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10. The Assertion of a Post-colonial Age

As a broad generalization, it can be said that by 1964 the great age of European decolonization had already passed its peak. The outstanding exceptions to this statement lay in southern Africa, where the entrenchment of white-settler society imposed a different time-scale on events. In the final section of this volume, therefore, the tangled story of Southern Rhodesia, and the final collapse of Portuguese rule in Africa after its long isolation from the mainstream of continental development, will be outlined. An exhaustive catalogue of transfers of power during the 1960s, however, with the seemingly endless succession of flag ceremonies set in dusty squares and presided over by some eminent (usually royal) metropolitan personage, will not be attempted. These were simply the motions of those decisions taken in the late 1950s and early 1960s whose origins and nature have already been explored. Even where the British still showed a tendency to cling to traditional relationships after 1960, as they did in parts of the Arabian peninsula, the reason for this tenacity had less to do with pressures emanating from the past and more to do with a new set of contemporary circumstances; we shall see later that even here – in Aden and the Gulf – the British finally decided to cut their losses and vacate.¹ It is nicely ironic that in the latter of these instances the British departure ran *against* the wishes of the indigenous ruling elite; by the early 1970s the golden years of Anglophobia in the Middle East had long passed.

The quintessential problem of the post-1964 period was no longer (except in certain outstanding instances) that of whether and how to decolonize, but rather how to graft the plethora of 'new' underdeveloped states into western interests. If the context of this challenge was novel, the principle determining responses to it was not; it involved a drive towards an appropriate set of collaborative devices

by which the leading interests of western and Afro-Asian societies could be brought into a stable equilibrium. The methods employed were hoary with age; they were those of strategic protection (so that the UK ensured Malaysian friendship by acting as its shield against Indonesian aggression) and economic patronage (through the network of development aid carefully put into place during the mid-1960s). It was the apparent underlying changelessness of this situation, regardless of how constitutional forms had been broken up and recast, which gave a superficial cogency to concepts of 'neo-colonialism'; that is, the contention so prevalent in liberal-leftist circles that European decolonizations were merely the induction of another, and more modern, means of appropriating the resources of the Third World for the needs of advanced (but crisis-wracked) capitalism. This was a theoretical model chiefly fashioned around the pervasive, world-wide corporatism of the great multinationals.² By ascribing an aggressively creative quality to big business strategies this interpretation, in its characteristic formulations, invariably fails to grasp the damage-limitation approach which characterized western commerce as it was buffeted by African decolonizations; 'get your head down and don't get hurt' was the brisk but defensive maxim which guided expatriate business thinking in late-colonial situations as diverse as Nigeria, Kenya and the Belgian Congo. The reality for the teeming un- and under-employed millions of Afro-Asian nations was somewhat more perturbing than that held out by the interpreters of neo-colonialism; the utilization of Third World resources seemed to be less, not more, necessary to the raising of living standards in Europe and North America.

In reacting to the effusions of radical theorists, the more cynical western liberals have sometimes been piqued into the observation that if there is one thing worse for the Third World than being exploited by the West it is not being exploited, and as with the conventional radical theories themselves, this trite comment at least touches on part of the truth. Certainly the shattered aspirations which followed the arrival of independence in many new states may, in general, be ascribed not to their more intensive integration within open market processes, but rather to the manner in which the operation of those processes was blunted and then deformed. This blockage had both internal and external causes. Internally, bureaucratic and urban elites used their acquisition of sovereign political power to monopolize the one source of financial surplus within their

societies, that of the cash-crop farmers. Externally, and most suggestively from the viewpoint of this study, western Europe increasingly retreated from participation in world agricultural markets. It did so through the mechanism of the EEC's Common Agricultural Policy, which was put into formal operation during 1964, and the in-built dynamics of which ensured that Europe's food demand would progressively be met by home producers. These pressures working against the economic prospects of the underdeveloped nations were all the more deleterious against a background of continued population growth, to which the new states were even less able than their colonial predecessors to devise meaningful responses. It is only by ignoring these larger developments, and by concocting a mythical world in which the small change of bilateral aid and World Bank financings are accorded centre-stage, that a voracious capitalism might be portrayed struggling to perpetuate itself through the agency of the Third World. Capitalism, like all economic systems, is by its nature voracious, but what is significant about the post-1960 period is the partial disengagement of Europe and the underdeveloped world in the strategic realms of economic policy, regardless of the inflated publicity which enveloped the inauguration of western aid programmes.

The period from 1964 to 1968 in Britain requires some special mention because it was marked by a final acceleration of that process, aptly referred to by one scholar as 'disimperialism',³ whose previous peaks had been 1946-7 and 1957-60. The uncouplings in this third crisis phase were obscured at the time by Harold Wilson's 'east of Suez' rhetoric on becoming Prime Minister of a Labour Government in October 1964, by the skilful promotion of the Commonwealth organism (newly equipped with its own Secretariat) and by the drama of Southern Rhodesia, all of which, in different ways, distracted attention from a fundamental reshaping of British political economy. The real British spirit of the times, however, was revealed by the manner in which a cluster of colonial remnants, which even in the early 1960s would have been judged unready for the shock of self-rule, were now hustled rudely into independence – during 1966 British Guiana had this status draped upon it in May, Basutoland in September, Bechuanaland in October and Barbados in November – and by the sudden decision to devalue the pound sterling in November 1967. It was the latter of these moves which was the litmus test *par excellence* of British attitudes. Up until that point recent British

Governments, and especially the Wilson administration, had been deeply committed to maintaining sterling's parity at \$2.80. That parity, both technically and symbolically, was held to underpin the fact that the UK's withdrawal from its dependent empire did not mean that her placement in the western system of power was affected in any substantive way. British Governments were so determined to maintain this 'signal' that they accepted the implicit cost of nailing the domestic economy to the prevailing dollar exchange-rate. Interestingly, it was yet another Middle Eastern conflict, the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war, which generated 'hot' money flows on a scale beyond the capacity of the Bank of England to control. But implicit, too, in the caving-in of Wilson's Cabinet to pressures for devaluation was the definition of a new governmental assumption: not only that Whitehall was prepared to make adjustments 'at the fringes' in order to cut a path towards national stabilization (which was the spirit of Macmillan's decolonizations, for example) but that by 1968 it had been harried into accepting a basic alteration in Britain's relationship to the western order. This was a point which went far beyond the ambit of colonies, wherever they might still be, but, amongst its other significances, the events of autumn 1967 can be taken as the point at which the last elements of imperial statehood finally burnt away into the atmosphere.

Thus, when the UK finally gained entrance to the EEC in 1972, the one advanced capitalist nation with a policy-making tradition of sensitivity to the trading needs of the Third World was lost to view.⁴ Part of the rationale of British entry to the EEC – that it would make the latter more sensitive to underdeveloped countries – never stood much chance of becoming reality; the Brussels bureaucracy had become much too introspective, and too penetrated by vested interests, for that to be the case. This did not seem to matter in the mid-1970s, when the balance of payments of the poorer nations appeared to be bridgeable by the endless and easy credit on offer from western banks stuffed with the recycled surplus from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) following the oil price-hike of 1973-4. It did matter, however, by the early 1980s, when the credit dried up, and Third World countries desperately required, not the petty aid patronage dropped by some visiting French diplomat or EEC bureaucrat, but a structural adaptation of world market patterns to open up opportunities for renewed growth. But by then not only had Britain's leverage within the international trading

system slipped, but its own economic psychology had been transformed. The Thatcherite silence in the face of Third World debt problems was deafening. There could be no more evocative testament to the atrophy which had come to beset the commercial nervous system which had once made for organic, if imperfect, interaction between the advanced and the non-advanced worlds.

