

# NATO AND SOUTH AFRICA

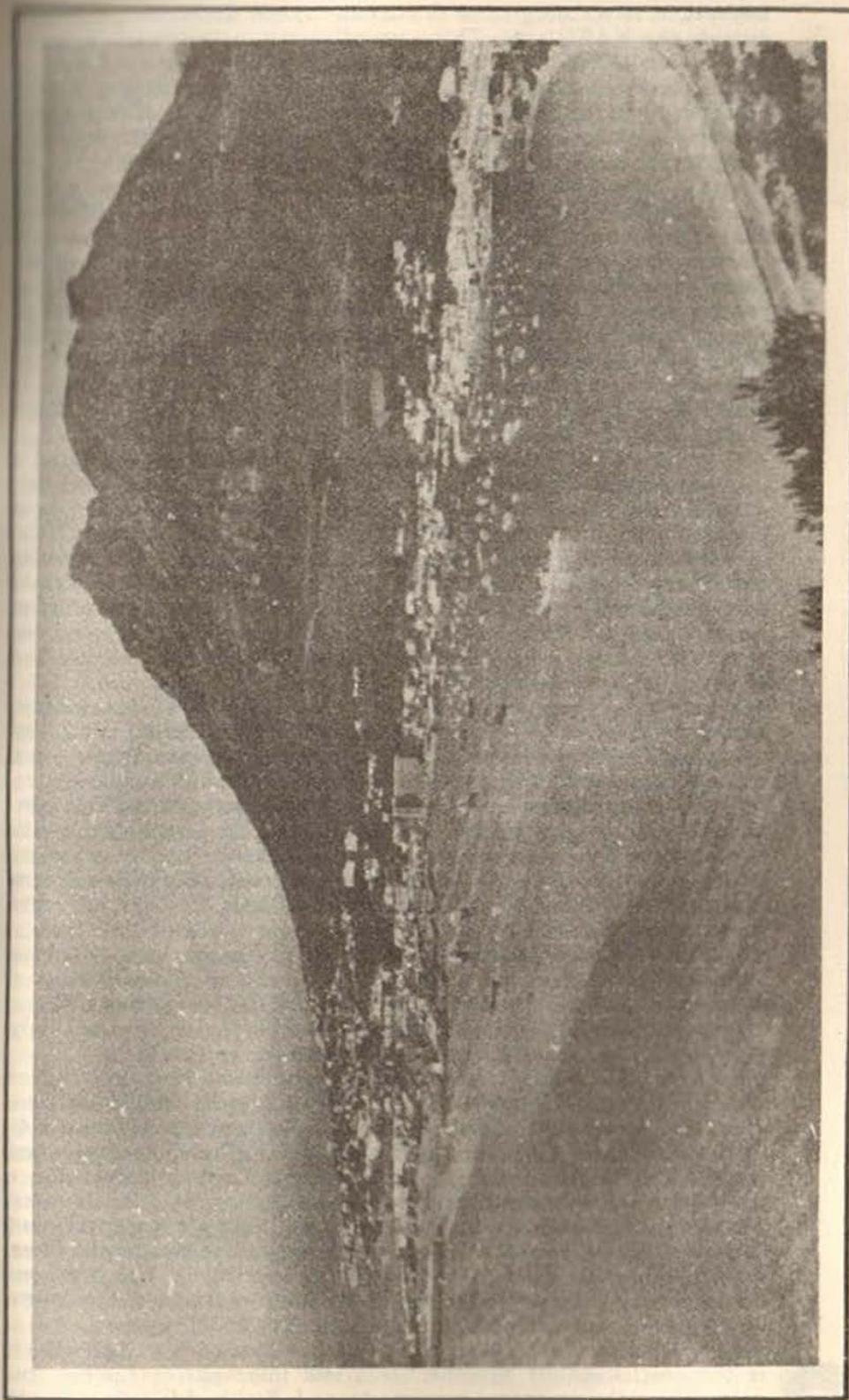
Abdul S. MINTY

Relations between the western powers and South Africa and the role the latter plays in NATO's plans is the theme that the Honorary Secretary of the British Apartheid Movement, Abdul S. Minty, develops in this interview for Tri-continental, granted while he was in Havana as a delegate to the International Seminar against Apartheid held there from May 24 to 28, 1976.

