Some Unstereotypical Voices

1. From South Africa—

"It appears to be fashionable among liberals to berate the Labour Party for deciding on participation in the new constitutional set-up... What is perturbing is that few whites sitting on the sidelines give the coloured people credit for having made up their own minds.

"This was probably the most democratic political congress I have ever attended—so democratic as to be remarkable for it. There was no time limit on speeches. Anyone was allowed to speak for as long as they liked, and some liked it long. The leadership did not curtail speakers... saying only that the longer they spoke, the longer it would take to reach a decision. When one particularly long-winded speaker paused after his first 40 minutes to say: 'And now I come to the prelude to the proposals...' Mr. David Curry showed a bit of impatience and told the speaker he would have to contain himself a little for the good of the many. The speaker simply walked off the stage in a huff, saying if he was to be hurried he would rather not continue. Mr. Curry hastily withdrew—and the speaker went back to continue for another 40 minutes.

"Throughout the congress, delegates' opinions were swayed from one end of the pendulum's swing to the other. Had a vote been taken straight after Chief Gatsha Buthelezi opened the congress, it would have been almost unanimously against participation. If they had voted after Mr. Norman Middleton's impassioned appeal, the Labour Party would not have gone in. But the vote was taken after everyone who wished to speak had spoken, in a completely democratic way. Within the sweaty confines of Eshowe Town Hall some were jubilant, the majority sat aside, some extremely sad. Democracy had been seen to be done and the final resolution rejected the government's proposals as a policy but agreed to participate as a strategy.

"It offended Chief Buthelezi, disappointed Dr. van Zyl Slabbert [leader of the Progressive Federal Party], annoyed some of the youth, disgusted some armchair liberals. It made Mr. Chris Heunis [Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning] jump for joy and [Prime Minister] P.W. Botha satisfied that he had not split his party in vain. Personally, I liked the decision as it means we will now have some people other than white in Parliament and they will be part of the political processes spotlighted by the major newspapers and television.

"Rubbing cheeks with articulate coloured MPs will benefit verkrampte Nats especially and will also teach those who believe they know what coloured people really want that the coloured people themselves know far better than anyone else what they really want. After the shared and somehow intimate experience at the Eshowe Congress, it seems strange that this time next year I will probably be addressing Allan Hendrickse and David Curry as 'Mr. Minister.'"

—Political Correspondent Peter Sullivan in The Star (Johannesburg), January 8, 1983.

2. From Mozambique—

"We meet today with representatives of the different religious denominations in our country. We want to talk with you about our lives, as Mozambicans and as citizens... Before being Moslems, Catholics, Protestants, or Hindus, we are Mozambicans... We were all born of the struggle against that which denied our status as Mozambicans. Whether we took part in that struggle or not, all of us, at this moment, are its product. Where did we come from? How did you, yourselves, your lives, your origins are proof of what colonialism was in our country. The Catholics who today are archbishops, bishops, and canons only had access to such posts beginning in 1975. It was during the transitional period that the first Mozambican bishops were consecrated... It was our victory that forced the Mozambicanization of the hierarchy.

"It is good to recall how few Mozambicans rose to the level of priest. Also, it is good not to forget that the first ones only surfaced in the 1950s. Even these..."
priests were, like all Mozambicans, subordinated and regarded as being incapable of leadership. They were oppressed by racial discrimination, humiliated by colonial contempt, slighted in the spiritual institutions to which they had consecrated themselves. They had given their lives to a church whose hierarchy did not accept them as equals... Mozambican Sisters of Charity were relegated to the work of servants because of discrimination... Even the Virgin carved from black wood, an object of curiosity and devotion to the Mozambican believers who identify themselves with her, was banned from the church... The civilizing campaign was not designed to transform the African into a lion but into a docile sheep. That was the sum total of the occupation and colonization process of our fatherland...

