

GULF OIL: THE STRATEGY TO APPEASE AND OPPRESS

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Brother from the west-  
How can we explain that you are our brother?  
The world does not end at the threshold of your house  
nor at the stream which marks the border of your country  
nor in the sea  
in whose vastness you sometimes think  
that you have discovered the meaning of the infinite.  
Beyond your threshold, beyond the sea  
the great struggle continues.  
Men with warm eyes and hands hard as the earth  
at night embrace their children  
and depart before dawn.  
Many will not return.  
What does it matter?  
We are men tired of shackles. For us  
freedom is worth more than life.  
From you, brother, we expect  
and to you we offer  
not the hand of charity which misleads and humiliates  
but the hand of comradeship, committed, conscious.  
How can you refuse, brother from the west?

Mozambique Liberation Front, 1973

1968 was the year of decision for the Gulf Oil Corporation. It was during that year that Gulf began pumping oil from the Portuguese held African colony of Angola. Portugal, then seven years at war with African freedom fighters, was strapped for funds. The freedom fighters had taken the military initiative in the remaining two colonies, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, in addition to Angola. For the first time Portugal realized she was losing the war in Africa. Such was the state of affairs when Gulf Oil made the first large tax and royalty payments to Portugal. The war would now be longer. Portugal had been economically resuscitated to a degree. Gulf Oil had entered the conflict on the side of the colonial oppressor.

Anticipating a storm of domestic Black protest precipitated by its empire saving assistance to Portugal, Gulf launched the first stage of a comprehensive public relations campaign designed to quell the protest voice of Black America. Traditionally known as the most racist in an industry noted for ruthlessness,

Gulf claims to have moved since 1968 from last in the industry to first in minority recruitment asserting that Blacks now comprise 12% of the total work force. (Such assertions were found lacking in foundation in 1971 however, when the City of Dayton, Ohio rejected the lowbid by Gulf to supply city vehicles with gasoline, because of Gulf's poor minority hiring record as well as its activities in Angola). Uncertain that the recruitment of a few Blacks here would offset the company's role in Africa, Gulf carefully pondered its next move. That move turned out to be the cultivation of favorable relations with the Black press. The company would implicitly encourage the Black press to give as little coverage to Gulf's role in Africa as possible thus achieving the desired prophylactic result.

Thusfar the strategy appears to be working. The Black press almost in toto has behaved more like a corporate public relations auxilliary than a professional newsorgan responsive to the needs of its Black readers. Almost as if to suggest implied conspiracy, the Black press has seen fit not to explore in any form the ten year old war in Southern Africa and Gulf's major role in it. In blind quest of the proverbial advertising dollar, the Black press has sadly disserved its readership. In proof of its own malfeasance, Cause, a now defunct supplement to the Black press, offered in July 1972 that, "More than 5000 stories favorable to Gulf Oil Corporation have appeared in the Black press since 1961.....The major accomplishment lies beneath the surface. This has been to change the hostility toward Gulf felt by countless Black Americans in 1961 to a favorable or at least open-minded attitude today."

Underscoring this all, the National Newspaper Publishers Association, the 33 year old group of Black publishers, invited Fred S. Schwend, president of Gulf, U.S.A., to present at this year's annual meeting in Houston, the NNPA Publisher-of-the-Year Award. In his speech on that occasion, Schwend enthused, "We've always had a friend in the Black press."

In exchange for the invitation but more importantly to ensure continued favorable treatment, Gulf offered to sponsor for NNPA members an escorted trip to its armed oil installation in Angola. Although the trip has yet to be made, when the

NNPA executive committee met in New York in September to discuss the details, prevailing sentiment ran in favor of making the trip despite strong discouragement of such trips from the Organization of African Unity, the African liberation groups fighting against Portugal and organized Black opinion on the subject in this country. Black journalists indeed should go to Angola, either at the request of their struggling African brethren or perhaps even independently but hardly under the paid sponsorship of the very company condemned by the United Nations itself for materially supporting Portugal in her military effort to maintain the colonial empire.

