The political outlook at the present time is filled with many uncertainties and much that is unpredictable. This applies wherever one looks in Southern Africa, whether it be to Zambia or South Africa, Mozambique or Namibia, Angola or Rhodesia, and even to the small BLS states or the newly independent homelands. Uncertain factors within many of these countries and in relations between some of them make the future of the whole region very unpredictable and give the region an appearance of considerable instability. This unstable condition is, of course, not unique to Southern Africa in today's unsettled world, but it is a cause of growing concern as it threatens to disrupt or even destroy much that has been achieved in the region and to prevent the further development of the region's tremendous potential in human and natural resources. The need to stabilize the region, so as to reduce the level of conflict and promote economic and social progress, is widely recognized, but the means of doing this are not proving easy to find.

In these circumstances it is difficult to discuss the outlook in anything but rather speculative terms. It is my intention, however, to attempt to identify general trends and indicate their implications, before dealing more specifically with Rhodesia and South West Africa/Namibia. In this way hopefully the political environment, in which decisions of an economic nature must be taken, will become at least a little clearer.

In the first place, it is worth looking at the background to the unstable condition of this region and at some general factors contributing to this condition. The context in which the problems of South and Southern Africa must be seen is that of a rapidly changing world, especially since the end of the World War II. The problems of this region are directly related to changes in the international system and fundamental shifts in world attitudes and policies. Of special relevance has been the dramatic change in Africa over the past three decades. But Africa must be seen in the wider context of a major world movement following the break-up of the colonial system, including the emergence of the Third World concept, with its growing influence on the attitudes and policies of the major industrial countries of the First and Second Worlds. This influence has become more obvious since the 1973/74 oil crisis, politically motivated, and the subsequent effects on the world economy of oil price increases.
These developments have resulted in a gradual - but by now quite clear - shift in the approach of the Western industrialized countries towards the questions of Southern Africa. In their growing concern about relations with the countries of the Third World and about the potential North/South conflict, i.e. between the "haves" and "have-nots" of the world, Southern Africa becomes a highly embarrassing issue. There is in microcosm within Southern Africa the same division found in the world at large between the "haves" and "have-nots", and the West has been identified with the Whites here, while the Blacks are seen as part of the Third World. In their own interests the Western countries do not wish to perpetuate this identification, but at the same time they cannot escape from involvement, because of their interests here. This poses a real dilemma for them.

Professor Hedley Bull of Oxford, a leading world scholar in the field of international relations, said recently that the view was growing that the West's traditional economic and strategic interests were not any longer being served by association with South Africa, as it is now, and that the political and ideological interests of the West in promoting change in South Africa were more important than its traditional economic and strategic interests. Even if some economic loss or some strategic risk were involved in dissociating themselves from South Africa, he felt that this was the course the Western countries would take. He continued:

"The reason why this kind of view is becoming important in the West is to do with a major historical change that is taking place in the international political system, and has been taking place for a long time. This is that the Western powers, who at the beginning of this century dominated the international system, are increasingly feeling themselves to be in the minority. The majority of states in the world are African and Asian, and the majority of the people in the world represented by these states are African and Asian. The Western powers are less dominant than they have been historically and if they look forward into the future they recognise that they are going to be less dominant still. They perceive a need founded not on ideological sympathy for the aspirations of non-Western peoples - although this affects them too - but on their own interests in preserving an international order in which all the major elements in world society feel they have a stake - to adjust themselves to this new situation."

Intimately connected with the changes of the post-colonial era is the racial factor. South Africa, with its dependent territory of South West Africa, and Rhodesia would have been seriously affected by the world movement against colonialism in any case, but the problem of adjusting to this changed world has been critically aggravated by the racial factor. This factor has, of course, also applied elsewhere, e.g. especially in the United States, but it has been much more difficult to adjust here than in other countries, for various reasons - not least the simple fact of numbers. In trying to promote change here, by persuasion and pressure, Western countries are perhaps reluctant to admit that solutions to this question in South Africa may have to be very different from solutions attempted in their own countries. Nevertheless, the fact is that policies based on racial distinctions, whatever the rationalisation for them, can no longer realistically be sustained,
internationally or domestically, in the changed world. Moreover, it is no longer possible to keep domestic politics as a national preserve, isolated from international trends. Domestic and international politics, especially in our case, are thoroughly interwoven.