In striking out towards more insular forms of economic growth, it might have been expected that western Europe would attract the brickbats of the Third World for barring their collective way to progress. In fact the glossy tinsel of such façades as the Lomé Convention and the drip-feed of bilateral and multilateral aid proved enough to appease the post-colonial elites of Afro-Asian countries, which frequently had their own reasons for fearing open market expansion at home since the effect might be to smash their world of parastatal favouritism.⁵ But the west Europeans were lucky, too, in that during the 1960s (not least as a result of the Vietnam War) anti-Americanism became the mood-music of the times. While EEC governments built up top-heavy structures of agricultural surpluses where a 'natural' propensity to import should have prevailed, crowds in Third World cities could often be relied on to dance around burning the Stars and Stripes. This was – viewed from some Picardy farmyard – a fortunate comedy, the pernicious effects of which did not emerge until two decades after the Common Agricultural Policy had commenced operation.

The European decolonizers were also fortunate in another sense: the years which followed their rapid evacuation from dependent territories were marked (on the whole) by détente between the American and Russian superpowers. If this had not been the case, and if decolonizations had generally been cut across more deeply by great-power rivalries, the shaky foundations of these gimcrack creations might have been exposed early on to more pressures than they could withstand. From the perspective of the 1980s it is possible to see how curiously advantageous the early and mid-1960s were for cutting colonies adrift; for all the superpower tensions which surrounded the Congolese debacle and the discovery of Russian missile-silos on Cuba, Russo-American confrontation had not yet become sufficiently dispersed across the globe or infused with a consistent intensity to draw European decolonization into its vortex. This was to change in the early 1970s, but by then only southern Africa remained to be scarred by the impact. It is, then, to these residual issues of European

colonialism between 1965 and 1981 that we finally turn: the British withdrawal from Aden and the Gulf, the protracted struggle over Southern Rhodesia and the collapse of Portuguese authority in Guiné, Mozambique and Angola.

I EAST OF SUEZ: THE BRITISH DEPARTURE FROM ADEN AND THE GULF

Britain's abdication of its existing political and strategic role east of Suez, and more particularly in the Gulf and South Arabia, between 1963 and 1971 is usually taken to be the final death-rattle of the most predatory of all the great European colonial powers. In a sense this was so; the UK was locked by historical commitments into a 'police' function in this zone, and it was in these years that residual imperial commitments were finally dispensed with. However, the continuance of the role beyond 1963 may also be ascribed to factors disconnected with colonialism in its traditional guise; one major reason, for example, lay in the US Government's new-found desire that the UK should continue its supervisory chores in the Gulf as a contribution to western security in an area which (not for the first time) threatened to become the focus of international rivalry. It is this merging of old and new modes of power, indeed, which makes the end of empire such a shifting and complex subject of study.

At the time of the 1957 Defence Review the significance for Britain of its Aden outpost was steadily diminishing. That outpost had always had its relevance defined largely by its relationship to the Indian *Raj*; after 1947 the gradual erosion of traditional strategic doctrines detracted from Aden's importance. Ironically, however, in the few years after 1957 this trend was reversed.⁶ First, once decolonization became a benchmark of British official thought, the preservation of key (and delimited) bases became all the more desirable. Certainly the British armed services in the early 1960s saw the hoarding of such bases – of which Aden would be a prize item – as one way their accustomed style of operations, including all the perquisites of overseas postings, could be continued into the post-imperial age. Second, the Americans became eager to steer their European allies, especially Britain, towards conventional, rather than nuclear, orientations in their defence expenditures. Macmillan and his successors in Downing Street, for whom a good relationship with

the US administration was so vital, could not afford to be rigidly unreceptive to such pressure. The problem, therefore, was how to maintain the British presence in Aden when radical, pan-Arab politics was already undermining traditional leadership in the port, above all through large-scale strikes amongst the workforce.

The British hoped they had found the answer in the establishment during January 1963 of the Federation of South Arabia.⁷ This unit was formed by meshing together Aden and those tribal states in its hinterland which had long enjoyed formal British 'protection'. The intended scenario was straightforward: it was hoped that the Federation would be controlled by the pooled political resources of traditional rulers inside and outside Aden, and that the pan-Arab radicals would be squeezed out of existence. At some point in this process the Federation could be accorded independence, and the base would be secured for British use in perpetuity. This plan might have worked if dissident forces had been effectively cut off from external support. But after September 1962 Nasser had installed an Egyptian army in North Yemen to shore up the 'revolutionary' Yemen Arab Republic in its struggle with its royalist opponents, and he proceeded to destabilize the Federation from outside; this, indeed, was hardly difficult, given the acute divisions within the indigenous order. British and Federal forces extinguished the initial guerrilla operations in the Radfan mountains, but it was clear that the status quo had become extremely fragile.

The election of a Labour Government in Britain under the leadership of Harold Wilson in October 1964 further undermined the Federation experiment. It was acutely embarrassing for a Socialist Cabinet to be seen in league with what were widely regarded as Arabian 'feudalists' against their 'progressive' opponents. The various radical-cum-terrorist factions, recognizing this opportunity, stepped up the incidence of demonstrations and killings in order to test the Labour Government's resolve; by this time two dissident organizations were emerging, the National Liberation Front (NLF) and the Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (FLOSY), both locked in a mutual competition for grass-roots support in Aden. Wilson decided to distance his government steadily from its Federation commitments. The British High Commissioner, Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, whose advice had been to make the Federation fully independent under its current constitution and in the process let the traditional elements 'off the leash' to liquidate the assortment of

Nasserists and Marxists in the guerrilla movements, was sacked towards the end of 1964. Finally, in August 1965 the Labour Government suspended Aden's constitution and, as a temporary compromise, reimposed direct rule.

It still seemed at this stage that Wilson would maintain the British presence in Aden, at least for the next few years, by a mixture of military reprisal and political brinkmanship. This conclusion could be drawn from the fact that between 1964 and 1966 Wilson's advocacy of an 'east of Suez' role reached a pitch quaintly reminiscent of backwoods Toryism.⁸ For this strange, but not altogether uncharacteristic, phenomenon, several influences are accountable. Wilson wanted to appeal to the centre-ground of the British electorate as being strong on defence, while pushing the nuclear issue, on which his party activists were so sensitive, into the background. Beating the east of Suez drum was a way of causing these twain to meet. Furthermore, in its early phases the Labour Government was looking to cut down its defence commitments in western Germany, and needed to balance this by a more vigorous approach in some other quarter. It was in western Germany that big financial savings might be made by the UK Treasury, and reductions in this sphere would be particularly well received by Labour leftists who disliked the concept of a 'front line' against the Russians. Finally, and not of least importance, Wilson spoke of the east of Suez role with a glowing attachment because it was what the Americans wanted to hear, and because the Prime Minister was all too aware that the UK's deteriorating financial position after 1964 would never be corrected without American assistance in a future sterling crisis.