Two or three years ago NATO decided that it had to prepare for crisis as well as for war outside the NATO area. It therefore made a study of operations around the Cape route. This study was published in 1974, and NATO says officially that it involves no collaboration with non-NATO countries. But all military experts agree it is very difficult to anticipate NATO action around the Cape route without involving South Africa, because it is an area very far from NATO bases. At the moment, in time of peace, the NATO countries are using the South African Advokaat system, which the West Germans helped build and which starts to operate in the tropics where the NATO area ends. If they're using that system now, in time of peace, then in time of war they will definitely use that system.

Meanwhile, South Africa is spending a lot of money improving its airports and its seaports. The Simonstown base is being expanded, for example, even though Britain has cancelled the Simonstown agreement. So the South Africans are planning that their bases will be used by the western powers.

The United States is feeling now that the price mechanism is not adequate to give the West all the raw materials of the world, and so it is once again planning for military action in order to allocate to itself more of the resources. The theory of economic strangulation, developed as a result of the Arab oil



boycott, is now being used to evaluate crisis situations for NATO outside the NATO area. This new offensive in the South Atlantic and Indian Ocean area is calculated to encircle the continent of Africa, not just South Africa, and to use South Africa as a base of operations in Africa. The European Economic Community, which has made an agreement for trade relations with the independent African states, is, at the same time, extending its investments in South Africa, so that South Africa is developed as a kind of sub-imperialist base. South Africa is beginning to develop characteristics of its own imperialism as well, which is a new feature. But the South African Government calculates that, because of public opinion and the international situation, it is becoming more difficult for some of the major western powers to establish open connections with South Africa. For example, the United States was unable to support South Africa as much as it wanted to over Angola. Therefore, there is a new move to create an alliance among middle powers in the West — South Africa, Iran, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Israel.

After the Viet Nam war, the United States Pentagon issued a paper saying it was very dangerous for the United States to rely on bases overseas because bases create difficulties with the local population and become a political problem. Instead of more United States overseas bases, the new strategy should be to develop regional policemen. The calculation is that South Africa should become the major base area for the southern oceans and Africa; Iran, at the northern end of the Indian Ocean; Japan should become a regional power in the Pacific, along with Australia; and of course Brazil in South America.

Together with West Germany and the other NATO powers in Europe, the United States can thus create an effective control of the world. This is mainly a strategy for the southern hemisphere calculated on the basis of the fact that many of the world's resources are in Africa and in the southern hemisphere. This concentration is not only for the exploitation of people and continents in the southern hemisphere; it is also to try to get more effective control over the sea, because the resources in the oceans are very valuable and the imperialists wish to have effective control there as well.

South Africa is playing a very big part in this new offensive and of course says quite openly that it is a representative of western interests in southern Africa. The South African Prime Minister said when they moved into Angola that it was not only for South Africa's interests but for western interests.

It is significant that last year in June, following the United Nations Security Council debate on Namibia, in which we gave evidence that South Africa was building bases in Namibia to attack Angola and showed photographs of French planes used there, the resolution put to the Security Council called for a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa. But the western powers used the veto to say that South Africa's occupation of Namibia did not amount to a threat to peace. Some months later, South Africa admitted to having troops in Angola, but the London Times newspaper reported that South African troops were in Angola in June of last year, long before independence.

South Africa committed a double crime: it used Namibia (which it occupies illegally) to send arms and mercenaries against Angola. Then the western powers argued South Africa's right to

insisted that Cuban troops withdraw before South Africa withdrew. The reality is that Cuban troops and others were invited by the legitimate Government of Angola in response to South Africa's aggression. Yet even after the western governments recognized the People's Republic of Angola under Dr. Neto, they still demanded that Cuban troops should withdraw. The greatest danger is that, although in the western countries many progressive forces felt that Vorster's "détente" initiatives were creating better opportunities for there not to be this type of confrontation, over Angola we saw a very serious development: first, it was possible for the media in the western countries and their governments to use the antiracist sentiment which exists in those countries to create an anti-Angolan position. Second, they used the anticommunist sentiment which exists in the western countries and, together, racist feelings and anticommunist sentiments were combined in a position whereby the general public in the western countries — who did not have very much information — began to view the southern African conflict in such a way that, if the liberation movements freed one inch of territory, they felt that was a threat to western interests. This is exactly what the South Africans want and, of course, what the United States wants: namely, that the public in the western countries should give its approval for more open military support to South Africa, to give South Africa the role of regional power, which will bring about "peace in that area." And so we find this ridiculous situation in which the main Nazi regime in the world, South Africa, is viewed as mediator between Africa and Rhodesia to bring about peace. Ironically, in all the western newspapers last year, Vorster was hailed as a great man of peace who does not want violence in Africa. These developments are very dangerous, and unfortunately many progressive elements in western countries are not sufficiently vigilant about the dangers they entail.