In considering this political environment in which South Africa finds itself, especially as it affects relations with the Western world, it is important to be realistic and to appreciate that the world has changed, and is still changing radically, and that we are not faced with a static international system, but rather a system in the process of continual movement. Protests, however justified, will not stop this movement, and certainly we cannot turn the clock back to an age that is past. For instance, there is a tendency to see our problem in the context of a struggle between the "free world" and the communist powers seeking world domination. That was the pattern of the Cold War, but the pattern has now become vastly more complicated. The competition between the superpowers continues, but other factors have been introduced, such as the influence of the Third World and the growth of other centres of power in the West and East. To see our situation simply in terms of an onslaught by world communism on the "free world" is grossly to mislead ourselves and to limit our ability to assess our position realistically and rationally, and thus to take decisions in our own long-term interests.

Turning specifically to Southern Africa, the effects of world changes first became acute with the collapse of Portuguese rule over their African territories in 1974. Without going into detail on the implications of this dramatic change, it is clear that it served to destabilize the whole region of Southern Africa. The Portuguese collapse did not create the problems in the region, but it exposed them more clearly and it made it impossible for them to be contained, as they had been, more or less, while the rest of Africa had been undergoing revolutionary changes during the previous two decades.

The destabilization of Southern Africa by the sudden Portuguese collapse also had the effect of bringing the unresolved issues onto the centre of the world stage. Previously the Western powers (and probably even the communist powers) were generally willing to accept the status quo in this region, in spite of what they said in the UN and elsewhere. The West saw the white-controlled régimes as being able to maintain stability for the foreseeable future, which suited them, and there was no need to pay particular attention to Southern Africa. The revolutionary changes in Mozambique and Angola, however, showed them that the status quo could not be maintained, and the escalating conflict (highlighted by the war in Angola) could no longer be ignored. As already indicated, Southern Africa had now become a focal point of a global problem, namely the North/south division. (This perception of the Southern African conflict was strengthened by the shock of the oil crisis which followed the October 1973 Middle East war, and which demonstrated the serious effects of a Third World revolt against Western policy.)
Southern Africa also became, after 1974, a focal point of East/West competition, and for the first time both superpowers became directly involved in the issues of the region - the Soviet Union in a military sense (with its supply of weapons and training to liberation forces) and the West diplomatically. This increasing outside involvement has vastly complicated the issues which can no longer simply be settled within the region or within individual countries. All the issues, including South Africa's domestic problems, have now clearly become internationalized. The danger of escalating and widening conflict in the region is a very real one, unless some progress can be made in resolving the issues through negotiation. Unfortunately, in this complicated situation, with so many conflicting political, ideological, strategic and even personal interests involved, the road of negotiations is an extremely difficult one and has so far not led to any permanent results. Faced with the frustrations of the negotiating process, and the risks involved in making the compromises required in negotiations, the temptation to stay on the military road is a real one. The danger in Southern Africa is that force is still seen by too many people as a viable means either of preserving the existing order or of overthrowing it.

**The Question of Confidence**

In these circumstances confidence in the stable future of Southern Africa is bound to be detrimentally affected, both internally and externally. There is no doubt that this lack of confidence has economic implications, which in turn further erode the confidence. Thus a sort of vicious circle develops, which clearly demonstrates the interrelationship of political and economic factors. It has now become commonplace for South African businessmen to refer to the uncertain political factor, when speaking about the economic outlook, because political uncertainty has affected investment in the country in the past few years, and there is no doubt that any repetition of events, such as Soweto 1976 or the October 19th bannings and detentions, would have a profoundly negative impact on international attitudes. The economic effects will be felt, even if there are no formal U.N. sanctions, but these may also come (following the precedent of the arms embargo after October 19th last year).