At some point in late 1965 or early 1966, however, this approach sank without trace. The February Defence Review introduced by the responsible minister, Dennis Healey, envisaged a severe cut in the British defence effort outside Europe, particularly east of Suez, and Aden was to be made independent by the end of 1968.⁹ The precise motives for this swift change of direction are necessarily clouded. The now critical state of sterling meant that public expenditure savings were urgently required. But Wilson's salvage strategy for the British economy had two political prongs, both of which could be helped by withdrawing from east of Suez: a renewed application to join the European Common Market – the chances of success of which would be helped by evidence that the UK really had put its old imperial orientations behind it – and the transmission to Washington of the

news that Britain would not shoulder alliance burdens so easily in future unless her unique currency problems received sympathetic attention from the superpower who was in a position to alleviate them if only it had the will to do so.

However, the evacuation from Aden proved a far from easy operation to carry out. The British attempts to involve the UN as an effective arbitrator got nowhere, and by early 1967 it was obvious that no clear successor-authority would emerge to whom power could be smoothly transferred. With the British Government under mounting economic pressure, they decided to move forward the date of the British departure and to do so regardless of local circumstances. A new Governor, Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, was appointed in May 1967, prepared to carry out what was a ruthless exercise of decolonization.¹⁰ Even Nasser's defeat in the Egyptian-Israeli war of June 1967, which held out the prospect that Arab radical pressures in the region might actually be on the point of decline, did not sway the British Cabinet from this decision. Subsequently one of its key concerns was to minimize the number of British casualties in the terrorist actions which now gripped Aden and its environs, since the steady stream of news regarding army losses seemed likely to be electorally damaging. Thus the central district of the city, the Crater, was almost denuded of British security, and the NLF, FLOSY and any other contenders for power left to settle their differences by the gun. By October it was clear that the NLF had come out on top of this bloody confrontation, and at the end of that month George Brown, the Foreign Secretary, felt able to announce that his representatives would enter immediate talks with that body as a prelude to independence in November. On 29 November 1967 the last British troops left Aden, 130 years after their first arrival.

Throughout the Aden imbroglio, the British Government had sought to assure the rulers of the Gulf states, for whose defence the UK was responsible by treaty, that no change in their longstanding relationships with Britain was in prospect. Such assurances were still issuing from ministerial mouths in December 1967. This was deception in spirit, if not actually in the letter. On the preceding 18 November sterling had at last succumbed to devaluation and the Labour Government was compelled to apply to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a loan to lubricate the transition. It was not until early January 1968, however, that a consensus was reached within the Labour Cabinet on the distribution of the public expendi-

ture cuts which were a precondition of IMF assistance. In the event the left-inclined members of the Cabinet swallowed welfare economies only in return for an off-setting reduction in defence spending, and the right-inclined were pleased, in this context, to sacrifice the Gulf presence rather than put in question the monies earmarked for the nuclear deterrent programme. Official messengers were then packed off to Washington and the Gulf states to break the news of this new twist to British policy, timed to take effect in March 1971.

Rulers of small Gulf states had good reason to fear the British departure, since all of them were subject to external threats. In some cases these states had claims upon each other's territory, but all were apprehensive of being trampled underfoot as the Saudis and the Iranian Shah competed with each other to establish regional dominance. The British advice was that the small states should combine into a unit capable of protecting their mutual interests, and most of the shajkhdoms did signify their intention to enter into a Federation of Arab Emirates. If this Federation was to come about, however, sustained British initiatives were required and specific promises of military aid after March 1971. The Labour Cabinet was not in any position to take such forceful action, partly because its attentions were elsewhere, and partly because the Saudis and the Shah made it clear that they would not look kindly on any British attempt to create some rickety structure designed to block their own natural ambitions. With OPEC looking well placed to exert an upward influence on oil prices, and given the Saudi and Iranian leverage within that body, these were no idle threats. The Gulf shajkhs, meanwhile, could only take refuge in the hope that the Conservative Opposition in Britain, which had lampooned Wilson's proposed scuttle from the Gulf as symbolic of his disregard for Britain's international prestige, would win the forthcoming general election.

The formation of a Conservative Government under Edward Heath did, indeed, appear at first to put Gulf policy back into the melting-pot. But it soon became plain that the Cabinet did not consider itself committed to reversing earlier decisions, even if the time-scale of their implementation had already slipped. Then, on 1 March 1971, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Home, announced in Parliament that the relevant treaties would be terminated by the end of the year and British troops withdrawn simultaneously. This eventuality had sprung from the coincidence of a decisive shift in Foreign Office evaluation of Middle Eastern politics (which itself

reflected new American prejudices), and the particular foreign policy concerns within the Heath government. Thus the British Foreign Office had by 1970 become converted to the contention that western interests in the Middle East could best be guaranteed by 'working in' with Saudi and Iranian influence, and that Gulf affairs had to be ordered accordingly; while such a perspective appealed strongly to the Heath government which was bending all its efforts to force entry into the Common Market and found formal external commitments a hindrance in promoting the UK as a quintessentially European power. In effect, between March and November 1971 the British pressed the treaty-shajkhdoms into negotiating the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on terms which appeared to open the way to a Saudi-Iranian condominium (however uneasy the latter might be). It was only afterwards, when British influence had been much reduced, that the inability of either the Saudis or the Iranians to play a quasi-imperial role became transparent. After the mid-1970s the western powers began to worry about the fragile arrangements for Gulf security, and the US Government had to spend large amounts of money developing Rapid Deployment Forces for emergencies. The old subtleties of the British presence had been replaced by the looming threat of the modernized gunboat.

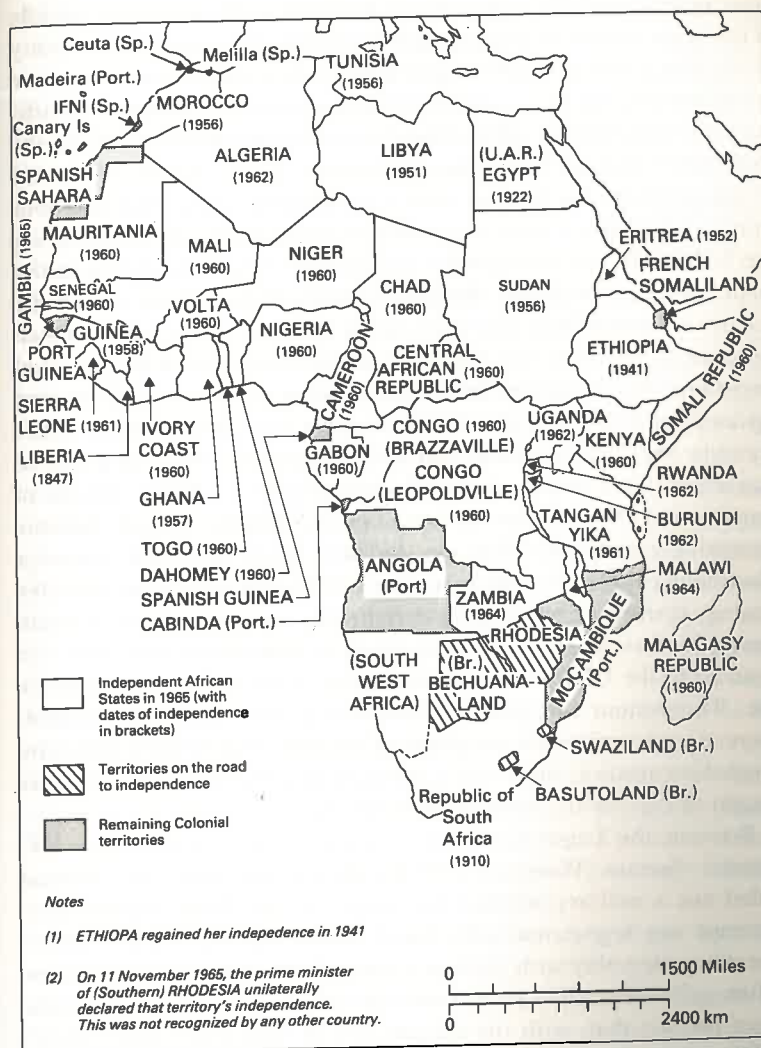
II SOUTHERN RHODESIA: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF UDI