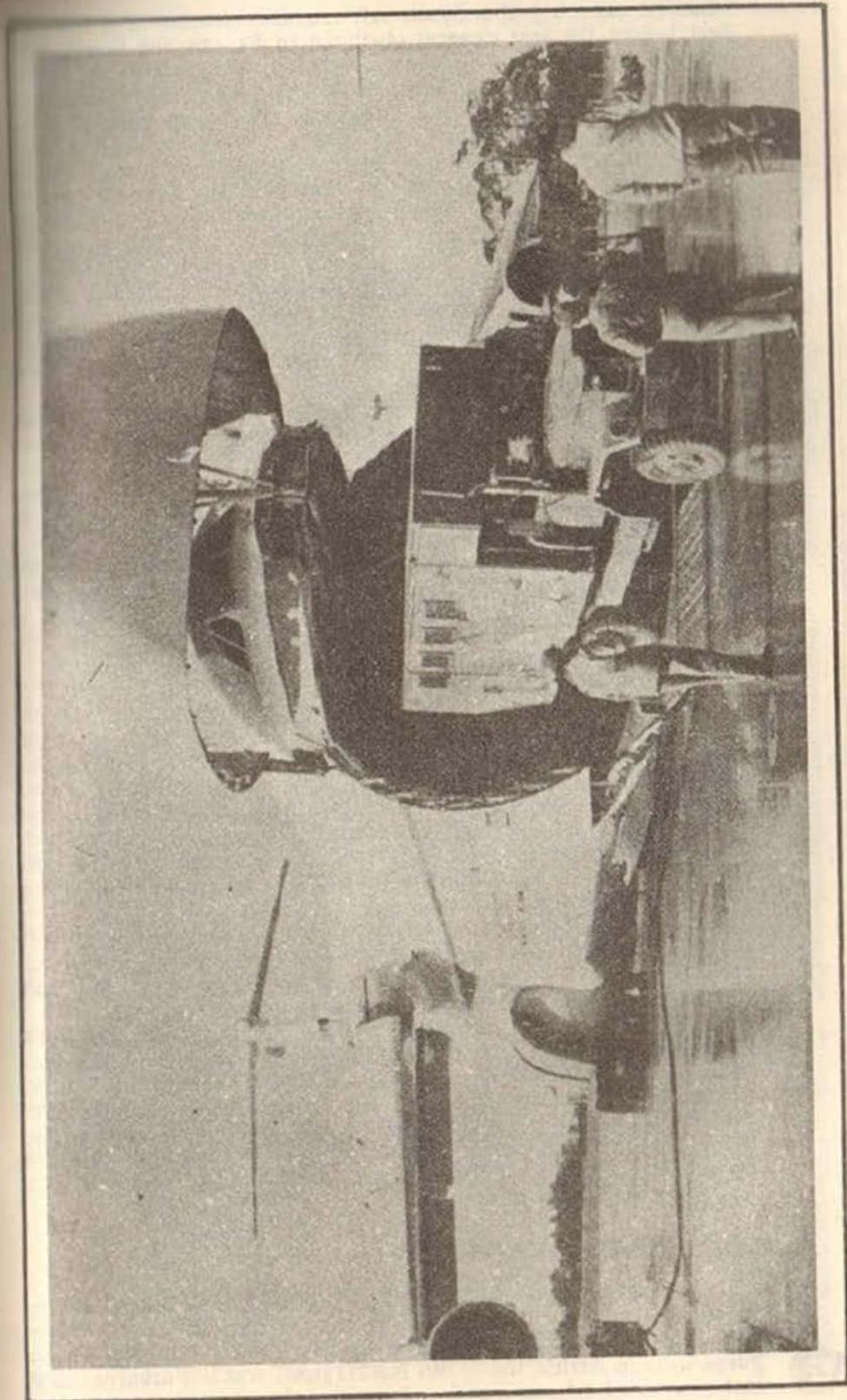
Our position is that the strategy to bring about a "settlement" in Zimbabwe and all the talk about South Africa's intention to withdraw from Namibia — which is not true — is aimed basically at giving South Africa time, to take away pressure from South Africa so it can consolidate itself. The collapse of Portuguese colonialism and the independence of Angola and Mozambique have created a new strategic position for South Africa, and it doesn't know what to do. Instead of increasing pressure on South Africa, western strategy and South African strategy is to buy time. And, unfortunately, the "détente" initiatives that some African states were involved in were a very unfortunate step, because the African people of Zimbabwe, of Namibia, and of South Africa were never more militant: the successes in Angola and Mozambique gave a lot of encouragement to the revolutionary movement on the continent. The situation is much clearer in Zimbabwe for instance because the last opportunity for peaceful change is gone there. No African in Zimbabwe, South Africa, or Namibia believes that you can bring about change by talking to the regime; rather, they know that they have to seize power. This is a crucial phase of the struggle.