In still another effort to buy the good will of the Black community, Gulf retained recently Zebra Associates, Inc., of New York City, a Black-owned and operated advertising agency which specializes in communicating with "minority communities". Zebra will provide creative and consulting services related to Gulf advertising in Black publications. They will also provide some public relations consulting services on "minority projects" according to Gulf. As part of the same "minority projects" strategy, Luddy Hayden, a Gulf Community Relations Specialist, recently visited Black organizations and businesses in the Ohio area with offers of financial assistance.

Not all of Gulf's public relations forays into the Black community have been catalogued. The campaign's collective impact is still unclear. But what is manifestly clear is its purpose, and that is to render the Black community uninformed; its leaders and notables left without standing to offer strong moral and politically courageous insights on the question of American corporate investment in Southern Africa.

From the sponsorship of Lee Elder in the Nigerian Open to Rev. Leon Sullivan's acceptance for OIC of 50,000 in 1972, nowhere is this dilemma of neutralized leadership more painful than in the case of Rev. Ralph David Abernathy. During the week of January 1 to 7 of this year, an impressive number of activities were planned in Pittsburgh honoring the life and genius of George Washington Carver. Of special note was the participation of Gulf in the activities. The company

sponsored a reception for Rev. Abernathy, guest speaker for the George Washington Carver Day luncheon. Six months later the Pan African Liberation Committee (PALC) circulated a petition calling upon "all Black Americans and others who believe in freedom to boycott the products of the Gulf Oil Company" because of Gulf's support of Portuguese colonialism in Africa. Rev. Abernathy signed the petition authorizing the use of his name in news releases and ads planned for major publications urging national support for the now escalating boycott campaign. On October 24 of this year, Gulf presented to Rev. Abernathy and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference a check for \$50,000.

The purpose here is not to heap scorn and vituperation on those who have accepted the favors of Gulf Oil. More constructively the task now is to render some measure of analysis and understanding of why the favors are given by Gulf and what the enormous geopolitical implications and consequences of acceptance may be. That requires a look at what the real stakes are in Southern Africa and how a favorable outcome of the freedom wars will affect the future of Africans all over the world in a way that pittance from Gulf were designed to help prevent. It would be a real tragedy indeed if our hard fought efforts for real freedom through total African liberation, were deflected and splintered by gifts from our enemies.

#### Portugal and Gulf In Africa

Since the early 1960's the African peoples of the Portuguese colonies, which include Guinea-Bissau in West Africa, the mineral rich land of Angola and the eastern coastal country of Mozambique, have been fighting for freedom. Having resisted five centuries of Portuguese tyranny, many Africans began to organize more concretely to end the colonial system which oppressed them. This system involved an economy which was founded in part on forced labor which required Africans under colonial law to work on European plantations or migrate to the mines of South Africa. Benefits went to the coffers in Lisbon or the pockets of other foreign interests.

Little or no education, scarce health facilities and the total absence of political rights were the lot of the African masses of Guinea, Angola and Mozambique. Petitions and demands to Portugal calling for political independence, especially stimulated by independence in nearby African countries, proved fruitless. Thus, in each colony more direct action occurred. In February, 1961 the people in Angola led by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) tried to free the growing number of political prisoners who had been incarcerated in the capital city of Luanda. On March 15th, an armed revolt broke out in the Northern Angola plantation areas. In 1963, the armed struggle began in Guinea after the political party, the PAIGC, had done careful preparatory work, and in 1964 in Northern Mozambique, the forces of the Mozambique Liberation Front, (Frelimo), launched the military struggle there. Since that time, the Portuguese with the help of NATO, South Africa and western corporations, have committed half their annual budget and 150,000 Portuguese troops in a continuing effort to stem the tide of freedom throughout white minority ruled Southern Africa.

The White Redoubt which includes in addition to the Portuguese held areas, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), Namibia and South Africa, is shrinking inexorably. The freedom forces now control large areas of territories formerly held by the Portuguese. Recently, almost fully liberated Guinea-Bissau declared its independence from Portugal. Fighting has now spread to Zimbabwe as the African freedom struggle pushes closer to the borders of the Republic of South Africa, the bulwark of minority rule on the African continent.