In retrospect, the extent to which Southern Rhodesian affairs dominated Britain's foreign policy concerns after UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence) in November 1965 appears somewhat anomalous.¹¹ Not only was the UK at this very point in the final throes of shedding its residual colonial responsibilities in Africa, but that continent was rapidly being reduced to a strategic backwater after a brief flurry of world attention during the Congo crisis of 1960-3. Why did Rhodesia continue to 'matter' in Westminster and Whitehall under these conditions? There are several overlapping answers to this conundrum. In reality, Rhodesia did not preoccupy the 1964-70 Labour Government quite as much as the coverage in *Hansard* or the press suggests; concern at the timing and scale of the next sterling crisis always carried a higher anxiety rating. But the passions aroused in Britain by the UDI drama were not mere shadow-

play; coincidentally, Rhodesia had provided the 'ground' on which the ideological and tactical tensions between, and within, the two great political parties of the state were played out amidst the fluidities of the 1960s. Neither could any British Government have denied a continuing responsibility in Rhodesian matters without triggering a walk-out of leading African states who had previously accepted membership of the Commonwealth following their independence. With the UK excluded from the EEC, and with a British public sceptical of the Labour Government's management of foreign relations, Harold Wilson was particularly keen to keep the Commonwealth flower-stall in business, if only for appearance's sake. Finally, in the 1960s US administrations continued to expect Britain to supervise western interests in much of central Africa, so that any breakdown in that region might have soured relations between Downing Street and the White House just when the latter's co-operation in sterling stabilization was vital. It was thus the manner in which Ian Smith's breakaway crossed with other, and usually larger, issues which invested the Rhodesian question with such *gravitas*.

Wilson's Rhodesian dilemma was certainly acute. His international strategy required that he nurture a good relationship with independent black African statesmen such as Kaunda of Zambia and Nyerere of Tanzania; his domestic strategy required that he never stray far from the centre-ground of British politics, streaked as it was with nationalist and (not least amongst the working classes) racist emotions. Wilson therefore did what came naturally to him, and what any British Prime Minister would have done under the circumstances: he struck out for the centre-line between this Scylla and Charybdis. But what constitutes a centre-line depends on the angle of the viewer, and in this case Wilson's perspective was biased in favour of Ian Smith. This did not reflect the British Prime Minister's personal instincts, but arose from his judgement of the UK public's gut response to the Rhodesian problem. Therefore Wilson, on what was really the crucial issue, ruled out the use of force by Britain to crush what was clearly an unconstitutional coup in a dependent colony. This meant that if there was any fighting to be done, then the African nationalists were going to have to undertake it themselves, with fearful consequences not only for Rhodesia but also for the neighbouring states which would undoubtedly be drawn into the fray.

Britain's relationships with independent black Africa were pro-



MAP 8 The pattern of alien rule in Africa, 1965

foundly shaken by this decision. Wilson sought to offset the ensuing African resentments by announcing a programme of extended sanctions against the UDI regime on 1 December 1965, and in the middle of the same month escalating these to include the crucial commodity of oil. The Labour leader's chief aim in these moves was to survive the imminent, specially convened Commonwealth Conference without any embarrassing splinterings from that organization. When the Conference met in Lagos during January 1966, Wilson continued trying to pacify his African critics by assuring them that sanctions would defeat Smith in weeks rather than months, and by adopting the NIBMAR precondition for any British involvement in a settlement: No Independence Before Majority Rule. These essentially rhetorical concessions, however, were in some ways not so much designed to persuade the African leaders themselves of British good intentions, but rather to help those leaders to persuade their own agitated publics that the Smith regime was being 'dealt with'. Kaunda and Nyerere knew that British sanctions were not likely to succeed in their stated aim, and were probably a farce (which, of course, they turned out to be), but meanwhile Wilson became increasingly conscious that the Africans could not walk out of a Commonwealth club which was one forum in which an effective strategy to displace Smith might eventually emerge, and where, more generally, their diplomatic voices could be heard loud and clear – in contrast to the UN, where nobody's voice could be heard amidst the din. Throughout the years of controversy over Rhodesia, indeed, there were no 'misunderstandings' of the sort much written about by journalists; instead, there was a complex process in which all parties sought to explore the weaknesses of others.

Between the Lagos Conference and his defeat in the 1970 UK general election, Wilson shifted his ground on Rhodesia. Having ruled out a military solution in 1965/6, it had been impossible to attempt any negotiation with Smith, since this would have meant breaking altogether with 'radical' opinion both at home and overseas. After 1966 Wilson had more room for manoeuvre. This partly arose from the fact that, with the evaporation of their hopes that Smith's UDI might fail at the outset for essentially economic reasons, independent African leaders became too eager for some form of compromise settlement to undermine Wilson's efforts from the sidelines. But other events in Africa also contributed to a reduction in the leverage which could be brought to bear on Britain; most signifi-

cantly, the Federal Government of Nigeria became too indebted to the British Government for military assistance during the war of Biafran secession to make much trouble over affairs elsewhere in the continent. In going for an agreement with Smith, however, Wilson could not risk a long-drawn-out negotiation without allowing his political opponents an opportunity to whip up dissatisfaction with his conduct of affairs; hence the quick-fire nature of the talks on board HMS *Tiger* in mid-Mediterranean during December 1966 and HMS *Fearless* in Gibraltar docks during October 1968. The *Tiger* negotiations ended in an early breakdown; the *Fearless* attempt yielded a package which Smith at first seemed to accept, and only rejected after (much to British annoyance) taking the terms home to Salisbury, where his Cabinet pronounced them to be inadequate. The degree of integrity of these peace drives remains obscure. Quite possibly both these ship-borne enterprises were mere exercises in public relations in which both leaders could signal to their respective publics that they were doing all *they* could to reach a reasonable agreement on terminating UDI. Certainly after October 1968 Wilson could conveniently let Rhodesia fade once more into the British political background as a general election approached. Subsequently, Wilson's Rhodesian bondage has been treated as a gross humiliation for the Labour leader. This seems a harsh judgement. Since Wilson knew that he was in no position unilaterally to obtain a settlement, his only concern was to prevent the issue reverberating on Britain's wider international position, and in this aim he largely succeeded. In fact the dilemma of the British Government was eased by the 1969 Rhodesian constitution pushed through the legislature by Smith which instituted a republic and which definitely blocked any passage to majority rule; after that it was not possible for other nations credibly to argue that the Rhodesian question was *solely* a British problem requiring a British-supervised solution.