In Britain they have been recruiting mercenaries for Zimbabwe and South Africa. We keep on exposing this. In the last two months alone, we have shown that a large number of British companies are supplying weapons to South Africa although the British Government is supposed to have an embargo. One exam-

ple: supplying radar equipment to be used in Namibia, very sophisticated equipment such as the Americans used in Viet Nam, designed to cover vast areas with a communications network, including air control. We only found out that Britain had this order for South Africa when a worker refused to work on this project. He said he would not collaborate with this. In the British situation, he's not very political, but he took a straight position against military support for South Africa. The company made him a victim. They put him in an office with no work. Eventually he had to leave the company, and today he does not have work. As a result of his action, however, we were able to mobilize the public — churches, students, trade unions, political parties — and now the British Government has been forced to place that particular system under government control. But that is only a half victory, because, although it will be under government control for export purposes, the Government can still give a license without publicizing. This is one of the difficulties: every time we get some information about arms being supplied to South Africa and we begin to mobilize the people, then the Government reacts with a half measure which gives the people the feeling they have succeeded, and then it carries on. Our greatest difficulty, though, is that the media are also hostile to us. We cannot get our views in any national newspapers except the Communist Party paper. We have to work constantly on the issue of South Africa. But we feel that, in the areas where we as a solidarity movement can be effective, we have been effective.

We have existed since 1959 in Britain. And in the 1960s and '70s we have made it impossible for any South African sports team to visit Britain. You must realize that Britain has the longest links with South Africa, that all the major companies have investments in South Africa, a lot of the political parties have links, that it is from Britain that South Africa gets a lot of white immigrants — every year 30 000 people from Britain go to South Africa to live there. So when you consider all these relationships, it is quite a successful thing for us to mobilize thousands of people in the streets who will demonstrate, go to the sports grounds, and stop the play. The South Africans could not play, the police had to be called, and so on. Now it is impossible for any South African sports team to visit Britain. We have always worked for the arms embargo against South Africa. And, although Britain supplies various arms in indirect ways, it is also true that in 1963-64 we succeeded in forcing the British Government to demand that the arms embargo be invoked. So at least Britain does not supply heavy aircraft and other equipment which can be identified too clearly. That, too, is a partial victory. We don't think that is enough, and we keep doing other things. But, from the point of view of the racists in South Africa, it becomes necessary for them to build up their own arms factories inside the country because they can't be sure they will get these arms.

Finally, I think in the international arena, the racists in South Africa know that Africa and Asia and Latin America in general are against racism and against apartheid, and they expect this opposition. What they are very alarmed at is that we have been able in Britain, in Germany as well, in the Scandinavian countries, in Australia, in New Zealand, and in Holland to mobilize large sections of the public against them and to force those governments to take a position that they don't want to take. This is



what is worrying the South African Government a great deal. Just before the last general elections in France, the South African Prime Minister said that the democratic process in France was of great concern to South Africa because it might bring into power the socialist alliance. That was not a very radical group, but that shows how isolated the South African regime is. While the primary role for bringing about liberation is played by the people and their movements, we feel that we have the second most important responsibility in the countries of major collaboration with South Africa, to ensure that we stop or hinder collaboration. We don't pretend that we can overturn the collaboration, because the interests against us are too powerful in Britain and the United States and Germany. But what we have been able to do has been very successful compared to the interests that exist there. And this role is recognized by the liberation movements as being very important.

