

# African internal pressures will affect pace of change

By Roy Lewis

Early in 1974, it became clear that Portugal was on the verge of a convulsion. It came on April 25, and General Spínola, who had been demoted from his appointment to the Chiefs of Staff after publishing a book warning that the wars in Guinea, Mozambique and Angola could not be won and that a "commonwealth" approach must be tried, presided over a revolution of which he gradually lost control. All the current assumptions about the pace of change in Southern Africa had to be abandoned.

Previously, in Pretoria and Salisbury, and even in Lusaka and Dar-es-Salaam, the view had prevailed that the "white redoubt" would last another ten years. In city circles in London, it was supposed that, even if the Rhodesian and Portuguese position crumbled before that, South Africa had up to 20 years to adjust to the march of black nationalism and to absorb the demands of the United Nations over South West Africa and (an internal matter under Clause 2) *apartheid*.

In the summer of 1975, as the Victoria Falls conference was being planned (and even after its failure), it was supposed by many journalists, businessmen and liberal politicians that Ian Smith would be forced to concede the *principle* of majority rule to Joshua Nkomo and Bishop Muzorewa before the end of the year, and that the working-out of a timetable for the transition would ensue, under which Africans would progressively take over the government after elections on a wider franchise. Rhodesia, it was deduced, would have a black government within two years, while South Africa would face the option of dismantling *apartheid* or facing racial war within a similar period.

Such expectations have proved as mistaken as the time-scale that was generally accepted before the Portuguese withdrawal from Africa. Smith's position looks stronger this summer than it did in 1975. The pressures brought against him abroad have failed, though there is growing criticism at home. Forecasts of events

in Southern Africa go wrong because they are so often based on a selection of the factors working against Rhodesia or South Africa and ignore the pressures on the surrounding black states, and on their foreign backers. This article is an attempt to bring all the factors into focus.

## Balance-sheet

The basis of any assessment is that the southern geopolitical zone of Africa — roughly the area below 10 degrees South Latitude — is still almost as interdependent as it was when Britain broke up the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1964. The main changes that have taken place in those 12 years are as follows. Zambia now has rail, road and oil-pipeline access to the East Coast at Dar-es-Salaam. But both Zaire and Zambia have — at least temporarily — lost their more important access to the West coast by the Benguela railway. As a result, Zaire (above all Katanga) is more landlocked than ever. Zambia is considerably worse off, for the Portuguese had increased the capacity of the Benguela railway, notwithstanding its bitter opposition to United Nations sanctions.

Rhodesia has lost its important coastal outlets at Beira and Maputo (Laurenço Marques) as a result of President Machel's full application of UN sanctions, which involved the closing of the border. But it has added the Beit Bridge rail link to its main line of rail to South Africa, which runs through Botswana; the two are thought to be adequate. Malawi, which used to be at the mercy of

*Both Zaire and Zambia have lost rail link to West Coast*

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