Rationally, therefore, everything possible should be done to restore economic and political confidence in the future of South and Southern Africa, based on the tremendous potential of human and natural resources. But unfortunately not all decisions are taken on a rational basis, and emotion, ideology and short-term advantage play their part. Moreover, the circumstances create particular difficulties even for those who seek a rational and non-violent resolution to the disputes and conflicts of the region. The pessimists see these circumstances as hopeless, but, if one looks at the particular issues objectively, one can still conclude that there are positive trends as well as negative.
Even without the issues of South West Africa/Namibia and Rhodesia, the outlook for South Africa would present many problems and uncertainties - domestic and international, but these two peripheral issues are of immediate concern, and the course they take over the coming year could critically affect South Africa's own future. South Africa is unavoidably involved in both of them. If negotiated settlements can be achieved, in spite of all the difficulties so far encountered, this would reduce substantially the level of conflict in the region and give South Africa itself a breathing space - even though our problems would not thereby be removed. On the other hand, as the war in Rhodesia escalates, it is difficult to contain it within the boundaries of Rhodesia, and all Southern Africa will be affected by a widening war. In South West Africa/Namibia, the South African Government is the administering power and is therefore directly involved in, and responsible for, what happens. More than any other issue, the Namibian dispute now provides the threat of international measures, such as sanctions, against South Africa in the short term.

**Rhodesia**

The internal agreement signed on 3 March of this year was a considerable achievement, and theoretically it met the basic requirements set by the British Government previously for an acceptable constitutional settlement, as well as the nationalist demands for majority rule. But by this time the situation had become much more complicated, with several nationalist movements competing for power, and the agreement left out important elements which could not in fact be ignored, namely the two nationalist movements led respectively by Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe and linked in the Patriotic Front, as well as the front-line African states which were supporting them. These externally based movements could not be ignored, because of their considerable international support, their growing armies, and also their internal support. While the degree of internal support for Robert Mugabe among the majority Shona-speaking peoples was unknown, there was no doubt about the support which Joshua Nkomo had among the Matabele. Although in a minority overall, the Matabele constitute an important minority, and the internal agreement did not include an Ndebele leader of stature and influence - the two internal Black nationalist leaders (Bishop Muzorewa and Mr. Sithole) both being Shona-speaking. So this was a serious gap in the agreement.

In these circumstances the chances of the internal agreement being successfully implemented (i.e. with independence at the end of 1978 being internationally recognised and with sanctions lifted) depended on several provisos being met:

1. There had to be a fast and dramatic removal of racial discrimination, in order to give the internal Black leaders credibility, and to catch the imagination of the people and gain their support.

2. There had to be a discernable de-escalation of the war, and a substantial response to the call of Bishop Muzorewa and Mr. Sithole to guerillas to return and support the internal settlement.
3. Some international support from Africa and the West had to be forthcoming, with at least a realistic hope that sanctions would be lifted or relaxed.

4. There had to be some weakening of the Patriotic Front alliance and an indication of interest in the internal agreement on the part of Joshua Nkomo at least, so that Matabele support could be obtained.

As the months passed, there was unfortunately little concrete development on any of these issues. In regard to 1. above, the undertaking to remove the remnants of discrimination took much longer to implement than expected, and, while some progress has certainly been made, certain areas have not yet been effectively dealt with, such as residential segregation, education and health facilities, largely because of concern about the possible reaction of Whites. This has had a negative effect on the standing of the internal Black leaders among their own people.

On the second point, although Bishop Muzorewa and Mr. Sithole have had meetings with guerilla leaders and some have apparently agreed to co-operate, there has not been a de-escalation of the war, the number being killed has increased, and the Government has admitted that large areas cannot be effectively controlled by the over-stretched security forces. Moreover, by constantly attacking "soft" targets, the terrorist forces are driving people, Black and White, out of the rural areas and causing a growing disruption of administrative and other services.