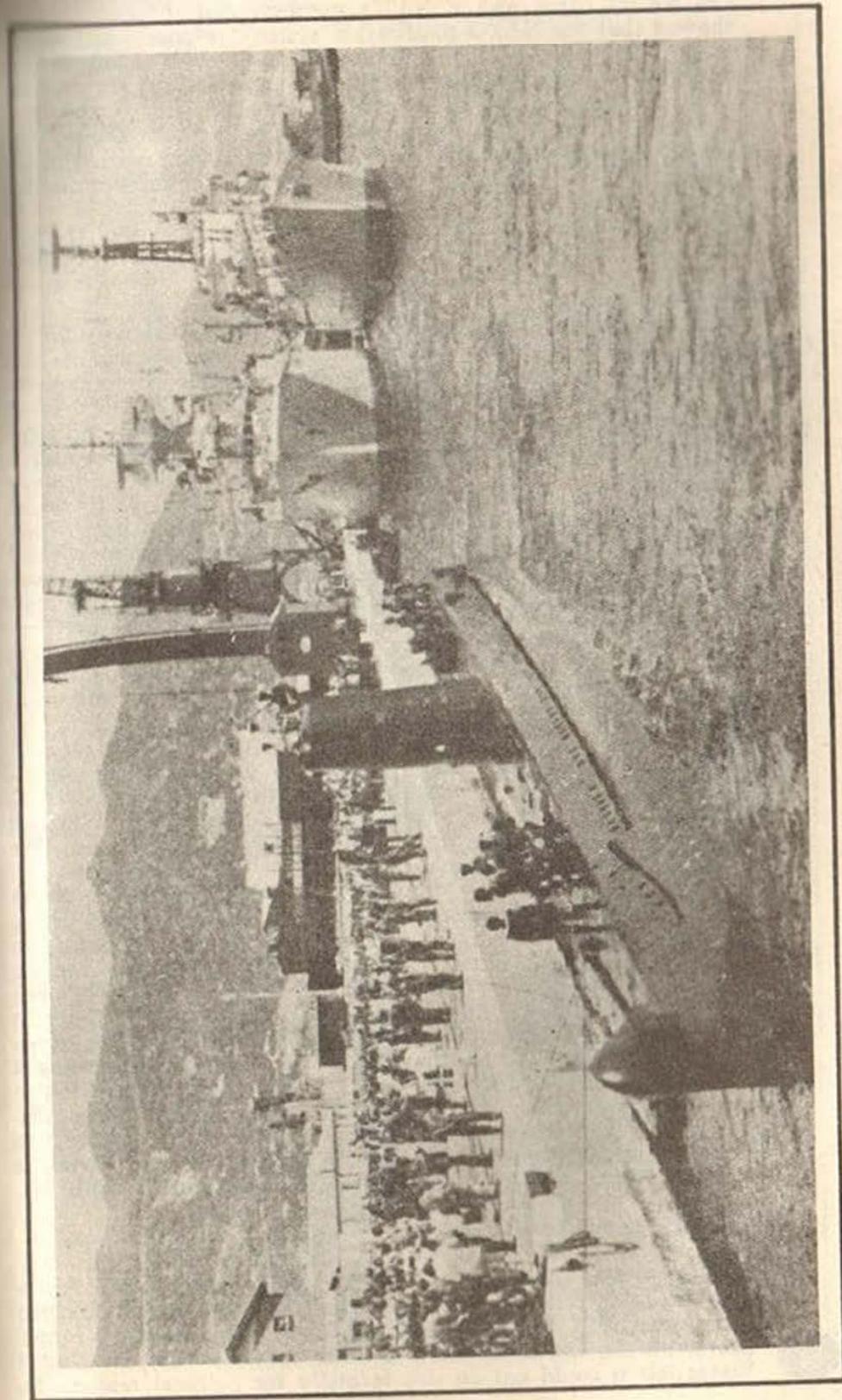
In Britain, the South Africans have a very big spy network, an intelligence network. They intimidate people and politicians who take a strong antiapartheid position. They resort to the filthiest techniques to discredit those British politicians who take a strong position against South Africa. Many of the refugees in exile in Britain have had their houses broken into, and no one has been arrested, even though the police know about it. We are really living in the hot center of South Africa's major supporters. And if we have been able to succeed in the hot center, so to say, in getting so much support for the liberation movements, then that is quite a victory.

