.” (15)

John Saul, in his article in ‘Socialist Register 1973’, has charted the way in which the liberation struggles in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique have led to the creation of a revolutionary nationalism “very different from that earlier brand of nationalism which brought formal independence to African territories north of the Zambesi.” (16)

“In the case of Portugal’s African colonies, then, we see not merely a struggle for independence -- but a revolution in the making.” (17)

Even in Angola, where inter- and intra-party conflict in the nationalist movement has tended to retard development, there have been signs of an increasing commitment to revolutionary nationalism in Neto’s MPLA, as it has increased its military control over areas of Eastern Angola. But the maturation of a revolutionary consciousness and growing commitment to socialist goals is most apparent in FRELIMO, where the leadership “have been increasingly firm about distinguishing revolutionary nationalism from its less savoury look-alikes, and communicating this distinction to the populace.” (18)

In a recent interview, Marcelino Dos Santos, the Vice-President of FRELIMO, made clear FRELIMO’s commitment to revolutionary nationalism, and indicated that the aim was to transcend neo-colonialism in achieving a socialist solution. He noted that nationalism within FRELIMO had moved from a primary to a secondary stage, and that “the point of departure” between the two stages was the idea of a society where there was no exploitation of man by man.

“In the particular conditions of fighting against Portuguese colonialism, revolutionary attitudes are not only possible, but necessary ...... If our organisation maintains a true revolutionary leader-
ship the special circumstances of the process of our liberation open up real possibilities for an advance from liberation to revolution.” (19)

In Mozambique, as in Guinea-Bissau, new social structures have been created in the liberated areas. Schools and hospitals have been established, and reforms in agriculture have been initiated. A new spirit of national struggle, transcending the old tribal antagonisms, is active among the people. It is a familiar story that parallels the Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban experiences. A guerrilla war is not just a military enterprise, but a political activity that mobilises and educates. As Robert Taber has noted: “The guerrilla fighter is primarily a propagandist, an agitator, a disseminator of the revolutionary idea, who uses the struggle itself -- the actual physical conflict -- as an instrument of agitation.” (20)

Dos Santos echoes these sentiments when he notes:

“The armed struggle can only be launched when the conditions are ripe for it. Even now the basic problem is not guns; the Portuguese have guns too but that does not make a revolution, The problem is the man. It is not because you give a Mozambiquan a rifle that he becomes a revolutionary, the basic problem is a political one. Political consciousness is the base.” (21)

Thus, in Angola and Mozambique, the years of struggle against Portuguese colonialism have witnessed the rise of a species of revolutionary nationalism that is in complete opposition to pressures for a neo-colonial settlement. This contradiction, between revolutionary nationalism and South Africa’s capitalist interests, is recognised by the nationalist leaders. Dos Santos was interviewed prior to the coup in Portugal, and thus before the possibility of formal independence was on the agenda. Yet he clearly foresaw the present position.

Perhaps we should look further to the content of independence. I think that a stage will be reached in which the main problem will not be whether a country becomes formally independ-
ident of FRELIMO are among FRECOMO’s leaders. Simango was expelled from FRELIMO in 1970 for advocating that an independent Mozambique be confined to the north of the Zambesi. Both Gumane and Simango are representative of those elements of FRELIMO which were committed to the capitalist system, and were willing opportunistically to compromise with imperialist forces. As noted, the party purged itself of these elements in the late ‘sixties. Their re-emergence to prominence at this stage speaks for itself. Reports suggest that South African and European business interests in Mozambique provide financial backing for FRECOMO.

Obviously the settler communities in Angola and Mozambique are of considerable importance in the present situation. They represent a source of reaction to African revolutionary nationalism, which they see as threatening their position, that can readily be exploited by South Africa. It is significant that race riots led by Europeans greeted news of the coup in Luanda. There is always the possibility of a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) on the lines taken by Rhodesia. It is a threat that has been in the air for some years past, repeated whenever Portugal’s will to continue seemed to be faltering. Now that that will has ceased to function, UDI, or at least some degree of independent action by the settlers, was almost bound to occur.

There are reports that mercenary forces are being recruited, through settler organisations, to prevent a takeover by FRELIMO in Mozambique. Colonel Mike Hoare and Jean Pierre Rene, both of whom were active mercenaries in the Congo, are two names that have been mentioned. Recently there was reported to have been a ‘reunion’ in Rhodesia of No. 5 Commando, the group Hoare commanded in the Congo. In a recent interview, Hoare denied that he had received any requests for assistance. But when asked if he would get “a good and quick response” if he set out to reactivate No. 5 Commando, he replied:

“Most definitely. Many of the old No. 5 Commando boys would rally immediately. I’ve had a flood of telephone calls from chaps – including a lot of old hands asking if I was recruiting for Mozambique or Angola.” (23)

Within Mozambique a mercenary force could expect to receive support from the settlers in general, and in particular the business community. Senhor Jorge Jardim, an influential European businessman, has been involved in the formation and financing of both GUMO and FRECOMO. He was responsible previously for organising a commando force to fight FRELIMO. A friend of Jardim’s, General Kaulza de Arriaga, is reported to be organising forces that could link up with the mercenaries.