Thirdly, the expected support from moderate African states was not forthcoming, and the July summit meeting of the O.A.U. passed without any significant sign of support for the internal settlement. The British and American Governments continued to press for an all-party conference and refused to give support to the internal agreement. There were indications of growing support for the agreement within the United States and Britain, including in the U.S. Congress. But the Congressional decision that sanctions should be lifted by the end of the year was only supported by a majority after a compromise which provided that the President would have to be satisfied that the envisaged elections were free and fair and that the internal leaders were willing to attend all-party talks. Present indications are that these conditions will not be met to the satisfaction of the American Administration. The British Conservative Party has expressed some support, but it has been strictly qualified.

Mr. Smith has blamed the lack of progress with the internal agreement on the refusal of the Western Governments to give it any support, and it is obvious that, if support from the West had been forthcoming, with a relaxation of sanctions, the agreement would have stood a much better chance of working. But it was never realistic to expect the Western countries to take sides against the African front-line states, in view of their wider international interests, and furthermore such a course would still have left the externally based movements pursuing the war, with probably increased support from the Communist powers. It is, therefore, an open question whether Anglo/American support for the internal agreement would have led to an
ending of the war, unless perhaps they were prepared to intervene militarily, which was out of the question. There is even less likelihood of Western support for the internal agreement now than there may have been soon after the agreement was signed.

On the fourth point above, the Patriotic Front has continued to be a fragile alliance between Mr. Nkomo's ZAPU and Mr. Mugabe's ZANU, with their respective armies, and the pressure of the front-line states has been required to maintain the alliance - although even they have had to accept that any real co-ordination between the two wings is not practicable. But nevertheless the Patriotic Front has not split, the war continues, with increasing external military support by way of weapons and training, and with sufficient internal support to provide recruits; plus food and shelter where the terrorists operate. Most important, neither of the external leaders has been induced to join the internal agreement or even negotiate seriously with the internal leaders.

Efforts were made to involve Mr. Nkomo in negotiations by Mr. Smith, when he realised that the internal settlement was not working as he had hoped it would - particularly in regard to the de-escalation of the war - and he met Mr. Nkomo in Lusaka in mid-August. That meeting was followed by discussions among the front-line states, with the participation of Nigeria, and there were indications that a deal was shaping up, which might have led to the return to Salisbury of Mr. Nkomo and possibly even Mr. Mugabe, to participate in a broader-based transitional government. This promising development, which would have been supported by the British and Americans, was however tragically aborted by the shooting down of the Air Rhodesia Viscount and the killing of survivors about a month ago. While Mr. Smith has not completely ruled out the possibility of further contact in the future with Patriotic Front leaders, the reaction within Rhodesia to the Kariba incident has made such direct contact unlikely, in the near future at least.

The Transitional Government has therefore now returned to a policy of trying to influence the Western countries to adopt a more sympathetic approach to the internal settlement, and it is proceeding with plans for the holding of an election to precede independence, on the basis of the new constitution which has now been drafted. But there were delays in drafting the constitution and in preparing for the elections, and it is now unlikely that they will be held in time for the independence target date of 31 December, 1978, to be met. Given the deteriorating security situation, there is also considerable concern as to whether it will be possible to hold free and fair elections throughout the country, which will stand a chance of being recognised as such.

If the plan is nevertheless implemented, as laid down in the agreement of 3 March, and independence is declared some time early next year by the government which assumes power after the intended elections, then one must assume at this stage that the outside world will simply regard this as a second U.D.I. In these
circumstances, without international recognition or even support from the West, sanctions will not be lifted, the war will escalate, the economy will continue to deteriorate and administrative structures will be increasingly difficult to maintain. This would be the route to eventual chaos and to a situation which would invite intervention by outside parties, which would mean a widening of the war. It is a situation such as this which Mr. Vorster must have had in mind when he spoke a few years ago of the "consequences too ghastly to contemplate", and it is this type of situation which Western policy is aimed at preventing - so far without success.