One other point is that we have been working for about 12 years to try and make sure that the churches in the resident countries support the liberation struggle, and it was a great victory for us to get the World Council of Churches to take that decision a few years ago. There, of course, are the most powerful churches in the western countries. And, although the British churches and the German churches were against this position, the main body of the World Council of Churches took the position that they had to support the liberation movements. That was very important politically.

We publish a newspaper every month that is concerned with nothing else than southern Africa. We have interviews with liberation movement people, and we also give details of the main campaigns in the western countries against collaboration. In a current issue of this newspaper, for example, when the world was being told that Prime Minister Vorster only went to Israel to visit archeological sites and his visit had no military importance, we were able to expose the truth. In our countries we cannot just answer by saying it is not true, because they say they want hard evidence. In this case, we were able to get a photograph showing that the South African Prime Minister went on board an Israeli patrol boat.

#### **NATO: loyal ally of South Africa**

Last year in June at the United Nations, NATO was saying it had no links with South Africa; maybe some NATO countries had links — this has always been the claim, with the Portuguese wars in Africa, too — but NATO itself was not involved. But, last year in June, we produced documents which have on them



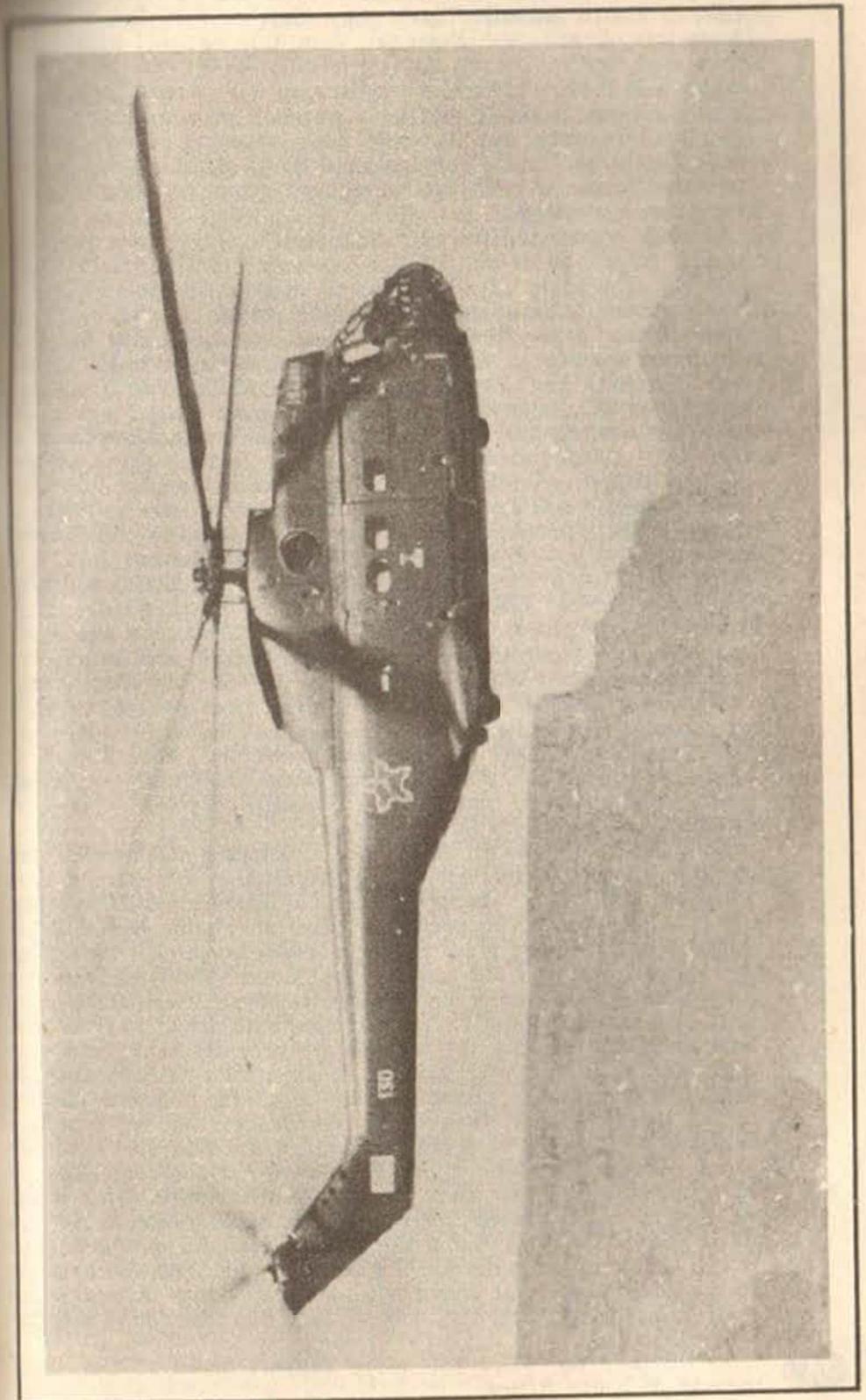
the NATO name and a NATO number, and these documents showed that the NATO codification system for spares and equipment was given to South Africa. Although many countries and liberation movements have always said that NATO was involved, it was impossible for us to confront the western governments until we produced this documentation. The fact that Canada and Denmark and Norway and the Netherlands made speeches in the recent NATO conference about it, despite pressures from the United States and from West Germany, shows the kind of public opinion that has developed in those countries, and also the fact that our evidence can be relied on. So more and more we have to make sure that we present evidence that is undeniable and completely clear.