"Regarding the Moslems, they were victims of exceptionally clear discrimination. The Moslems were treated as a foreign church that was only tolerated and not recognized. They were the infidels—but infidels to whom? In schools the Moslem children learned that their parents’ religion was that of the forces of evil. The followers of Mohammed were barbarians, bloody and corrupt. The Moslems were pushed aside, oppressed and mocked in the Portuguese schools. This discrimination and humiliation dogged them in the streets, in their jobs, and in all their social life.

"The Protestants were always the target of colonialism’s hostility, too, and we understand why. In general, the hierarchy of these churches did not identify with the colonial occupation and domination of our country... The detentions, the deportations, and even murders became a normal way of life for the most outstanding leaders of the Protestant churches, particularly the Presbyterians and Methodists... This repressive campaign intensified with the awareness of the anticolonial feeling and with the advance of ideas of national independence..."

"It is fundamental for all of us to recall these things. It is something that Catholics and non-Catholics, Moslems and non-Moslems, Protestants and non-Protestants must never forget... Religion, with all its aspects, was a part of our history. It did not escape colonialism. It was used as an instrument of division in the complexity of Mozambican society. The sequels of these colonialist practices have not completely disappeared. The launching of the struggle of national liberation did not automatically amount to the unity of the whole of the people from Rovuma to Maputo. For that matter, the liberation of the fatherland did not automatically extinguish the phenomenon of social, racial, ethnic, or religious division in the varied framework of Mozambican society. The liberation of the fatherland, however, did create the need for and the possibility of a higher level of national unity [and made] dialogue possible..."

"We proclaimed the People’s Republic of Mozambique as a secular state. This means that the state has no denomination and that all denominations are equal before the state... We have stated that it is a right of the citizen to profess a religion or not to do so, and that no consequence regarding the citizen’s status or rights should follow from that choice. However, since different religious denominations exist, the respective churches cannot act in such a way that our country would be transformed into an arena where influence or predominance would be in dispute... It is necessary that the different churches not embark on sectarianism and proselytizing. Instead, they must adopt a positive role that they can play in the defense, consolidation, and development of the Mozambican nation, of this fatherland that belongs to all Mozambicans—Moslems, Protestants, Catholics, Hindus, and the nonreligious..."

—Excerpted from an address by President Samora Machel to the opening session of a meeting with representatives of Mozambican religious denominations, December 14, 1982, Maputo.

3. From China—

"[Regarding Angola] the situation was that during the independence struggle there were three factions and we supported all three. When the war of independence was won and the three factions were in a coalition, we said that China would stop helping all three. China’s consistent policy toward the independence struggle was to help them, so whenever they came for help we gave them appropriate assistance—no matter whether they were progressive or backward forces because all were fighting against imperialism. We never interfere with the internal affairs of independent countries—how they develop is their own affair. In the talks for diplomatic relations, Angola set two conditions—mutual recognition, and no more Chinese support for UNITA. As to the first condition, we pointed out that we had already recognized the government since Premier Zhou Enlai had sent a telegram of congratulations to it at independence and also supported it when the South African army invaded the country. So, de facto, we had already given our recognition. We have also given our moral support. Nevertheless, to show our respect for the Angolan people we issued a statement formally welcoming and recognizing the government of Angola. As for the second condition, Angola wanted us to say, along with our statement of mutual recognition, that we will stop helping UNITA and FNLA. We think this is an unreasonable request since we had already said we were stopping giving aid to all three factions, so why the need now for saying that we are stopping aid to two of the factions? We always gave our aid through President Nyerere, and he would know whether we have stopped such assistance or not. If Savimbi says we help him, that is for reasons of his own propaganda.

"The South African situation is different from the national independence struggle in other African states... South Africa has a population of 20 million, a quarter of them White who have lived there for several hundred years... To support either Whites or Blacks would only create confusion; White interests

CSIS Africa Notes, January 25, 1983
will be smashed and this won't benefit Blacks. The Big Powers would get involved and that would lead to big trouble internationally ... The situation in South Africa is different from that in Algeria. The Blacks can't drive the Whites into the sea, and the Whites can't continue with apartheid forever ... The way we see it is that Blacks should unite with progressive Whites to change the political system ... We fully understand if our Black brothers take up arms. But let's be realistic: it won't succeed, and it will only make things worse for our Black brothers."

