

## THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA IN THE DEFENSE OF THE FREE WORLD

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### *Introduction*

The very title of this article contains ingredients for controversy. I can visualize the raised eyebrows and the shaking of heads while readers formulate the questions (some of which are rhetoric). "What is the Free World?" "Against whom or what must it be defended?" "Does it need to be defended?" Or more cynically: "Is it worth defending?"

This is patently not the place to analyse these and associated questions in detail, and I shall not attempt to do so. At the same time, however, it is pertinent to point out that, unless one assumes the existence, or the potential existence, of a more or less polarized conflict situation, there could be no justification for an article of this kind at all. Nor would there, by the same token, be a justification for NATO and the Warsaw Pact, for the US interest in Diego Garcia and the Soviet interest in such unlikely areas as Somalia, Uganda, Cape Verde Islands, etc. (these in addition to areas which could be rationalized in the context of other considerations such as the normal development of trade or the Sino-Soviet conflict.) There could be no justification for the ever increasing expenditure on armaments in both the United States and the Soviet Union.

Whatever hesitations may prevail in Western thinking, however, there is no such ambiguity in the minds of the Soviet leadership on this score. Even if we should blind ourselves to the hostile implications of their actions; even if we should hail every ratification of an "agreement" as the dawn of a new era of detente in spite of the historic evidence that the USSR has never yet honoured an international agreement beyond the point where it ceased to yield direct advantage to the Soviet cause ... even so, I submit, we can not ignore the unwavering "Party Line" and the insistent and consistent policy statements and declarations issuing from the Kremlin. These spell out, regularly and in every conceivable syntax, that "The basic theme which runs through current Soviet statements on East-West relations and

matters relating to Soviet defence is that, regardless of agreements between states, the struggle for dominance between the communist bloc, led by the Soviet Union, and the capitalist bloc, led by the United States, is uncompromising and irreconcilable and will continue as long as capitalism survives". (1)

It might perhaps have been more acceptable had I captioned this article "The RSA as a Pivot in the Balance of Power." Here once again, though, one would have to consult the Soviet strategic philosophy on the interpretation of the concept of balance of power. This is summarised in a monograph published by the University of Miami, as follows: "...the term 'balance of world forces' is to the Soviet a 'broad concept' which encompasses a gamut of factors: economic, political, psychological and ideological as well as military. However, none of these stands alone; all are interlocked. Strength in the case of one adds strength to all the others, and vice versa. And true superiority from the standpoint of the overall 'balance of world forces' requires superiority in all." (2) The all-embracing scope of this concept is further illustrated by the fact that the Soviet leaders also express the same idea in various different terms, such as: "correlation of forces in the world arena", "correlation of world forces" and "alignment of forces in the world arena".

For more than a decade Soviet leadership has been claiming, and boastfully proclaiming, that this balance of power was shifting inexorably in their favour. (3) During the last few years they have been insisting that this shift has become irreversible and consequently they have appropriated unto themselves a progressively increasing freedom of action and impunity to defy the USA in every sphere short of direct military confrontation. There is a widespread tendency in Western countries to discard this balance of power concept as an outmoded "zero-sum game". This point of view is claimed to be based on current realities, such as the depolarization of global conflict,

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(1) Goure, Leon. et. al. *The Role of Nuclear Forces in Current Soviet Strategy*. Monographs in International Affairs. Center for Advanced International Studies. University of Miami. 1974. p 1.

(2) Harvey, Mose L. et. al. *Science and Technology as an Instrument of Soviet Policy*. Monographs in International Affairs. Center for Advanced International Studies. University of Miami. 1972. p 4.

(3) Kohler, Foy D. et. al. *Soviet Strategy for the Seventies*. From Cold War to Peaceful Coexistence. Monographs in International Affairs. Center for Advanced International Studies. University of Miami. 1973. p 41.

decentralization of communist control and even hostility within the communist camp, modern realism in the face of international problems such as environment, population explosion, the energy crisis, etc. Many of these current realities are in fact the very elements from which the shift in the balance of power accrues. Furthermore, there are other realities in the equation which the protagonists of this point of view appear to ignore, such as the Soviet nuclear armament, the expansion of Soviet maritime power, the Soviet gains and/or the US losses in the Mediterranean, in the Suez Canal area, in the Persian Gulf area, on the Indian subcontinent, in the Indian Ocean, on the African Continent, in Portugal, in the North Atlantic, in Indo-China or are these not realities?