In London, two weeks ago, one of our supporters went to the South African Embassy (under a different name), and he was able to see the military man, and there he saw seven volumes of the British codification system for weapons. We then asked questions in the British Parliament through members of Parliament as to what this was. The British Defense Minister said it was British manuals about British arms for South Africa not covered by the embargo. In other words, Britain says it has an embargo against South Africa on arms, but Britain gave South Africa seven books about arms which it says are not covered by the embargo! So the public begins to ask how it is that seven volumes of books about arms are not covered by the embargo. But we were also able to show that those volumes were not that: that they were sent from a Royal Air Force base in Britain to the South African codification center in Pretoria. This British base is only concerned with the NATO code; it is not concerned with selling weapons; the Ministry of Defense sales office is concerned with selling weapons. In South Africa it was addressed to the Director of Codification and not to the purchasing department of the Army. It was quite clear that these were NATO codes, so now we have a second stage of our campaign with that kind of information, to try to expose what Britain and other western countries are doing.

The United States is supplying Hercules aircraft to South Africa. There is proof that the Hercules aircraft supplied before to South Africa were used in Namibia and were used also to move troops from Namibia to Angola. These aircraft had no markings on them, no identification and were, of course, supplied by the United States. At the Nonaligned Conference in Colombo we will show not only the increased military assistance given to South Africa but also that the western alliance is placing a high priority on South Africa as a major power in the Indian Ocean. We will show that South Africa is an enemy of the African people and the Asian people. Of course, a lot of this kind of information is not available to the Indian Ocean countries, so we feel it our duty to make it available to them as well.

#### **South Africa and Latin America**

There is also the matter of the alliance between South Africa and Latin-American governments. The first stage of this occurred in the late 1960s. The South African Government wanted a formal pact with the United States and other countries, but the United States felt it could not do this formally for political reasons. So



what the South Africans calculated was that if they could develop a South Atlantic Treaty Organization with South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, and Portugal, then this regional alliance, as they said, for the South Atlantic, could jointly ask the United States and Britain to have a relationship with them. Then, in the United States it would not be a question of collaborating with apartheid regimes, but it would be a question of collaborating with Argentina, Brazil, Portugal, and South Africa jointly to protect the South Atlantic against alleged communist aggression, a very clever strategy.