— Excerpted from PRC Vice Foreign Minister Gong Dafei’s replies to questions posed by British journalist Colin Legum in an interview in Beijing “which lasted for several hours.” Colin Legum’s Third World Reports, CSI Syndication Service, November 12, 1982.

4. From Lesotho—

“As we have repeatedly stressed, there are no ANC military bases in Lesotho, and the South African soldiers who drained the blood of 42 people in Maseru on the ninth of December did not find any. What the soldiers found, and what they will continue to find in their subsequent invasion, which they have already promised, are innocent refugees who have fled from the apartheid oppression in the country of their birth . . .

“In case Botha and his colleagues should not appreciate the point, we must state here that it is not an entertaining job to care for people who have had to flee from their country of birth, not only because of limited capacity, but also because among them there are planted agents who have [the task of] sowing seeds of confusion in our country and to spy on other refugees. South Africa should surely know that we have never invited refugees, but that they come to Lesotho because of apartheid. In the circumstances, and if South Africa wants all the people of that country to remain within its national boundaries, the solution is very simple; and it lies in the total and unconditional dismantling of the apartheid system which separates sons from their mothers, daughters from their fathers, and husbands from their wives, as they flee in pursuit of human status in other parts of the world . . . Trying to use Lesotho as a scapegoat for the South African refugee problem is both unhelpful to Pretoria and deplorable.”

— From a December 23 commentary on Lesotho radio.

5. From Zimbabwe—

“I visited South Africa and Lesotho en route to this conference and had the opportunity to witness first-hand the conditions in those troubled lands. The South African raid into Lesotho was tragic. Let there be no misunderstanding; no one in the United States Government sympathizes with such activities. I was reminded of a comment made by Alan Paton, over 30 years ago, that the beauty of South Africa’s landscape ‘is nothing more than the backdrop against which is being played a great human drama’ in which he, his wife, and his children, were deeply involved. Further, he commented, ‘All Africa is involved, and all humanity, and the world. For no country is now an island, of itself entire.’

“To play an important role in the human drama that is South Africa is an appealing prospect. But those who want to play a role in this drama must first ask if they are willing to devote the time, the study, the prayer, and the love of our fellow man that is required if our role is to be a positive contribution to the denouement of this drama. Those who seek to simplify this drama into a white hats/black hats cowboy movie by refusing to consider the viewpoints of any but a rigid, narrowly defined group of South African opinion—be it white or black—should not seek to play a role. I was especially struck in South Africa by those, both white and black, who have foregone the easy living and high salaries they could have had, for modestly paying positions from which they seek to promote a more just society. We should seek ways to support those who seek to demonstrate that there are alternatives to violence and injustice.

“It is much easier to condemn than construct. In such an atmosphere symbolizing overwhelms substance. There has been much talk about the American policy of constructive engagement. The whole point, however, of diplomacy is to be constructively engaged. It can only be successful, though, if it is a two-way street. Africa is at a crossroad. If ever the full potential of this great continent is to be achieved, Africans and Americans must approach each other with an honesty and candor born of good will and mutual respect.”


6. From Angola—

“Nobody, including myself, would like to see Angola ruled by South Africa. But there’s a difference between the South Africans and the Cubans. We will live with the South Africans forever. We need to get an agreement with them, to say: ‘Look, South Africa, you have technical know-how, you are Africans, though you are white.’

[In response to a question concerning his meetings with South African Prime Minister P.W. Botha.]” We met several times. You can write it. Also I tell you frankly that I wish him well . . . The decolonization movement in former French colonies started with [Pierre] Mendès-France who was a strong man to say, ‘Let us talk to these people frankly.’ And they decolonized. De Gaulle moved forward. Without them...
today, all these peoples would be many colonies. And if we find a man like Prime Minister Botha who will stand to say, 'Let us change,' and he makes the first move—Asians and Indians together—let us pray for him that he succeeds... If we get [Namibia and Angola] solved peacefully, we are accommodating everybody, and then I think we are going to have a tremendous chance of solving the problem of South Africa.

