

Southern African Development Coordinating Conference (SADCC) — grouping all nine black Southern African states in a joint strategy to reduce economic dependence on South Africa.<sup>10</sup>

By 1980 South Africa clearly felt its domestic and regional interests threatened. Of the *cordon sanitaire* of white-ruled states on which its regional policies and sense of security had been built, now only Namibia remained. There too Pretoria's control was stretched. Inside South Africa many blacks perceived Zimbabwean independence as another military victory over white rule. The banned African National Congress capitalized on this in June 1980 when it began a series of spectacular sabotage attacks inside South Africa.

The formation of SADCC underlined the collapse of Pretoria's political hegemony and directly challenged its economic domination. An alternative regional transport and communications network presaged a loss of leverage throughout the region. Zimbabwe's developed manufacturing sector could undermine South Africa's vital regional export markets. Regional economic independence potentially threatened both South Africa's US\$1.5 billion annual trade surplus with SADCC and the flow of labour to its mines and agriculture.

The political consequences were unthinkable. Pretoria saw its regional economic dominance as the unquestionable pre-condition of South African capitalism. Moreover, economic domination guaranteed South Africa's overwhelming political role which Pretoria believed essential to curbing what it saw as externally-provoked resistance to *apartheid*. Finally, given the geopolitical structure of Southern Africa, any success for SADCC would benefit radical Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zimbabwe and thereby radicalize SADCC as a whole. It might mean that socialism would be seen by South Africa's black population to present a viable alternative to *apartheid* — the South African government therefore set out to defeat the SADCC strategy.

### 2) 1980-1981: search for a response

For much of the next 18 months, unsure of its immediate regional objectives, Pretoria lashed out fairly indiscriminately against its neighbours. Direct military attacks and indirect aggression through puppet groups were launched against Angola, Mozambique, Lesotho and Zimbabwe. An explicit threat was made to turn Swaziland into a second front. Restrictions were imposed on the use of South African rail and port facilities and on the import of labour. A dual track strategy in Namibia sought to build an internal settlement whilst escalating military attacks against SWAPO bases in Angola.<sup>11</sup>

During this phase the most important development from Pretoria's point of view was the advent of the

Reagan administration. President Ronald Reagan's constructive engagement policies promised much greater American sympathy than under Jimmy Carter. State Department briefing notes for a May 1981 meeting between Secretary of State Alexander Haig and Foreign Minister Roelof (Pik) Botha, show many common priorities between the two governments. Both gave priority to combatting Soviet influence in the region, both sought to prevent a SWAPO victory in Namibia. Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Chester Crocker, expressed the fundamental aims of US policy in the region as the need to end South Africa's "pariah status" and to re-integrate South Africa into "the network of Western security interests."<sup>12</sup> This produced the celebrated "linkage" policy — no settlement in Namibia until Cuban troops were withdrawn from Angola. The new administration used its Security Council veto to forestall condemnation of South Africa's massive August 1981 invasion of Angola.<sup>13</sup> Pretoria certainly believed it had US support for its far more aggressive regional policies.

### 3) 1982-March 1984: effects of destabilization

By early 1982 Pretoria had worked out its immediate regional objectives. It sought firstly to get regional states to limit the numbers and to police the activities of ANC members in their countries and secondly to shatter SADCC economic initiatives — particularly in the transport sector.

The more conservative states such as Swaziland and Malawi were seen as potential collaborators and were offered concessions to deepen ties with Pretoria. Landlocked Swaziland accepted South African assistance in building a new rail link with the South African port of Richard's Bay, and a supplementary