In 1968, representatives of the Argentine Navy went to South Africa. Argentina is one of five countries in the world which still has a military attaché, a naval attaché, in its embassy in South Africa. There is an Argentine naval attaché in South Africa and a South African naval attaché in Argentina. But now the links are not so much with Argentina as with Brazil and with Uruguay and Paraguay, and with Chile. Now Chile has established a mission in South Africa. South Africa is also engaged in moving into various countries in South America. It is trying to use its financial power and its technology to achieve political support. South Africa is beginning to become industrialized. It cannot sell its products to the metropolitan countries in the northern hemisphere. So what it wishes to do — and it needs this desperately — is to penetrate South America and Asia. And in this scheme, France, Britain, and the United States are helping South Africa. These "associates" say to many African countries: "We will give you more aid for your development provided you end your confrontation with South Africa; and, if you end your confrontation with South Africa, you can buy South African products cheaper than importing them from Europe, which is very expensive because they have to travel a long way." It is a very clever technique used to try and break the African boycott against South Africa. And to some extent they have succeeded, because some African countries — although very few — are also establishing links with South Africa.

Both Brazil and South Africa are developing nuclear technology, for instance. South Africa has aircraft that can carry nuclear weapons. The South African Defense Minister himself says that South Africa has the capacity to build an atomic bomb. South Africa has developed a lot of nerve gases, some that Nazi Germany developed and did not use; and South Africa is preparing for a war against Africa and against its own African population. It is also strengthening its nuclear ties with Iran. The victories have been considerable, the regimes are very desperate, and what is dangerous is that they have so much military power on their side. If they receive encouragement from the western powers, as has been the case, then there is a danger that we will face in southern Africa a kind of Viet Nam of the West but far more serious. Because in Viet Nam there were not the same kind of economic interests as there are in South Africa. The whole western monetary system, for example, is based on South Africa's gold. South Africa is the third biggest uranium producer, and it has many other minerals. Elements in the West have begun to consider it of vital importance to keep South Africa under their own control. And they realize that the neocolonial solution is not possible.

So we may see more and more support given to the white regimes in South Africa.

#### The transnationals, their link with South Africa

There was once considerable rivalry between what one might generally call international capital and South African capital, which has very nationalistic features. In the first phase, where international capital was linked up with the Anglo American Corporation, the Afrikaners tried to develop their own capital in order to get more power. But this situation is now almost a unified thing. There is a fusion. What started as a "nationalist" thrust was eventually submerged in the international. They are not essentially alternatives; rather, they have special features. For example, the Anglo American Corporation, which traditionally we have thought of as international, is now beginning to act as an arm of South Africa in various ways. Internationally, it has offices now in the Caribbean. It is engaged in various investments in metropolitan countries. In Portugal, about 30% of all investment was South African, to give an idea of some of the features of South Africa's expansion.

In the strategic area of uranium enrichment, South Africa has the technology. It is now building the biggest uranium enrichment plant in the world. State capital is joining with private capital to do this, and various firms in the western countries which cannot produce the technology there are producing it in South Africa.

The transnationals are becoming dependent on South African capital in order to perfect certain technology, as, for example, in the whole area of missile technology, where South African capital has been instrumental in developing the French Crotale missile, using German technology.

It is clear that, in addition to the financial and economic factors operating here, there are also very important political and strategic considerations.

South African capital is moving into the Middle East countries, into manufacturing sectors in Bahrain, in Saudi Arabia, where it is in a rather early stage. There are a number of areas in which it is acting almost independently and some areas even competitively. This autonomous generation is what needs to be looked at, and I think it will come to the point of competition with the metropolitan countries. South Africa, for example, wants to become the country that will sell motor cars to Africa and to the southern hemisphere. At the present moment, the major western companies are preparing to expand in South Africa, rather than in Europe. Workers in Britain are unemployed, while British companies are putting money into South Africa. One example: the British Leyland Corporation. It was in crisis last year. It asked the British Government for a 15-million-pound loan, and, as a result, the British Government half nationalized it. But the same week British Leyland put 25 million pounds into South Africa, and it reduced its plant in Australia, so the South African production is going to serve the Australian market; and there are parts coming from the South African company which go to Britain, exported to make the engines and the exhaust pipes of the cars manufactured in Britain. For every ten Ford Escort cars that are produced in Britain, one of them has an engine made in South Africa.

Because of the cheap labor and resources in South Africa, it is giving technology and manufactured goods to the metropolitan countries themselves. This is a new feature which the Pretoria regime is developing from an economic point of view.