### *Identification of Role*

How does the RSA fit into this picture? Firstly, and in a general perspective, it is perhaps axiomatic to state that, in the present era of total strategy, engendered largely by the technological progress in respect of the destructive capacity of weapons and in their delivery as well as in respect of communication facilities, no area in the world is too insignificant to be considered in a global strategy. Similarly, in the application of the currently predominant indirect mode of strategy, no avenue of approach can be discarded with impunity. These truisms however assume more than rudimentary relevance with regard to the RSA if one should take into account certain inherent attributes accruing to the country from, for example, its geographic location, its natural resources, its state of development and its current stability. These are real attributes which could have either a positive or a negative effect on the defence of the Free World. The significance of this impact could be more or less crucial depending on circumstances prevailing in the event, and the pros and cons could be disputed. The effect could be either positive or negative: it could not be neutral.

It is of primary importance to note that the strategic relevance of each of the identified attributes is a function of the interaction between all the spheres on which they operate. Thus, in every sphere, they constitute an equation in which a change in one of the factors must have a direct significance on all the other spheres as well. This equation is further complicated by the fact that the strategic effect of these attributes, singly or in combination, is conditioned by the ambient internal climate. Therefore the prevailing internal climate in the RSA is a vital premise in the arguments deployed in the context of this paper. It is, once again, not my intention to elaborate

on this subject except to define this premise as a stable situation in orderly evolution along democratic capitalistic lines.

### *Geographic Location*

This is probably the major factor which focusses the attention of soldiers and students of strategy on the RSA. No one can take a look at a map of the world without noticing the location of Southern Africa. It is immediately conspicuous because it is seen to be one of three continents reaching into the southern ocean areas. To the student certain significant differences in the location of these three land masses will become apparent. He will no doubt notice that there is much more sea-room for manoeuvre around the South African shores than in the other two cases; that, except for the traffic through the Suez Canal, the maritime routes around the Cape provide the most direct link between countries on the Atlantic and Indian Ocean littorals; he would notice navigational bottlenecks to these oceans at Cape Horn, Panama, Gibraltar, Suez, the Indonesian sea area and the passage South of Australia, etc. Observation of these intrinsic physical characteristics would stimulate further analysis in the context of military, economic and political considerations which, in turn, would result in strategic appreciations.

It was natural therefore that objective studies should be made to explore the implications of the RSA's physical location in a strategic context and that such studies should pay progressively more attention to the related economic and political aspects. Developments over the past two decades induced a rapid increase in the quantity and a change in the tenor of studies on the subject. Developments which had the most notable influence on this were probably technological advances, decolonialization, the expansion of Soviet naval power, the situation in the Middle East, the energy crisis, the dwindling available raw materials and the changed status and alignment of Portugal and its former African territories ... I have remarked that the tenor of these studies has changed: they have become less objective and one discerns a greater urgency in them.

The main arguments in current studies revolve mainly around the commercial and military importance of the Cape Sea Route, the importance of the RSA as an operational base in the event of a general war and the value of the South African harbours and its developed infrastructure as a supporting and supply base for operations in the Southern Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Latterly a greater emphasis has been placed on the RSA's resources of energy and raw materials. One finds, of course, numerous variations on these themes

as well as differences in emphasis, but the factors invoked in the different arguments remain largely within this general framework.

The conclusions drawn in these studies could, generally speaking, be classified as belonging to one of two opposing schools of thought, viz: either that the RSA is vital to the defence and the security of the Free World, or, at the other pole, that it has no significant role to play in this respect. (4)

### *Economic Considerations*

Protagonists of the first school of thought point to the importance of commercial shipping along the Cape Sea Route for Western Europe and, to an increasing extent, for the USA "The grand total of all ships of all nations passing the Cape of Good Hope ... comes to approximately 24000 ocean-going ships a year, or 66 per day". (5) Increasing emphasis is placed on tanker traffic (+ 70% of total tonnage) and it is postulated that, for the foreseeable future, the Cape Route will remain of vital importance in this respect; it is agreed that even if the Suez Canal should resume peak operation the route would remain vulnerable and the Canal will not be able to accommodate laden super tankers. Attention is drawn to the increasing Soviet maritime presence in the Indian Ocean, its expanding facilities on the Indian Ocean littoral and Soviet and Chinese representation and influence in African states. These are interpreted as constituting a potential threat to Western shipping in view of the absence of a counter Western presence. The