The alternative course is one of negotiations between the Transitional Government, or at least part of it, and the externally based nationalist leaders. This course is very distasteful at the present time to the internal leaders, and the Patriotic Front leaders are showing no signs publicly of wanting to negotiate a compromise agreement, instead of continuing along the road of violence. But there are indications that the front-line states, especially Zambia, Angola and Botswana (and probably Mozambique as well), are anxious to find ways of ending the conflict which, if it escalates and widens, will seriously affect their own security, and which has already had a profoundly negative effect on their economies. Their growing interest in a resolution of the conflict, plus the recognition by Mr. Smith, and also Chief Chirau, that the internal agreement has not produced the results hoped for, may provide the framework within which the British and Americans will be able to achieve renewed negotiations and an eventual wider settlement. In other words, in spite of the apparent hopelessness of the present trends, there may now be a wider realisation among several of the parties involved in this conflict, that a military solution is not possible and that no-one will gain from a continuation of the violent confrontation. But the road towards a negotiated settlement will by no means be an easy one, because all the nationalist leaders still appear reluctant to take this road. The two internal leaders justifiably fear that the Patriotic Front leaders would have an overwhelming advantage in negotiations, because of their wide international support. Bishop Muzorewa has, for instance, said that an all-party conference would simply be designed as a coronation ceremony for Joshua Nkomo. On the other hand, the Patriotic Front leaders no doubt would rather inherit power without having to face the risk of elections in which they would not only be competing with Bishop Muzorewa and Mr. Sithole, but also with each other. In these circumstances, a degree of pressure will be required on all sides, and in particular a greater degree of determination and decisiveness on the part of the West than has been the case in the recent past. A willingness of other major Western powers, in addition to Britain and the U.S., to become involved in the negotiations could perhaps be of assistance.

An additional complicating factor, which must at least be mentioned, is the destructive role of the Communist powers. There is little doubt that it will not
be in the interests of the Soviet Union to see a negotiated settlement achieved under the influence of the West. It can therefore be expected that the Soviet Union will try to prevent this from happening. But, if the African states cooperate with a determined Western initiative, then the Soviet ability to disrupt negotiations will at least be seriously weakened. In this regard, the negotiations leading to the Western proposals for South West Africa/Namibia are an interesting example.

South West Africa/Namibia

While this issue is much less complicated than the Rhodesian one, and while there has not yet been the same escalation of conflict, it is at the moment the most critical one for South Africa. Apart from the uncertain future of this Territory itself, South Africa's relations with the West and also with Africa in the short term future hinge on developments in South West Africa/Namibia.

The history of the dispute with the United Nations over the future of the Territory has been a long one - over thirty years - but in the past two or three years there has been considerable progress towards a settlement of the dispute. The South African Government has never denied the international character of this Territory and has always aimed to achieve a solution which would have international acceptance, including by the U.N., as well as being viable internally, i.e. acceptable to the people themselves. But, of course, South Africa's own political economic and strategic interests are involved, and therefore these interests, as the Government perceives them, also play a determining role.

Over the past eighteen months there have been intensive negotiations conducted by the contact group of the five Western members of the Security Council. These negotiations were based on a 1976 Security Council resolution, and they were designed to produce a settlement plan for an internationally recognised independent Namibia, which the Security Council would endorse and implement. The negotiations were undertaken in the first place with the South African Government as the de facto administering authority (although there is no international recognition of South Africa's rights in the territory de jure), but there had to be negotiations also with the other parties involved, particularly SWAPO and the African front-line states, in order to ensure acceptance of the plan by the Security Council and to prevent a veto by the Soviet Union. As in the case of Rhodesia, it can be assumed that a Western-sponsored settlement for Namibia, even with SWAPO's participation, does not suit the Russians whose opportunities to cause further disruption in the region would be reduced by a resolution of the conflict. In these circumstances it was not so much SWAPO which had to be convinced to accept the settlement proposals, but rather the African states whose support is needed for Security Council approval and which in any case have the power to force SWAPO to co-operate. It is thus important to appreciate that the group of five could not, and cannot, simply reach a deal with South Africa; the deal has to be one which is acceptable on a realistic basis to both the South
African Government and the African states. Obviously, a deal which is unacceptable to a majority of the people within the Territory will not work in the long run anyway, but the crucial international dimensions of this dispute cannot be avoided.

