

# South Africa: Second Thoughts About Carter's Africa Policy

## SOUTH AFRICA

The recent series of Atlanticist diplomatic deployments designed to isolate South Africa and spur it into a war posture vis-à-vis the neighboring African states, has failed miserably.

U.S. United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young, and Olof Palme, both used a lot of strident rhetoric at the Maputo, Mozambique U.N. conference on Namibia and Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) calling for economic pressure on South Africa. Palme called for a complete economic boycott of South Africa. At the same time Vice-President Mondale met South African Prime Minister Vorster in Vienna. According to press accounts, Mondale was slated to confront Vorster with demands for internal changes in South Africa which Vorster was expected to reject. Just prior to the Vienna meeting, South African Foreign Minister Roelof Botha was whipping up the white South African population: "I am prepared to die for our right to exist." Botha urged all voters to face up to the threat of a race war, and avowed that South Africa would never negotiate away its existence.

However after the Mondale meeting, Vorster and other South African officials did not react in the expected manner to vociferously protest the imposition of unacceptable demands. The day after the talks, the May 21 *Washington Post* still maintained that "South Africa would indeed now have to go it alone to defend itself against increasingly militant black governments," and claimed that "Vorster's defiant stand in favor of continued racial separation" could spark new outbursts of riots in South Africa.

Vorster and Mondale only agreed on vague generalities: an eventual undefined independence for Namibia, now illegally ruled by South Africa, and an unspecified Rhodesian settlement. This represented no change in previous commitments by Vorster.

After the Vienna meeting, Vorster went to Geneva where he met with the President of the Ivory Coast, Houphouët-Boigny, and gave an unusual four-hour press conference. Asked if he thought the Carter policy of pressuring South Africa would backfire, a question carefully formulated so as to give Vorster an opportunity to angrily declare his intention to "go it alone," Vorster responded simply: "I don't think it will work."

The question on the minds of knowledgeable observers is: What caused the South African government to abandon the Carter scenario as a way out of their own predicament?

### *Soft-Option Disintegrates*

The Carter Administration has sought to use the time-worn tactic of squeezing pariah countries like South Africa or Israel — called fifth world countries by *New York Times* columnist C.L. Sulzberger last week as he described this process — to turn them into a bludgeon against surrounding countries. In southern Africa, this would mean the threat of or actual military attacks against the front-line African states by South Africa to splinter off the weaker front-line states, permitting the imposition of agreements on the African states that would be agreeable to both South Africa and Carter.

But several things went awry with this scenario, leading the South Africa leadership to the conclusion that it would be suicidal to adopt a war posture. Young's civil rights parody at Maputo, an attempt to get the Africans to adopt a passive, apolitical approach to the problems in southern Africa was a complete failure. Mozambican President Machel asked Young to refrain from making 'racist speeches.'

Young failed to whip up a racial fury despite increasing threats from the racist regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa: Rhodesian Prime Minister Smith threatened to attack the front-line state of Zambia; helicopter-borne South African troops carried out a provocative attack into Angola, another front-line state. The African delegates responded at the conference by calling for a weapons embargo against the two regimes, which the U.S., along with the other Western powers, did not support.

Bolstered by declarations of support from East Bloc and African countries, the front-line states are relatively confident. The threat of war by South Africa thus tends to strengthen their solidarity, and drive them closer to the Soviets.

### *Looking for Alternatives*

Confronted with this situation, the South Africans have been forced to rethink their policy, and look for alternatives. South Africa now appears to be putting out feelers for a non-confrontationist policy. Education Minister Pieter Koornhof, while carefully not committing the South African government, noted that there were South Africans who believed that the blacks living permanently outside the tribal areas (bantustans) should be given a direct role in the new structure. Koornhof noted that changes along these lines, a sharp departure from official Nationalist Party doctrine, would offer South Africa more policy options and more "political maneuverability." Explained Koornhof: "Politics, especially in these times, are unpredictable, and only

time will prove whether this line of thought is feasible or not," indicating that the South Africans were at least evaluating options rather than their traditional military one.