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(4) See for example:

- a. Wall, Patrick. *Draft General Report on the Security of the Alliance (NATO)*. October 1974.
- b. Menaul, Stewart. *The Indian Ocean in the Next Decade*, South Africa International, Vol V, No. 4, April 1975.
- c. *The Security of the Cape Oil Route*, Institute for the Study of Conflict Special Report. March 1974.
- d. Jukes, Geoffrey. *The Indian Ocean in Soviet Naval Policy*, Adelphi Papers, No. 87, May 1972.
- e. *Africa and the Defense of the West*, Le Monde Moderne, 1975.
- f. *Indian Ocean Security*, Bulletin of the Africa Institute of South Africa, No. 2, Vol XIII, 1975.
- g. Dodd, Colonel N. *Simonstown*, Defense Magazine, England, 1975.

(5) Wall, Patrick, ed. *The Indian Ocean and the Threat to the West*. Four Studies in Global Strategy. Stacey International. London 1975. p 62.

RSA with its developed ports, maritime communications, repair and refuelling facilities, resources and infrastructure, backed by the largest industrial complex in the Southern Hemisphere, is seen as vital ground for the protection of this lifeline and to ensure the smooth and uninterrupted flow of traffic in peace and in war.

The RSA's economic importance is summarised by Mr. Patrick Wall, MP, in the following terms: "South Africa is the world's largest supplier of the world's most precious metal, gold, and its most precious stone, the diamond. For centuries men have fought over these exotic minerals. Today modern technology has given enhanced importance to such minerals as uranium, chrome and vanadium, all of which are found in large quantities in the Republic of South Africa. Export of these materials to the West are of great strategic and economic importance. As far as food is concerned South Africa is virtually self-supporting and exports maize, sugar, tobacco and fruit as well as wood, karakul, mohair and hides." (6) The RSA is one of the leading producers of minerals in the Western world. Currently some 65 minerals are produced, the chief of which are high-grade iron ore, coal, copper, limestone, phosphates, vermiculite, antimony and titanium - and of course gold and diamonds.

The importance of these resources, it is pointed out, derives not so much from the fact that they exist and are known to exist, but rather from the fact that they are being exploited effectively and, above all, that they are available to the Free World. This is seen to be a crucial consideration in the context of the current awareness of the incipient crisis as regards the availability of raw materials to the industrial countries of the West. In view of the consideration that economic vitality is a prerequisite for the preservation of the Western way of life, the RSA fulfills an important role, in the economic sphere, in the defence of the Free World.

Adherents to the opposing school of thought generally concede the statistical facts in the arguments referred to above, but they differ in the interpretation. They argue, for example, that the Cape Sea Route - and in particular in respect of oil supply - is not all that important for Western economy. The counter argument rests on different assessments of Western dependence on Middle East oil and of the effect which the reopening of the Suez Route and eventually the SUMED and other pipelines will have on the volume of the Cape Route traffic.

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(6) Ibid. p 59.

They see no ominous or sinister portent, as far as the West is concerned, in the increase of Soviet maritime presence in the Indian Ocean or the expansion of Soviet and Chinese influence in African states. These manifestations, they assert, are natural and legitimate aspirations of these powers to extend their international relations in the different spheres of inter-state commerce. Any military implication in these activities, if such implications are admitted, are ascribed to the Sino-Soviet conflict. It is a logical next step, therefore, to conclude that the question of the protection of shipping on the Cape Route does not arise and, as a corollary to this, that the role of the RSA in the defence of the Free World in this context is irrelevant.

On the issue of the RSA's importance accruing from its economic resources, the champions of this second school of thought contend that the sources of raw materials in the rest of the African continent must be vastly in excess of those in the Republic of South Africa. Without analysing the implications of the time factor involved in the discovery and actual exploitation of such resources, their availability to Western industrialised countries or the security of tenure and supply, they then arrive at two conclusions. Firstly, they conclude that the relative economic importance of the RSA is overrated and, secondly - on the premise that there is no communist threat in this region - that there is no risk of the West losing this source of supply of raw materials anyway.

