
South Africa

Botha lifts the state of emergency

The March 5 announcement of South African State President P. W. Botha that his government would lift the state of emergency and is ready to implement United Nations Resolution 435 on Namibia, has created the conditions in which the real intentions of the major powers involved in the region will be exposed. If the U.S. State Department and allied banking circles in the West push ahead with economic sanctions against South Africa, it will become obvious to all that they never intended a peaceful settlement in the region. The Soviets, on the other hand, will now be forced to escalate their own drive to explode the southern African tinderbox with terrorism and military operations.

By lifting the state of emergency, Botha removed one of the major obstacles to the participation of black leaders in negotiations with the government, along the lines of his recent speech to Parliament, in which he invited black participation in a National Statutory Council. The difficulty of black leaders' doing so, without fear of losing their base to the violence-oriented elements of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the African National Congress (ANC), has been a major problem for those in Botha's government and National Party who are committed to negotiated constitutional reform to end apartheid.

The townships have calmed down to a significant degree, with unrest localized. The recent Alexandra Township riots were started by provocateurs from outside the Township. Of course, once the first clashes with the police took place, events took on a life of their own.

The problem for the authorities is how to protect black councilors and other officials who live in the townships from being assassinated. Upwards of one-third of the 757 deaths during the state of emergency were victims of roving assassination gangs. The clear object of the ANC terrorists has been to destroy the town government structure, which moderates intend to be the vehicle for regional cooperation with the white city and state governments, overcoming the economic and administrative anachronisms of apartheid.

Zulu Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi is exemplary of the black moderates, an outspoken opponent of apartheid, but supportive of peaceful moderates, an outspoken opponent of apartheid, but supportive of peaceful negotiations and industrialization as the key to South Africa's future.

If a consensus emerges in the West for sanctions in the next few months, as ANC and UDF leaders are loudly demanding, then their internal tactics will be aimed at creating

bloody incidents to generate press headlines with the intensity of the recent Philippines spectacle.

The March 7 announcement by Barclay's Bank in London that it would refuse all new loan requests or rescheduling of existing debts of South Africa is most ominous, and could signal an unraveling of the February agreement between creditor banks and South Africa.

The Namibia resolution

Botha's Namibia proposal calls for a U.N.-supervised election and the removal of South African Defense Force troops, if firm agreement is reached on the removal of over 30,000 Cuban troops from Angola. Some 50% of the population of Namibia lives within 120 kilometers of the Angolan border. Standing between the Angolan army, the Cubans, and Namibia is the operational area of Dr. Jonas Savimbi's pro-Western UNITA. Any settlement of the Namibia problem would also require a settlement in Angola acceptable to UNITA.

The crux of the problem is that the Soviets are only interested in seeing, not the destruction of apartheid, but the destruction of South Africa as a Western ally. Successful motion towards Namibian independence and constitutional reform in South Africa removes their justification for being there and their standing in the eyes of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

As long as the Soviets and Cubans are firmly entrenched in Angola, those war-weary elements of the Marxist government who might incline to negotiations with UNITA risk death if they even utter such thoughts.

Botha has proposed Aug. 1 as a target-date for a pre-agreement on the Cuban-troop issue and subsequent implementation of U.N. Resolution 435. Before that date, however, comes the April/May end of the rainy season, and the expected beginning of another Soviet- and Cuban-commanded Angolan offensive aimed at driving UNITA out of its base in southeast Angola. Heavy use of Angola's Soviet-equipped air force is expected. Soviet supplies have been built up at three staging areas in preparation for a three-pronged offensive.

The South Africans are quite aware that the Soviets have it within their means to sabotage the new Botha initiative. If they do, then Resolution 435 is dead, and the South Africans will unilaterally supervise Namibia's independence. The Soviet-backed Southwest Africa Peoples Organization (SWAPO), by their own choice, will have nothing to do with this independence.

As those in the West committed to furthering Moscow's ambitions in the region begin raising their voices for sanctions, the Botha government will have to consider its most formidable weapon, the "debt bomb." The potential for both South Africa, and those black Africans suffering under International Monetary Fund policies, to recognize their common interest in breaking the power of their mutual enemy, will then become the crucial factor.