In view of the extreme difficulties in the process of negotiating a plan acceptable to the various conflicting parties, the Western proposal accepted by South Africa in April of this year, and given preliminary endorsement by the Security Council in July, was a considerable achievement. A great deal of credit must go to the determination of the Western contact group, but their success was due in large measure to a willingness of the parties to make compromises. In this regard any objective assessment must show that the South African Government moved a long way from its previous policies, in order to reach agreement. The major issues of principle were thus resolved. For instance, South Africa agreed to accept the principle of a unitary state (instead of the policy of separate development); universal adult suffrage in elections on a country-wide basis was accepted; a supervising role for the United Nations in the process to independence, including the elections, was agreed to; the requirement of ending all racial discrimination was recognised; and it was agreed that political detainees should be released and all Namibians outside the Territory be allowed to return to participate in the independence process, including SWAPO. Given the progress on these major issues of principle, which for so long held up an international settlement of this dispute, it is tragic that progress should now have been halted by what appear to be simply questions of detail.

While it is not possible now to analyse fully the Western proposal for the transition to independence, or the Secretary-General's plans for the implementation of this proposal, which were adopted by the Security Council on 29 September (with the support of all groups in the Council except the Communist states which abstained). But it is necessary to examine briefly the points which are now at issue and which have caused the South African Government to decide to go it alone with elections in the Territory. These issues are the size of the U.N. military contingent; the question of a U.N. civil police component; and the date of the elections.

The Western proposal, as submitted to the Security Council, was concerned primarily with creating conditions for free and fair elections, and it referred to a United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) which would work under the U.N. Special Representative in the Territory and which would have both a civilian and military section. No size for UNTAG as a whole, or for either section, was proposed. With regard to the military section, the proposal simply said that this would be included "to make sure that the provisions of the agreed solution will be observed by all parties". The establishment of the military section was left to the U.N. Secretary-General, and the proposal stated that the five Western Governments "will support the Secretary-General's judgement in his discharge of this responsibility", although the proposal also made clear that the Secretary-General
would "include in his consultations all those concerned with the implementation of the agreement". In his Report on the implementation of the Western proposals, the Secretary-General proposes, on the basis of his Special Representative's assessment of what would be required (after his visit to the Territory), that the military component should have a strength of approximately 5,000, plus 200 monitors (i.e., to monitor the cease-fire) and, in addition, communications, logistic and other support elements of approximately 2,300, i.e., a total military component of approximately 7,500. This proposed size has been supported by the Western Powers and approved by the Security Council, although the Secretary-General has indicated that this is simply the maximum figure which may be needed.

In objecting to the size of the U.N. military component, the South African Government has claimed that in its discussions with the Western contact group no figure higher than 3,000 was mentioned, and that South Africa indicated that it could not accept a figure exceeding 2,000. The Western Powers have not admitted the validity of this claim. The South African Government has also objected to the lack of consultation with the Administrator-General in South West Africa by the U.N. Special Representative, and there has been no clear answer to this objection. According to Mr. Vorster's statement of 20 September, the Government's objection to the size of the U.N. military force is based on "the political and psychological effect of such a large number of U.N. personnel on the people of South West Africa". The statement continued: "The impartiality of the U.N. is rendered suspect by the continued and sustained assistance to SWAPO, to the exclusion of all other political parties in South West Africa." (A related matter of concern is the composition of the U.N. force. The Western proposal left this aspect to the Secretary-General, and he states in his Report that the contingents to make up the military component will be selected in consultation with the Security Council and with the parties concerned, bearing in mind the accepted principle of equitable geographical representation. So, even if the size of the force were accepted by South Africa, the composition would still have to be agreed to.)