Meanwhile, however, the British Conservative Party had not escaped lightly from the shock-waves set up by UDI. The party was deeply split between those who felt a residual loyalty towards the white-settler fraternity, and those for whom the latter were frankly expendable. Again, it was the manner in which this division matched up with more fundamental conflicts within Toryism which gave it real force; in this case, the continuing struggle for patronage between the *grandee* faction, for whom 'colonial values' still ranked as a political virtue, and the new generation of grammar-school aspirants,

for whom colonial responsibilities smacked of an inefficient, sentimental and sinecure-ridden conservatism which they despised. As a grammar-school product, but also as the protégé of the arch-*grandee* Alec Douglas-Home, whom he succeeded in the party leadership during July 1965, Edward Heath was well placed to hold these extremes together. His strategy was to emphasize the one point – ‘no use of force’ – on which a Tory consensus existed, and maintain an equivocal posture regarding sanctions whereby he refrained from criticizing the principle of the Labour Government’s measures while asserting that they could not ultimately gain their end without South African cooperation – a highly unlikely eventuality in the 1960s. Like Wilson, Heath’s prime objective was simply to arrive at the next general election without having his party crack apart beneath him on the way there. On balance, the British political system put on a virtuoso performance during the first (and most symbolically laden) five years of the post-UDI crisis: the different poles of political emotion were given impassioned parliamentary expression while the party managers were able to ensure that Westminster business was not disturbed by the backwash.

In fact Edward Heath’s position over Rhodesia during his 1970-4 premiership was considerably easier than that of his predecessor. By the early 1970s African questions in general, and Rhodesia in particular, had been pushed firmly into the international background. Western nations were too absorbed by the knock-on effects of the 1967 war in the Middle East, and especially with the instabilities of the world monetary system, to concern themselves other than marginally with the contortions of African states, whatever the pigmentation of their ruling groups. After 1969, too, the UDI which most worried the British Government was that in the Falls Road, Belfast, not its more distant variety, although this fact was not always accurately reflected in the coverage by UK newspapers. Heath’s scope for negotiation over Rhodesia was also distinctly broadened after 1970 by the awful prospect that guerrilla war opened up for Kaunda and Nyerere. These leaders, conscious of the arms from Soviet and Chinese suppliers reaching black African exiles ensconced in their territories, were quick to apprehend that their own regimes were potentially threatened – and became commensurately more sympathetic (if only in private) to any deal with Salisbury that might prevent regional destabilization.

In November 1971, after extensive contact, the British Foreign

Secretary, Alec Douglas-Home, arrived in the Rhodesian capital with a high-level delegation which included the Attorney-General and his own permanent under-secretary. This was eloquent testimony that the British were seriously intent on an agreement. Smith’s ability to bargain from strength had certainly slipped since his encounters with Wilson. After 1971 he faced intensifying guerrilla incursions over the Zambezi from Zambia, and increasingly from that portion of Mozambique controlled by the anti-Portuguese forces of FRELIMO (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique). The UK mission was able to make powerful use of the argument that this was the last chance for a political settlement. With the emergence of Soviet support for black ‘liberation’ movements, the cogency of this was not lost even on the most hardbitten of Rhodesia Front veterans. The result was an agreement which would extend African participation in government, and buttressed this with a justiciable Bill of Rights, but which would not have yielded majority rule in the foreseeable future. The British advocacy of this compromise was that, for all its limitations as a form of political justice for Africans, it nevertheless put Rhodesian affairs on a footing which pointed towards, rather than away from, a better material and moral future for blacks. Neither did it seem unlikely that such a conclusion might prove acceptable in Lusaka and Dar-es-Salaam as long as it foreclosed the drift to generalized breakdown in Rhodesia.

Here, indeed, was the rub: a settlement with Smith was of no use to Heath, Kaunda or Nyerere unless it was workable *within* Rhodesia. The British had therefore made the agreement hinge on its proven acceptability to the majority of Rhodesia’s peoples. Subsequently it was decided in London that this ‘test’ of opinion was best achieved through a Royal Commission, which was set up under the chairmanship of Lord Pearce. The choice of a Commission for this purpose was suggestive; its concern was not, in reality, with whether more heads were ‘against’ than ‘for’ the proposed new constitution, but with the more subjective issue of whether that constitution could be made operable, so that a Commission had the capacity (albeit by sleight of hand) to pronounce the terms offered as ‘acceptable’ to Rhodesians, even if the actual counting of numbers might marginally have given an opposite answer. Furthermore, the Commission was in a position to discount a certain percentage of opposition to the deal fixed between London and Salisbury on the grounds that it was the product of intimidation by armed radicals. The problem facing the

Pearce team during its investigation, however, was that Rhodesian blacks were *overwhelmingly* antagonistic to the terms of settlement, and to have concluded otherwise under these conditions would have meant a margin of distortion which the world's press could easily have latched on to. Once the Commission had turned in its negative findings, the Heath Government had to decide whether to push on regardless or to accept the new impasse. In fact the costs of the first option, which would have caused a howl of international outrage, mostly from those furthest from the Rhodesian scene and for whom such indignation came cheap, were too high; while the alternative – of withdrawing from all negotiations, leaving the immediate combatants to weaken each other further in a bush-war – had attractions of its own.

The war of insurgency and counter-insurgency dominated the Rhodesian scene after 1972. Indeed, African guerrilla fighters had been operating against the Smith regime since 1964, when both ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) and ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) had been banned and their leadership forced into exile in Lusaka. The increasing internal divisions within and between these two factions had been one factor persuading Smith against making any concessions to African politicians during the later 1960s, since it seemed that the political and military opposition to white hegemony was so friable. Bottled up in Lusaka, starved of cash and with little prospect of future spoils, it is not surprising that ZAPU and ZANU rigidified into ethnic and mutually antipathetic entities. Thus ZAPU by 1969 had become an essentially Ndebele organization, while ZANU was dominated by Shona. With the greater availability of modern small arms in the area, Kaunda ordered his security forces to impose discipline on these volatile guests, and it was to escape these constraints that ZANU, amongst whose leadership Robert Mugabe was increasingly prominent, switched its operations after 1970 to Mozambique, where its FRELIMO ally was controlling extensive tracts of border country. These developments were of clear concern to the Rhodesian regime, and forced Smith to begin exploring the possibility of an 'internal settlement' with African elements; thus from mid-1973 he was in sporadic dialogue with Bishop Muzorewa, a faction leader who had risen to local prominence during the period of the Pearce Commission. But before 1974 Smith could still feel that, with the military odds in his favour, there was little incentive in negotiating away

white privilege. He was confident that in the end Kaunda could be bounced into destroying the Rhodesian guerrilla organizations based in and around his capital, and it was to build up pressure to this climax that Smith closed the frontier between Rhodesia and Zambia in January 1973, with enormously deleterious effects on Zambia's economy. Once the Portuguese authorities finally got a throttle-hold on FRELIMO, as was fully expected, then Smith believed that ZANU, too, would cease to be a real threat. Finally, the Rhodesian Prime Minister knew that as long as his regime retained South African support it could not be toppled, and in late 1973 there seemed no reason why Pretoria should cut off the supply-lines and withdraw the military personnel which helped to keep the illegal 'white' republic to the north afloat.