There was widespread speculation that Koornhof was floating the idea with the encouragement of Vorster. However, for the record, Vorster on May 27 said that it is "not practical politics at this stage" to consider the establishment of a confederation that would give other racial groups in South Africa, possibly including urban blacks, a share of national power.

The lead article in the South African business weekly *Financial Mail* published immediately prior to the Mondale-Vorster meeting also indicated that a reevaluation was taking place. The *Financial Mail* stated

that the Mondale-Vorster meeting signified the end of the Kissinger era policy, in which South Africa could count on U.S. support no matter what.

Faced with isolation from Europe because of its policy towards blacks in South Africa, the article dismissed the possibility of a military option: "Despite its military preparedness it (South Africa) would pay a devastating price against an enemy with unlimited time, unlimited black manpower and unlimited Russian resources." The article advocated "visible movement toward political equity" in South Africa, emphasizing that the country must at least "be seen to be making progress towards giving its black citizens full citizenship," before any Western country can afford to ally with South Africa.

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## Young Jeered As Racist In Africa

*The following are excerpts from an article in the May 25 Washington Star reporting on the reaction of African delegates to UN Ambassador Andrew Young at the United Nations Conference in Support of Zimbabwe and Namibia held in Maputo, Mozambique:*

Maputo, Mozambique — Ambassador Andrew Young, who won friends and the Carter Administration time on an earlier visit to Africa got into trouble here when he started speaking 'as a fellow black man' and tried to tell Africans how to win their 'freedom.'

Before Young left town, Mozambique's President Samora Machel asked him to refrain from delivering any more 'racist speeches' while in the country. Rhodesian and South-West African nationalist leaders, who are heavily engaged in guerilla warfare, said they resented having Young, an outsider, lecture them.

"He just doesn't understand the history of our struggle," said Rhodesian nationalist leader Robert Mugabe...

Young called for blacks living under white minority rule in southern Africa to engage in economic boycotts. He said that 'the combination of (economic) pressures and incentives are more effective than outright war.'

Young declared that 'if we do an analysis of the racism that we find pervasive in southern Africa we find a phenomenon with which I am very familiar. It's been a part of my whole life — come to me with my mother's milk.' Throughout the speech, Young referred to Machel, Mugabe and any other black person as 'brother.'...

Many other African delegates who heard Young's speech immediately expressed surprise and called it 'racist.'

According to Mozambican sources, Machel told Young, in no uncertain terms, that such presentations are not welcome in Mozambique...

(Referring to Young's recounting his exploits in the civil rights movement...) (Robert) Mugabe, a lawyer

who heads the group doing most of the fighting in Rhodesia, said that comparison between the southern United States and Rhodesia was 'not applicable.'...

Mugabe told journalists 'We've tried these methods. We've tried passive resistance. Our people have been locked up. Our people have been shot. We have now moved a stage up in the struggle.' The guerilla leader added, 'No, we're not going to be a laboratory for experiments.'

(Nigerian Ambassador Leslie O.) Harriman who said he was 'very disappointed,' said that 'one could have hoped that Andy Young would contribute to the conference and not lecture us on civil rights. I would have listened 10 years ago with some patience. But instead I listened today with considerable irritation.'

Harriman's views appeared to be shared by the overwhelming majority of the delegates from 93 countries who attended the conference. The speech was met with only polite applause...

Young refused to give the specifics that Africans were waiting for. In the 'trust me' style of Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign, he said the major question is not about the specifics of the Carter administration's African policies — but 'our policies are believable.'

Said Mugabe later, 'If they (the Americans) have any pressure to exercise, let them exercise it from a distance.'

### 'Third World Hero'

President Carter told members of his Cabinet May 24 that "There is no doubt in my mind that over a period of time Andy Young will become a hero to the Third World," according to the British Daily Telegraph May 25. Carter added that Young is "establishing the proper relationship with developing countries on the issue of race and human rights."