The second matter at issue is the proposed U.N. civil police component which the South African Government maintains was not provided for at all in the Western proposal. In fact, the Western proposal simply says that the U.N. Special Representative "shall make arrangements when appropriate for U.N. personnel to accompany the police forces in the discharge of their duties", after stating clearly that the existing police forces will have "primary responsibility for maintaining law and order in Namibia during the transition period". The Secretary-General's Report, however, makes specific reference to a civil police element in UNTAG and, as a preliminary estimate, states that approximately 360 experienced police officers will be required to accompany the existing police forces, and to take measures "against any intimidation and interference with the electoral process from whatever quarter". In an attempt apparently to meet the South African objections on
this score, the Secretary-General has acknowledged in the Security Council that
the inclusion of this civil police element is not intended to detract from the
responsibility of the existing police forces to maintain law and order.

The third and most important disagreement concerns the election date. The
problem here arises from the fact that there was a delay of three months after
South Africa's acceptance of the Western proposal on 25 April, 1978, before the
Security Council gave its initial endorsement to this proposal. The delay was due
to difficulties encountered by the Western contact group in obtaining the agreement
of SWAPO and the African states. The Western proposal contained a detailed and
carefully worked out stage-by-stage time-table, leading up to the elections for a
Constituent Assembly, followed by independence to be achieved "by 31 December 1978
at the latest". The time-table provided for a period of at least seven months for
the transition, i.e. from approval by the Security Council to the independence date.
Included in the time-table is a period of "about four months duration" for the
election campaign. It is clear, therefore, that the achievement of the 31
December target date for independence, in accordance with the time-table laid down,
required that the implementation of the plan should have started in May of this
year at the latest. Once there was a delay, either the target date or the
time-table had to be changed, and this created a basic conflict. The South
African Government, maintaining that the delay was not its fault, has demanded
that the time-table should be shortened to allow for early elections, although
it has not objected to a postponement of the actual independence date. The
Security Council has, however, with the agreement of the Western Powers, decided
that the time-table should be maintained, which means that there would be a period
of approximately seven months before the holding of elections.

In deciding to proceed on its own with elections, the South African Government
has argued that the continued delays are causing uncertainty and confusion in the
Territory, whose people have now been promised for some time that they can exercise
their right to self-determination and achieve independence. It argues further that
the delays have been caused by SWAPO's intransigence and its unwillingness to face
free elections in the Territory, while it has shown no signs of halting its acts of
violence. The U.N. and Western Powers, on the other hand, argue that it is not
possible to create the conditions for free and fair elections, with adequate time for
all parties to prepare their campaigns, in less than the time provided for in the
Western proposal. South Africa has now been given until 23 October to change its
mind and agree to co-operate with the Security Council's plan for independence,
and it appears that the Western States will make a determined effort to negotiate
a compromise arrangement which will allow the U.N. plan to be implemented. The
five Foreign Ministers are preparing to undertake these negotiations personally,
thereby demonstrating their governments' commitment to finding a solution.
The implications of the present deadlock are very serious, because it puts South Africa in a position of potential confrontation, not only with the United Nations, but with the Western Powers. The Government has made it clear that doors are still open to further negotiations, and that the Constituent Assembly elected at the beginning of December will have the right to consider various options, including the implementation of the U.N. plan. But the offer of negotiations after the elections will not satisfy the Security Council, while it is highly unlikely as things now stand, that the plans for this early election will be changed by the Administrator-General and/or the South African Government.

