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Southern Africa: Of America's Motives

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To the Editor:

The U.S. works for a split in the Organization for African Unity, a majority of which, both radical and conservative, recognize the M.P.L.A. Luanda government; the minority is allied to France, arms supplier to South Africa.

Judge U.S. southern Africa policy by actions, not words. American banks rescued the South African economy when the Sharpsville massacre provoked a flight of European capital. America has "welcomed" South Africa's attempts to "normalize relations" with black Africa and its claims that "apartheid is consistent with freedom" (if spiced with profits). Here President Kaunda of Zambia has been South Africa's ally, and Mobutu of Zaire, America's friend, has accepted Vorster's overtures. Now U.S. arms move through Zaire and Zambia.

The U.S. has for many years supported the *status quo* in all of southern Africa. Thus, extensive military aid was given to the Portuguese. Upon Portuguese withdrawal, the U.S. and South Africa decided to sacrifice the indefensible and to concentrate on the "essential." Therefore, *détente*. Projected in Rhodesia: something short of majority rule through a split in the African liberation forces helped by Kaunda. Desired in Angola: a *de facto* partition; the south under the hegemony of South Africa; the north, under that of Zaire and America.

America, probably the largest foreign investor in South Africa, has been very tolerant of its illegal occupation of Namibia. Angola is rich also, but South Africa would be currently satisfied if Angola were a buffer between areas administered by it and states supporting guerrilla movements. The U.S.-South African policy is solidification of a buffer zone of pro-apartheid African regimes.

South African and Zairean intervention is necessary to its success, if the M.P.L.A. endures—thus U.S. acquiescence. But recent African statements confirm that Africans may enlist against South Africa, whose army, drawing on a white minority already fighting guerrillas in Namibia and Rhodesia, would be in a hopeless position, with chances of disaster at home, too; Zaire would also be in danger. With such major destabilization, the U.S. could state that America must, given its "commitment to self-determination and world peace," send troops. Can it?

The U.S. endorses South African offers of withdrawal for cutoff of outside aid. Perhaps de-escalation can occur, but not on U.S. terms. The O.A.U. won't impose a compromise on the M.P.L.A., the F.N.L.A. and UNITA being so hopelessly compromised with South African objectives. Any standstill, at present, would give South Africa the partition it wants.

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