Clearly, key figures are involved in organising an anti-FRELIMO front. It is significant that Jardim, Simango and other members of FRECOMO have all advocated the partition of Mozambique along the Zambesi. This, it is hoped, would safeguard European business interests, since the chief plantations, towns and ports (Biera and Lourenco Marques) and European settlements are all south of the Zambesi. In addition, any partition agreement would inevitably include the Cabora Bassa dam within a southern state. Thus, FRELIMO would be confined to the liberated areas of northern Mozambique. Moreover further plans along these lines suggest the incorporation of northern Mozambique with Malawi. It is presumably in response to such plans that FRELIMO has reportedly discussed with Portugal a delayed independence, and has clearly stated that it wants time to expand its political base and mobilise people south of the Zambesi. Whether FRELIMO’s opponents will allow time for such expansion and mobilisation is obviously a moot point.

In Angola the rifts within the competing nationalist groups continue to undermine their position. Although Agostino Neto’s MPLA and Holden Roberto’s FNLA have reached a tenuous agreement, no basis for a united political front has yet been reached with Joseph Savimba’s UNITA. More importantly, the large settler community in Angola is a stumbling block to any attempt to establish a progressive, radical African administration. The United Resistance of Angola (RUA), initially formed in 1961 in response
to guerrilla activity, and drawing its membership from working class whites, has recently re-appeared. Reports suggest that its leader, Captain Jose Mendoza, a former officer in the Portuguese army, is working in collaboration with former members of the DGS, the Portuguese security service disbanded after the coup, and is taking orders from South Africa. The RUA could obviously be linked with a UDI movement in Angola. The future of oil-rich Cabinda is also of obvious concern to many parties, not least South Africa, who, lacking oil reserves of her own, is dependent on the expensive oil from coal process for her strategic reserves. South Africa, and the three nationalist parties of Angola are in agreement on one issue at least, that Cabinda be considered part of Angola. But their views on the future of Cabinda/Angola are obviously rather different.

Thus, overall, although the details that are emerging from Southern Africa are incomplete, a broad outline of present trends can be perceived. It would appear that in furtherance of her interest in preserving the Southern African Complex free from revolutionary nationalism, South Africa is at present backing white settler groups and opportunist black elements in Angola and Mozambique. Such a method of operation is, of course, in keeping with South Africa’s desire to keep a low profile, and avoid, if possible, open involvement. South Africa would seem to be relying on settlers’ groups to deploy their own and mercenary forces against the nationalist forces, presumably with her financial assistance. It has been suggested that one of the aims of such groups is to attack their African opponents through punitive border raids aimed at bases and key installations in Zaire, Zambia and Tanzania. It is difficult not to see the hand of South Africa in such a plan which implements a threat that has been made, at least sotto voce, for years by South African leaders. It would be convenient to have such operations conducted by groups ostensibly unconnected with South Africa.

Given the position of South Africa, then, we must presume that if the present tactics fail to stem the tide of revolutionary nationalism, more direct South African intervention cannot be ruled out. It is not that South Africa has any particular interest in the establishment of settler regimes in Angola or Mozambique. In Rhodesia, Mr. Smith, and the settlers he leads, have proved as much an embarrassment and liability as an asset. South Africa would probably be well satisfied with African governments in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, so long as they were compliant and her control was unaffected.

But at the present time South Africa’s desire to defeat revolutionary nationalism, while avoiding direct confrontation itself, is best served by support for settler or other groups equally interested in a neo-colonial settlement.

Any discussion of the pattern of future events must, of course, be speculative. However, given the present disposition of economic power and military force in the Southern African complex, it would seem that, in the short term, some type of neo-colonial settlement is inevitable for Angola/Cabinda, and for at least a large area of Mozambique. The corollary of this, of course, is that the struggle waged by the forces of revolutionary nationalism will continue, not only in Angola and Mozambique, but in all the countries of Southern and Central Africa that South Africa seeks to dominate. The demise of Portuguese colonialism has not opened the way to immediate liberation. But it is a great victory for the progressive forces of African nationalism, and it will serve to heighten the contradictions within the Southern African complex. As such, it is an important step on the road to complete liberation.

FOOTNOTES


2. In discussing the nature of Portuguese colonialism the present author is in-


9. Ibid., p. 49/50.


11. Quoted in First, ibid., p. 293.

12. Ibid., p. 293.

13. The Zimbabwe African National Union and the Zimbabwe African People's Union, the two nationalist parties of Zimbabwe, operating since 1972 under a joint military command.

14. The African National Congress, the banned nationalist party of South Africa.

15. Cabral, op. cit. p. 86.


17. Ibid., p. 310.


22. Ibid., pp. 52/53.

23. 'Newsweek', August 26, 1974, p. 56.