The question is, therefore: What will the West do in order to salvage the settlement proposal to which they have devoted so much effort and prestige and which was an essential element in a wider plan to stabilise Southern Africa and reduce the level of Soviet influence? Their negotiating options are limited, because their proposal, as interpreted by the Secretary-General, has now been adopted by the Security Council. They can only negotiate for compromises within the framework of the U.N. plan. Furthermore, their interests, as they see them, in maintaining amicable relations with the African states and with the Third World in general, do not leave them much room for manoeuvre in making concessions to the South African Government, which might antagonise the African States. On the other hand, their means of leverage vis-à-vis the South African Government are also limited. Clearly, the Western Powers have so far been reluctant to use threats against South Africa, although hints are now being given that threats will be included in the attempt to persuade the South African Government to reverse its present course. In an interview on 1 October the British Foreign Secretary, Dr. David Owen, stated that Britain would be willing to veto a sanctions proposal in the Security Council after 23 October, if progress was being made in renewed negotiations with South Africa. The clear implication was that, if no progress could be reported, then it would be difficult to use the veto, and he in fact indicated that the Western Powers might eventually have no choice but to support sanctions. Although Dr. Owen refused to be drawn on what sanctions might be feasible, and although Ambassador Andrew Young has expressed the view that a way has not yet been found to apply sanctions effectively anywhere, the veiled threat is there, and it must be taken seriously. In fact, official South African statements indicate that the Government itself does take these threats seriously.

The threats will, however, no doubt be mixed with incentives for South Africa to co-operate. For instance, Dr. Owen has suggested that South African co-operation could lead to some reduction of pressure on the wider issue of South Africa's internal race policies. But at present these are all rather vague indications of what may happen over the next few weeks and months.

If the plans to hold the elections without U.N. supervision are maintained in the face of external pressure, including the possible application of U.N.
sanctions, then a great deal will depend on the level of participation in those elections. South Africa's position will be strengthened or weakened accordingly. At this stage a political and diplomatic advantage has been gained by SWAPO, because the South African Government can be portrayed as the party unwilling to accept U.N. supervision of the elections for fear of a SWAPO victory - although in fact SWAPO itself was previously showing signs of extreme reluctance to give up its armed struggle and become involved in an open democratic process. If the percentage poll in the elections is high, and a DTA majority is returned, SWAPO's propaganda position will be weakened, even if it claims the elections were not fair. On the other hand, if the percentage poll is low, due to a boycott of the elections by the majority of the people, then the South African position will be further weakened and the elected Assembly will have little credibility. Only two parties have at this stage stated their willingness to participate in the elections, namely the DTA and AKTUR, while SWAPO, SWAPO-D and the NNF have said they will not participate. Without a wide and meaningful choice before the electorate, therefore, the prospects for a high level of participation are not very great at this time, and the danger is that when negotiations are later resumed - as they will surely have to be to avoid an escalation of conflict - South Africa may have to negotiate from a weaker position.

Given the fact that the Western Five are now committed to the Security Council plan and South Africa to the early elections in December, the room for compromise in the forthcoming negotiations is not great. But, with sufficient motivation on both sides, there may be some way of breaking the deadlock, or at least of delaying a final breakdown of the negotiating process when the Security Council next meets. The knowledge that the stakes are high for both South Africa and the West may provide the required motivation.

Concluding Comment

It is too early to say what direction the new Prime Minister will give to the Government's policies in the domestic and foreign affairs fields. This is one of the unpredictable factors in the situation at the present moment. On the domestic front Mr. Botha has given an indication at least of willingness to engage in discussions with leaders of other groups on the new constitutional proposals. If a meaningful dialogue can be initiated, which includes also urban and homeland black leaders, as well as the Coloureds and Asians, then this will be a very hopeful sign for many people, inside and outside South Africa.

The need for renewed dialogue externally, especially with our neighbour states of Southern Africa, is also great. The possibility of this happening does not depend only on our Government, of course. But the indications of concern on the
part of Zambia, Angola and Botswana, about the dangers for them of escalating conflict in the region, may provide the opportunities again (as occurred after the Portuguese collapse in 1974) of a realistic approach to our common problems.