Gulf Oil began exploration in Cabinda, a small enclave of Angola between the Republic of Zaire and Congo-Brazzaville, in 1954; received its first concession from the Portuguese Government in 1957, discovered oil with a valuable low sulphur content in 1966; and began production in 1968. By the fall of 1971, petroleum production had reached 150,000 barrels per day and Gulf's investment \$200 million comprising two thirds of American total investment in Portuguese held Africa.

In exchange for extracted oil, prior to 1969, Gulf paid to Portugal only \$3 million. In 1969 this jumped to \$11 million and to \$16 million in 1970, thus totalling 30 million, most of which according to Gulf were advances against future royalties and taxes. The 1972 payments reached a high of \$62 million with a higher projection for this year.

Gulf has vainly attempted to deny the significance of these and future payments, by underplaying the fact that Angola is a colony of Portugal fighting to liberate itself and describing the Angolan Colonial Government as a beneficent ruler. In reality, Gulf's monies aid Portugal and the colonial authorities in the following ways: (1) Gulf provides important foreign exchange to Portugal through control over the monetary and trade systems of Angola, (2) Profits from Gulf's investment are the best foundation for sustaining the Portuguese Government defense effort. (Last year's payments of \$62 million comprised nearly 50% of the Portuguese Angolan war budget), (3) Gulf provides money at the precise times that the Portuguese are hard pressed and will continue in this manner.

The importance of Gulf's corporate-military alliance is dramatized by the story that the Governor-General of Angola traveled around the districts of that colony talking to white settlers, assuring them that although they had to pay heavy taxes to aid the war effort, the burden would eventually be lifted from them and absorbed by none other than the Gulf Oil Corporation.

But the arena of armed crisis in Southern Africa extends well beyond the local combatants and foreign investors. The entire area had become a geopolitical crucible for the restructuring of world power relationships involving against the forces of African freedom, all of the major western nations, prominently including the United States. It is not surprising that the U.S. State Department and Gulf Oil have compatible, if not identical, interests in maintaining the status quo in Southern Africa. Undoubtedly Gulf has had its imprint on American foreign policy towards Portugal. Jack Anderson quoted in Michael Tanser's, The Political Economy of International Oil the Underdeveloped Countries related that, " The

State Department has often taken its politics right out of the executive suites of the oil companies. When big oil can't get what it wants in foreign countries the State Department tires to get it for them. In many countries the American Embassies function virtually as branch offices for the American oil combine."

Oil, however, is not the lone determining factor in the western powers policy calculus. The stakes in these wars are much larger for Africa and her sons in diaspora than casual observation reveals. Over the last few decades, due in large part to industrial expansion, western economics have been increasingly dependent on foreign sources of raw materials. The United States, Britain and West Germany all import substantial proportions of their total domestic consumption of certain minerals from Southern Africa which produces very high proportions of the world supply of more than ten important minerals. These powers are, in other words, dependent, perhaps even critically so, upon Southern Africa's supplies of minerals and other raw materials.

Because of the importance of gold in international economic relations, South African production of 74% of the world supply is of global significance. Over 300 American companies have vested interests totaling over \$1 billion in the survival of white minority rule in South Africa.

In short, any threat to white rule in Southern Africa, for the west is a threat to important western markets, to vital suppliers of raw materials, to trade routes, to strategic interests, to investments, to old and trusted white ties and white friends. Not unexpectedly then, the western powers led by the United States have elected to support materially, the totalitarian white minority rule regimes of Southern Africa.

It is no secret that Portugal is prosecuting the colonial wars with armaments and planes provided by the western powers through the NATO alliances or that western investments, leases, credit extensions and other supportive economic arrangements are providing an essential lifeline to the minority regimes.

But even with the support of the western powers, the white regimes can not resist history. That Southern Africa will be free in the foreseeable future is inevitable. The momentum and support of most of the world are all on the side of the freedom forces.

The lesson for us in this is that until Africa is free and in firm control of all of her valuable resources, with leverage to develop and demand, certainly none of us here shall be free. Only in this way will we ever escape this nightmare of sufferance survival in the midst of a hostile majority.

The Gulf Oil Corporation understands this. When will we?