[In response to a question on whether there is "any fundamental ideological conflict between UNITA and the MPLA." ] "No, no. It is because of foreign domination. Because I am not a capitalist. Some of my American friends were puzzled when I told them I was not a capitalist and I don't intend to become one. So friends of mine, like Senator Jesse Helms, were absolutely shocked. But it is frank. I don't want to be a capitalist. To exploit who? My own people? It is not worth fighting for."


7. From the United Nations—

"[T]he Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Angola and of the Republic of Cuba, and on behalf of their respective governments, prepared and signed a joint declaration on February 4, 1982, with which all of this Members of this international body are fully familiar... [T]he joint Angolan-Cuban declaration states solemnly and unambiguously that the intention is to gradually withdraw the Cuban internationalist forces stationed on Angolan territory. ('When the governments of Angola and Cuba so decide, the withdrawal of Cuban forces stationed on Angolan territory will be carried out by a sovereign decision of the government of the People's Republic of Angola when there is no further possibility of aggression or armed invasion and, in that connection, the government of Cuba reiterates that it will unreservedly respect any decision taken by the sovereign government of the People's Republic of Angola concerning the withdrawal of those forces.')"

"[O]n April 2, 1976, a month after expelling the South African troops, the Angolan and Cuban governments agreed on a program progressively to reduce those forces and, in less than a year, the Cuban military contingent was reduced by more than one-third. Toward the end of the second half of 1979, the two governments once again decided to implement another program for the gradual reduction of the Cuban forces. Nevertheless, those two programs had to be suspended at a certain point because of the growing number and scope of South African armed aggression against the provinces of Cunene and Huila."

It should be emphasized that the Angolan and Cuban governments spontaneously took the initiative to implement those programs. No government—including that of the United States of America—and no international organization dared to propose or demand that we do so. How is it then to understand the sickly insistence of the United States Administration on this subject and its inability to realize that such an attitude is a gross and inadmissable interference in the internal affairs of an independent and sovereign country?"

—Excerpted from an address to the UN General Assembly by Angolan Foreign Minister Paulo Jorge, October 4, 1982.

8. From Libya—

"... Could we have a moment of deep contemplation and recall some of the verses of the holy Koran and the Old Testament and the New Testament, and say: 'Help one another in righteousness and piety, but help not one another in sin and rancor.' [verse from Koran]

"Let us remember how Christ most strongly rebuked the populace for forgetting the word of God and following their own whim. He rebuked the sages for undermining the law of God through their traditions. He said all that at the first religious exhortation he made in Jerusalem. Since, at the dawning of 1983, we are without a Christ to rebuke those who forget God, the proud and the greedy, ... and those who disobey the law of God, we have but to rebuke each other for our wrongdoing and to reprimand ourselves for our sins. We have to realize that we are very far from the teaching of Christ and very near to the teaching of Satan.

"The superpowers and rich countries spend enormous amounts on manufacturing nuclear bombs, developing intercontinental missiles, space invasion programs, and on propaganda and psychological warfare at a time when the peoples of the Earth are laboring under the burden of sickness, extreme hunger, malnutrition, and the madness of high prices. These countries are actually led by Satan and their book is the theory of Malthus and not the sacred book. We need to reread the teachings of Christ, peace be on Him. We will find what he wanted to tell us. Hands off Palestine, the cradle of Christ, peace be on Him, and off all the oppressed, suppressed, and colonized peoples.

"The world is again in dire need of Christ today, and is also in dire need to turn away from the dancing places, bars, and buffoonery on the night of every New Year, and to head for the temples to perform prayers, ask forgiveness, and remember the law of God on this night at least..."

—From Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi's Christmas/New Year's message "to heads of state and government," as reported by the official Libyan news agency JANA, December 31, 1982.