The breakdown of Portuguese rule in their African dependencies after April 1974 transformed this situation. With crushing suddenness, the Rhodesian economy was deprived of its most ready access to the sea via the Mozambique ports, and the perimeter of its vulnerable borders had been greatly extended. In short, it had always been probable that the Smith Government could successfully wage a one-front war across the Zambezi, but it was highly improbable that it had the resources to fight a two-front war with ZANU operating from secure and well-stocked bases in Mozambique. Furthermore, South Africa was confronted with a choice it had previously hoped would never have to be faced: either to assume a much bigger military responsibility for white Rhodesia's survival, or to accept that some form of black government in that country was inevitable and, as a consequence, therefore best arranged as quickly as possible while the process could be controlled. It was the latter approach which best fitted the *verligte* (or 'enlightened') foreign policy which the South African Prime Minister, Dr John Vorster, was currently striving to develop, involving an 'opening up' of relationships between South Africa and those of her continental neighbours prepared to accept the economic benefits he was in a position to distribute. Furthermore, the feasibility of 'managed change' in Rhodesia was simultaneously accentuated by Kaunda's desire to fix a settlement before the weight of guerrilla activity shifted to Mozambique, making it unlikely that any Zambian protégé would prove victorious in the scramble for power in Salisbury which would inevitably follow a white collapse. It was the dovetailing pressure exerted by Kaunda and Vorster which brought together a conference at Victoria Falls on 25 August 1975,

attended by Smith, Muzorewa, Nkomo and Ndabaningi Sithole. No agreement resulted as to a future Rhodesian constitution, but it can be surmised that there was an understanding on one crucial point: the need to minimize the future role of Mugabe's ZANU and its Mozambique mentor. It was not, perhaps, a coincidence that the Rhodesian security forces proceeded to hit hardest against the Mozambique bases while the South Africans, Americans and British chose this moment to drive towards a political solution.

The Nixon administration in the US had begun to take a fitful interest in the Rhodesian imbroglio after 1970 as a response to growing Soviet activities in southern Africa. After the Portuguese coup, which opened up a cluster of new opportunities for Kremlin strategists in their African ambitions, this interest crystallized into a major foreign policy priority. Indeed, the Angolan debacle during 1975, when despite both American and South African efforts the pro-western elements were squeezed out of the *de facto* settlement, only highlighted the importance for the NATO powers of keeping the Rhodesian end-game under better control. The problem was that the Americans had no traditional links, or decisive economic leverage, in an area which had never figured large in Washington's mind. The US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, had little option but to work through the South African 'proxy'. This, in fact, did not matter at first, in so far as Kissinger's habitual method of statecraft was to attempt to fix regional stabilizations by filtering his objectives through dominant local powers whose interests had a high level of congruity with those of the US. But the method was flawed. Such proxy-tactics might have worked in previous eras for the older imperial powers when the world had been a less complicated and integrated place. But Kissinger found that proxies could break apart in American hands (as happened most dramatically later in Iran), while an entente with Pretoria was not a very auspicious means of ordering western relations in southern Africa. Nevertheless, Kissinger met Vorster in Zurich during September 1976 and together they decided on an all-party settlement in which Rhodesia's internal black leadership, especially Bishop Muzorewa, would hold the real reins of power. Smith was not in a position to resist such a US-South African diktat, and after a meeting with Kissinger in Pretoria, a package emerged figuring a two-year transition to majority rule, with an interim government headed by a black Prime Minister – who would, of course, have been Muzorewa. In effect, the Americans, the British

and the South Africans were gambling that the exiled guerrillas in Zambia and Mozambique were sufficiently close to exhaustion to grab at a compromise which offered them some fruits of future office, but which would have subordinated them to a moderate internal coalition of black politicians who had always distanced themselves from the military struggle – and from Soviet propaganda. It was the burgeoning recognition that they were being muscled aside by these Washington-orchestrated initiatives which proceeded to drive ZANU and ZAPU together into the (highly unstable) 'Patriotic Front'; although its representatives attended the all-party Geneva Conference in December 1976 under British chairmanship, the Front ensured its break-up when the degree of 'internalization' implicit in the proposed Rhodesian settlement became clear. Kissinger's plan, based on the assumption that ZANU and ZAPU were too riven by mutual rivalries to unite against the pressures brought to bear on them, had split apart at the seams.

Between 1977 and early 1979 the focus again shifted from political to military events. Both the Rhodesian security forces and the nationalist insurgents resembled two drained and much pummelled boxers whose ability to stay in the ring became increasingly problematical, while their respective backers, unable to forge a consensus among themselves, waited to see whose knees would buckle first. By the late 1970s, however, the cards were heavily stacked against the white Rhodesian cause, for not only had they to fight a constantly extending bush war, but also to run an economy which (like all other economies) had been hit by the inflations and recessions so characteristic of the decade and which (unlike other economies) was subject to international sanctions. Knowing that time had moved against him, Smith strove to push through his own deal with internal black political factions, and in April 1979 the security apparatus stretched itself to the limit to 'screen' national elections which gave a thumping majority to Muzorewa's party. This time, indeed, the official British observers, led by Lord Boyd, approved the legitimacy of the result. For a moment it seemed all might not be lost for Smith. If the UK Government could be brought to recognize the new dispensation, regardless of the declamatory excesses this would provoke in such forums as the UN, then it was possible that the South African Government might be persuaded at long last to raise its military stake in Rhodesia; in these ways victory could still be snatched from the jaws of defeat, and ZAPU and ZANU left where they were –

vicariously living off charity in Lusaka and Maputo. In June 1979 the election of a Conservative Government led by Margaret Thatcher, with impeccable right-wing credentials, brought this scenario to apparent life.

Almost immediately following the British election, however, the Thatcher Government ditched its manifesto commitment to act on the Boyd recommendation, and in so doing doomed any purely internally arranged succession to white hegemony in Rhodesia. Several reasons can be adduced for this uncharacteristic Thatcherite backdown. Smith's security organization had only barely succeeded in policing the April elections; there was little prospect of its being able to supervise a constitutional transition in Rhodesia without strong external reinforcement. This would be expensive at a time when the British Prime Minister was battenning down the public expenditure hatches; it would also be dangerous when she was intent on husbanding British prestige and when the military uncertainties in Rhodesia were so large. Simultaneously, and crucially, however, the possibilities of forcing the external guerrilla factions into a *generalized* settlement suddenly brightened; if this was not to Smith's taste, because it would create a new order which he would not be in a position to manipulate from the side-lines, it was certainly preferable to the British since it promised to be more stable in the long term than an internalized solution built on a dangerously narrow base. By 1979 the post-1973 rundown in most African states caused by oil price rises had attained crisis proportions in Zambia and, highly significantly, in Mozambique. In the latter case the Mozambique leader, Samora Machel, now had a real and urgent interest in pushing Robert Mugabe and his ZANU cohorts towards a negotiation with other parties, since this action was the vital precondition for any western banking loans to his regime. The Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference was scheduled for Lusaka in August 1979, and this proved an excellent venue for Mrs Thatcher to draw the threads of the Rhodesian problem into her hands. To what degree the resulting package had already been put together *before* the Lusaka proceedings began, and to what extent it was the product of conference brinkmanship with key roles played by such brokers as the Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, cannot be known. The provisional agreement, however, clearly stipulated all-party involvement in the transitional arrangements, a fully democratic constitution with safeguards for minorities and immediate elections to be supervised by the

UK. Both Muzorewa and Mugabe expressed considerable dismay at what each saw as a *fait accompli* likely to prejudice their respective positions, but neither could refute their backers' demands that they enter a trilateral negotiation with the British Government to thrash out the details of implementation.

The apparent ease with which the new British Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, bludgeoned Mugabe and the ZANU radicals into cooperation on the detailed application of the Lusaka principles came as a surprise to all but the most informed observers of southern African affairs. Carrington's leverage arose from the credible threat that the British Government *might* decide to go ahead unilaterally with Muzorewa, thus leaving any non-compromisers out in the cold, and from the frailty of the Machel regime in Mozambique. But Mugabe's pliability (however much it was concealed behind vivid protestations) was also underpinned by his own confidence that he would win the independence elections which were the keystone of the proposed transition. The pressures and manoeuvres which surrounded these elections will not be treated here. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the supposed expectation in London and other western capitals that Muzorewa's party would emerge victorious seems hard to believe. The scale of Mugabe's electoral triumph in March 1980 might not have been predicted, but the essential outcome – the leading role of ZANU in independent Zimbabwe – was almost certainly implicit in western thinking in the final stages of Rhodesian decolonization. The extent of ZANU penetration in much of the countryside was too great for any other assumption to have prevailed. The important consideration was that this leading role should be fitted into a system of constitutional, political and economic constraints. How successfully this task was actually fulfilled from the vantage point of the various participants at the Lusaka Conference will emerge only in the course of the later 1980s.