#### *Military Considerations*

In the military strategic sphere we find an even greater diversity in points of view cutting across both the schools of thought identified above. The main points at issue are the hypotheses of future confrontations, probable scenarios, effective military balance, vital objectives, enemy strategy, the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean in a general war, the importance of land-based support for maritime operations and a host of associated theories and concepts. It is manifestly out of the question even to attempt to analyse these factors in a single article and therefore I shall only refer to a few implications involved.

Basic to the argument, of course, is the question of the nature of the conflict. By definition there can be no strategy unless a conflict situation exists and, by the same token, neither could there be an argument about defence and the role of the RSA in defence.

As I have already intimated, there is a school of thought which tends to reject the existence of a polarized conflict on a global scale and in a total

sense. Its champions translate the realities of current tensions to competition in areas of social endeavour (economic, industrial, technological, ideological, etc.) and to regional, local and internal conflicts. Hence, the argument goes, security has become divisible. (7) This leads to their hypotheses that the only admissible confrontation is one that is postulated on the escalation of regional conflicts. In this context Southern Africa, in contrast, for example to the Middle East, is considered to be an unlikely region for the initiation of such an escalation because, it is argued, super power interests are not sufficiently involved in the region. In spite of this assessment of the RSA's importance (or lack of importance) however, the argument is developed, by some of its champions, (8) to the amazing conclusion that the RSA should desist from strengthening its defensive capability lest the African states be provoked to aggression. This, the argument goes, would set in motion a regional conflict which might involve super power interests and create conditions for a confrontation. (A regional version of the ABM argument).

At the other end of the spectrum we find the premise that the East-West conflict, symbolized on the one hand by the USA and on the other by the USSR, is continuing unabatedly; that it is a protracted war of low intensity in which every sphere of human activity serves as a means of coercion and/or as a target; that, because of the destructive capability of modern weapons, the indirect mode of strategy is prevalent; that detente is a Soviet strategy and that the Kremlin has not deviated in the slightest from its aim of total world domination. (9)

A truly inexplicable phenomenon in all the arguments over the whole spectrum indicated above is that the consideration of the "balance of forces in the world arena", in the context of the Soviet interpretation of the concept is conspicuous by its absence. I have already emphasized the fact that this tenet of Soviet strategy is constantly invoked by the Soviet leadership, even to this day. One would imagine that this in itself - ie the Kremlin's insistence on this tenet - would qualify it for inclusion in any argument in which a conflict with the Soviet Union arises. This would be true even if such a conflict were only admitted as an hypothesis. Moreover, bearing in mind

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(7) Bertram, Dr. Christoph. *South Africa in the World Strategic Situation*. S.A.I.I.A. Symposium, Pretoria. 1975. p 5.

(8) Ibid. p 18.

(9) Cf. Gordon, Andrew. *Soviet Strategy Crisis Management*. Strategic Review. US Strategic Institute. Vol III, No. 2. Spring 1975. pp 30 - 40.

the Communist gains referred to in the introductory portion of this article, one would imagine that this consideration would qualify for inclusion in its own right, even if in the course of the elaboration of the argument its importance or relevance should be demolished. It can not be ignored.

Within this notion of balance the pivotal strategic importance of the RSA emerges with irresistible insistence. A glance at a political map of the world will illustrate the penetration and expansion of communist influence over the face of the globe since the end of the Second War. In every instance, in every geographic area or sphere of action, this expansion was achieved to a greater or lesser extent at the expense of the West, and specifically the USA. This is no friendly concurrence, because even in apparently innocuous situations the communists import their "doctrine of imperialism" which, by definition, is calculated to generate hatred towards the West. Even where the communists have suffered severe setbacks and where ideological communism was rejected outright, the doctrine of imperialism remained and blossomed. Dr. Frederick C. Schwartz claims that "the mighty propaganda apparatus of the World Communist movement focusses upon the teaching of the doctrine of imperialism". (10) Also: "It is creating revolutionary enemies of the United States all around the world". (11)

Reverting to the map, it would be noticed that there are very few areas on the globe which remain unexploited by communist penetration in this context. One of these is the Republic of South Africa; it is one of the three out of forty five independent states on the continent of Africa where there is still no official communist representation of any kind. This in itself constitutes a strategic objective in the context of the theory of "the alignment of forces in the world arena". Its strategic importance from the Soviet point of view is enhanced by the geographic and economic assets to which I have already referred. Furthermore, within the regional perspective it provides a gateway and a base for access to Africa south of the Sahara. In a global perspective it constitutes vital ground for the control of the southern Indian and Atlantic Oceans, and a firm foothold here would bring the Soviets a

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(10) Schwartz, Dr. Frederick, C. *Terroristic Activity*. Hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate. Ninety-Third Congress. Second Session. Part 3. July 5, 1974. U.S. Government Printing Office. Washington 1975. p 165.