It was fitting that Britain's final disentanglement from Rhodesia should have come during the premiership of Margaret Thatcher. She represented an unbending commitment to the regearing of British society and economy to a world order which had changed profoundly over the preceding twenty years; in her reformist convictions she was reminiscent of Harold Macmillan, although fortuitously for her many of the constraints which had limited his scope for action had since dissolved. It might be argued, nevertheless, that the Falklands War of 1982, and the intensity of public emotion it aroused in the

UK, indicated that the imperial plasma was still secreted within the tissues of British society. This is probably misplaced. What the Falklands highlighted was a Britain which cared very little about what African, Asian or the rest of Latin American opinion thought on an issue where British interests were held to be at stake. By the early 1980s Britain had arrived at a point long occupied by Western Germany regarding the non-advanced world: the latter counted as suppliers and consumers, nothing more. The moral rhetoric of decolonization had given way to an implacable economic reductionism. Thus right-wing opinion in Britain looked on with satisfaction while the new Conservative Government scaled down overseas aid programmes; meanwhile left-wing commentators adumbrated an 'alternative economic strategy' consisting of a battery of protectionist devices, one of the chief aims of which would be to export deflation and unemployment to the newly industrializing countries of the Third World. The metropole-hinterland relationship had been transmuted into a purely business affair, interrupted by the odd strategic flurry as great-power rivalries refracted through the outer world. The age of formalized European empire, which once seemed such a logical outcrop of 'modern' forces, and which was a blend of authoritarianism and racism on the one hand and 'responsibility' for development and stability on the other, appeared now to be a curious departure from the normative, cash-register interaction between the world's different continents.

III PORTUGAL'S AFRICAN EMPIRE: REVOLUTION FROM THE METROPOLE

The Portuguese decolonizations in Guiné, Mozambique and Angola were the inevitable consequence of the successful coup against the dictatorship of President Antonio Salazar in Lisbon during April 1974.¹² The coup itself, however, was the product of a progressive weakening of the Portuguese position in its African colonies after 1970. It was this rapid crumbling of the Portuguese presence in the region which not only sealed the fate of the UDI regime in Rhodesia, but, more broadly, triggered a struggle among interested powers for a pre-eminent position in the new southern African dispensation. Had Portuguese colonialism in Africa been drawn into line with other European transfers of power in the early 1960s, and indigenous

regimes compliant with western interests slotted into place, then the Soviet Union and its clients (above all, Cuba) would not have been granted the windfall opportunity to penetrate central-southern Africa which came their way a decade later. The questions we must ask are, therefore, why did the Portuguese dictatorship succeed in maintaining its African authority through the 1960s, and why was this achievement so rapidly reversed in the first half of the 1970s?

Just when the British, French and Belgian metropolises had swung away from their colonial orientations after 1955, the Portuguese commitment to their African dependencies had been greatly reinforced. This enhanced commitment took two main forms: an increase in the numbers of white settlers (such that there were 350,000 such arrivals in Angola *after* 1960) and a build-up in the military forces 'on the ground' (such that in 1974 one in four adult Portuguese males were in the armed forces). African resistance to this accelerating penetration was feeble. The Bkonde rebellion in Angola during 1961 was bloodily but successfully crushed, and the nationalist cadres were sealed off from the masses by intensive security operations. Clearly, if a European power (even a weak one) wished to break an African nationalism after 1960, it was able to do so, at a cost.¹³ Portugal's acceptance of these costs was predetermined by the nature of its domestic economy. Since Salazar had taken power in 1928, Portugal had been shielded from those modernizing tendencies (generated by depression, war and reconstruction) so evident in northern Europe. This cordoning-off of Portuguese society would not have been sustainable if their larger neighbour, Spain, had maintained its place in the mainstream of continental development, but wartime neutrality, and Francoist authoritarianism, meant that the whole Iberian peninsula was strapped into social and economic immobility. Portugal, itself in certain senses a dependency of more advanced industrial economies and effectively pushed to the margins of Europe's transforming capitalism, concentrated its stagnant pool of resources and skills on cultivating its African allotment. This connection was predicated on continuing *formal* political domination of colonies because the metropole lacked the economic magnetism necessary to make informal control a viable alternative. As Amílcar Cabral, the self-styled martyr of Portuguese decolonization, commented: 'Portugal cannot afford neo-colonialism'.

However reluctant the Portuguese political and business establishments were to break out of the old colonial nexus, it might have been

expected that the other western powers would have pressed them into decolonization. Thus Portugal had been a NATO member since its inception in 1949, and by the early 1960s the US had long been determined to disengage the alliance from the taint of colonialism. In Britain, too, Harold Macmillan might logically have wished to see the Portuguese empire dismantled in Africa after 1959, since his own domestic right-wing critics, resentful of the swing in British colonial policy, were further incensed by the observation that the Portuguese were quite able to withstand the 'wind of change' which Macmillan chose to find so overwhelming. But paradoxically, the maintenance of Lisbon's authority in Africa suited other NATO powers quite well. The cost, after all, was borne entirely on the Portuguese exchequer, or, more precisely, by the Portuguese peasantry who were recruited in their hundreds of thousands for service in Africa. Since the armed services of this minor ally had no real role to play in western defence thinking, the diversion of its energies in African directions did not cause concern in Washington. Indeed, US administrations were anxious that Communist powers might fill any vacuum left by a Portuguese departure, and so accepted the status quo as the best of all possible worlds. The British shared in these American attitudes. But the continuance of Lisbon's authority in Guiné, Angola and Mozambique (especially in the latter two territories) had one particular advantage when viewed from London: it provided a kind of regional 'guarantee' which permitted British decolonizations to be pressed in southern-central Africa with a greater confidence than might otherwise have been the case. But overarching these considerations was the knowledge that any unscrambling of Portuguese colonialism in Africa would necessitate the unscrambling, too, of the Salazarist dictatorship itself. Throughout the 1960s this remained an unwelcome prospect within NATO, since renewed instabilities in the Iberian peninsula had been a scenario which western governments had been eager to stifle ever since the Spanish Civil War had ground to a halt in 1939.

After 1970, however, Portuguese resources were badly stretched by the heightened tempo of its military engagement in Africa.¹⁴ The changing pace of events was partially caused by internal political shifts within the various dependencies. It was quite logical that large blocks of indigenous black opinion should have been mobilized as majority-rule independence seemed to have passed them by altogether, just as it had passed by Rhodesian blacks; in this way it

became easier for such nationalist factions as the African Forces for the Independence of Guiné and Cape Verde (PAIGC), the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) to attract recruits. But the root cause of the altered situation in Portuguese Africa after 1970 was external: the flow of arms, munitions and specialist advisers from non-western countries transformed the guerrilla factions into credible opponents of Portuguese mastery. This intervention emanated above all from the Soviet Union and its East German and Cuban proxies; it was just one facet of the Warsaw Pact's decision at this stage to extend its global challenge to American power. Had the Americans not been embroiled in the Vietnam War it is probable that an early response would have been made to this Soviet entry into southern Africa. As it was, however, the Portuguese were left to cope with a regional escalation as best they could, hiking-up their own man- and firepower to maintain their margin of superiority over the guerrillas. But by 1975 the metropole's ability to sustain this huge military effort was beginning to crack.

If this was the crucial background to the coup of 25 April 1974 in Lisbon, it is necessary to go on and differentiate between the two main groups which ensured its success. First, there was the mass of military conscripts (middle- and junior-ranking officers, and ranks) who saw their personal aspirations being subordinated to unwinnable African wars, and who had become convinced that only a return to democracy at home offered a way out of the impasse. This opinion was organized for action in the Armed Forces Movement (AFM) and deeply overlaid with radical and proletarian sentiments. Second, there was the burgeoning consensus amongst the business and bureaucratic classes that Portugal had to reorientate itself towards integration within the EEC, a long-term goal which required as a first step the ending of domestic authoritarianism and any commitment to colonial pacification. Thus the expansion of the EEC in 1972 with the signature of the Treaty of Rome by the UK, Ireland and Denmark had opened up the whole question of southern Europe's absorption into that ambitious block; if, as Amílcar Cabral had said, Portugal could not afford neo-colonialism in the 1960s, in the 1970s it could afford even less to see Spain edge towards a re-entry into west European affairs and thus be left out in the cold on its own. It was this transient coincidence between popular protest as expressed in the AFM and the strategic calculations of metropolitan oligarchies which

allowed the coup to run its course so easily and (almost) bloodlessly, placing transitional power in the hands of General Antonio de Spínola.

The 'coup consensus', however, did not mean that the moving spirits of the April revolution had identical views on what shape decolonization in Africa should take. The AFM leaders pressed for immediate settlements with the guerrilla armies, whereas establishment interests held out for a more closely controlled process in which transfers of power should be made to hinge on a non-appropriation of metropolitan-owned assets in the colonies. Spínola had constantly to bridge this gap. His original, pre-coup conception of a Lusitanian Federation (a kind of French Community-style solution) lacked credibility; Portugal did not have the power to impose such a system as France had been able to do in West Africa. Within months of coming to power, Spínola had decided to differentiate between the three African situations with which he was confronted. He gave the AFM factions in Guiné the scope to negotiate a ceasefire followed by independence, because the military situation was irretrievable and because Guiné was economically of little value. Similarly, Spínola accepted a settlement in Mozambique, since Samora Machel's FRELIMO was firmly in control of much of the country and seemed likely to prove a malleable partner after power was transferred. Angola, however, was crucially different, and it was in this territory that decolonization was to prove deeply contorted and deformed by international rivalries. In particular, the new regime in Lisbon could not allow Angola – rich in minerals, occupying a strategic position in the continent and vulnerable to external manipulation by virtue of its conflicting regional and ethnic formations – to slip into an unstable, Soviet-penetrated independence without angering those western nations on whose future favours Portugal would be dependent. Spínola therefore strove to effect a negotiated end to colonial rule in which the role of the Marxist-led MPLA was carefully buttressed by its competitors, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) whose external links lay with NATO. Finally, in January 1975 he secured a document signed by representatives from all three of these aspirant bodies providing for independence in Angola in the following November, after which free and fair elections would be held as soon as possible; the Portuguese military presence would not be completely withdrawn until February 1976. This last stipulation was not least intended to give white settlers the

assurances they required to stay on in the colonies, so that their skills and production would not be forfeited just when the emerging independent states would have desperate need of their resources. But in fact, given the preparations that the MPLA, UNITA, and FLNA were each making for civil war, the January 1975 agreement was a farce; its only effectiveness probably lay in allowing Spínola to signal loud and clear that Portuguese capacities had now been exhausted, and that other (and bigger) powers would have to see to it that the Angolan dénouement was not a catastrophe for the western alliance. Sensing that their 'home' government had no stomach even for 'emergency' measures to protect its exposed nationals in Angola, and shocked by the inter-factional fighting which tore the Angolan capital, Luanda, apart during March 1975, the Portuguese settlers proceeded to stream back to Europe in a massive exodus reminiscent of the end of French Algeria. Holding the Luanda 'ring' while this migration took place, and absorbing the refugees back into metropolitan society, was really the last significant act of Portuguese colonialism.

Because the Portuguese role in subsequent Angolan events was so limited, the events which ensued really fall outside our present scope, but a brief summary would be appropriate. Henry Kissinger, who dominated foreign policy-making in President Ford's Republican administration in the US, was just as determined to prevent the MPLA scooping the Angolan pool as he was to thwart ZANU and ZAPU in Rhodesia, and in early 1975 he saw a solution to both these tangled situations in the evolution of an American-South African 'umbrella' fixed over these portions of central-southern Africa. But the rapid disintegration of the Portuguese presence by the summer of 1975 meant that this cooperation between Washington and Pretoria had to take on an explicit military form. It is quite likely that at first Kissinger felt such action to be an advantage, since a limited and successful intervention in Africa might help to staunch that post-Vietnam defeatism at home which the Secretary of State felt to be such a danger to American power at large. Thus in October 1975 a US-financed and equipped force moved south from Zaïre into Angola, while South African armoured columns moved north with UNITA and FLNA units, intending to break the MPLA strongholds around Luanda. The massive Cuban counter-reinforcements which followed, however, raised the military stakes in a way the US administration had not anticipated, and to a degree which evoked the intense nervousness and caution currently dominant within the

Congress; in December 1975, with a presidential election year looming, the American commitment to Angolan operations was suddenly withdrawn. The damage done to US-South African understanding was profound and lasting, and as a result the anti-Communist powers were left without any mechanism to achieve their goals in the area. The South African Government maintained its offensive in the south so as to create as much havoc as possible within the MPLA zone, but inevitably these troops, too, drew back in the latter months of 1976, since without American back-up they could not hope to impose solutions over such a large area stretching beyond South African borders. It was therefore the MPLA and its Cuban backers whose dual authority succeeded that of Portugal over most of Angola's vast tracts, and most significantly around the Luanda 'core'. But UNITA and the FLN continued to exercise power within their own regional fiefdoms, and the South Africans evinced a readiness to reintervene to sustain that condition of confused deadlock which (under the circumstances) served their interests best. What had followed upon the Portuguese withdrawal from Angola, therefore, was not independence in any meaningful or substantive sense, but rather a field of play upon which intricate and layered patterns of conflict – national, regional and international – were branded.

If in the 1970s, therefore, the western powers succeeded (just) in keeping Rhodesian decolonization within the guide-lines of their own interests, they clearly failed to do so in Angola. The reasons for this contrast are fundamentally simple: settler-power, and western influence generally, was much more deeply entrenched in Rhodesian society than had been the case in the latter's Portuguese-ruled neighbours. But perhaps the most pertinent conclusion to draw from this narrative is how lucky or astute British, French and Belgian governments had been to drive towards blanket decolonizations in the first half of the 1960s when the Soviets had yet seriously to challenge western power in Afro-Asia. Had many of these decolonizations, especially the more complicated among them, been delayed for a decade longer, by which time the USSR had become a truly global military power, the processes of power transfer would have been infinitely more subject to international complications. The chronological pattern of decolonization after the late 1950s was therefore probably conducive to the world's peace (on essentially western terms), even if it did little for the aspirations to prosperity of the newly self-governing masses.