(11) Ibid. p 164.

great deal nearer to their goal of encircling Western Europe and isolating the USA.

The RSA with its present constitution assumes a posture of unequivocal anti-communism. This posture is most unlikely to survive a revolutionary change. At best an anti-imperialist regime would seek to be non-aligned in the African interpretation of the term, but it will be an anti-imperialist alignment in the Soviet sense of the strategic principle. In effect this would reduce, if not completely prohibit the existing mutual trade between this country and the West; it would threaten foreign investment and foreign tenure of such investment, and it would deny the West the military facilities presently open to it. On the other hand, it would encourage trade with the communist world and Soviet maritime presence in the area of the Cape of Good Hope. At worst, the inevitable chaos attendant upon a revolution in Africa, would be exploited to turn the country into a Soviet satellite. This would not only deprive the Free World of the assets to which I have alluded, but would confer these very assets upon the Soviets. The balance of forces in the world arena would indeed have tilted finally and irreversibly in favour of the Soviet Union.

There is little prospect for a successful revolution in the RSA. In fact the conspicuous progress in orderly evolution being achieved by the development of the present government policy in the RSA, and in Africa, tends to convince more and more people inside and outside the country that a revolution would be irrelevant and counter productive. This fact will inevitably stimulate the extremists to more feverish endeavours and, should the credibility of our defensive capability become suspect, these could well lead to desperate attempts at armed incursion. Active communist support in such an eventuality is more than speculation; it is a *sine qua non*. It is spelt out in their doctrine and it is currently reiterated by Kremlin leaders and official Soviet media (12); it is rendered all the more likely in the light of the evidence that the Kremlin leaders are progressively more inclined to disparage USA credibility to react in opposition to Soviet initiatives. (13)

From the South African point of view, every effort to defend the RSA, both physically and ideologically, from revolutionary chaos and communist penetration, is an effort in direct support of the defence of the Free World.

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(12) Cf. Kohler, Foy D. et. al. *The Soviet Union and the October 1973 Middle East War*. The Implications for Detente. Monographs in International Affairs. Center for Advanced International Studies. University of Miami. 1974. pp 18 - 20, 22, 68, 69, 124.

This argument is often countered by the cynical retort that we are claiming to defend the interests of third parties who do not wish to be so defended and who, in fact, are embarrassed by such pretence. But such scorers seldom deign to follow the argument to its logical conclusion.

### *Conclusion*

It would appear that all the arguments negating the importance of the RSA's role in the defense of the Free World — at the present time, and precisely under its present system of government — are postulated on unilateral hyper-sophisticated Western theories, without convincing proof that these are shared by the Soviet Union and the so-called Third World. Whereas I do not consider myself qualified to refute these theories categorically, I can find little to substantiate them in recent and current Soviet official pronouncements, in the declared tenets of Communist strategy or in contemporary history.

These theories are propounded with erudition and are used in numerous permutations in order to justify arguments in favour of a reappraisal of international relations. This tendency in certain circles has gained impetus since the Middle East War of October 1973 and has been stimulated by the developments in Vietnam and in Cambodia, the SALT-Agreements, the Conference on European Security and by the preoccupation with detente. A reappraisal on these lines, however, contains an inhibition inherent in the very theories on which it is based in so far as the latter predicate the absence of a threat. Therefore the conclusions are predetermined: where is the wolf? — the wolf has no teeth — it is not a wolf; it is a sheep in a wolf's skin — there is no wolf.

This sophisticated (cynical) approach has gained almost universal credence in the West, because, if the conclusions were valid, it would constitute "a consummation devoutly to be wished". A good example of this credence can be seen in the following quotations from a study by Professor Rosecrance: "Popular opinion in European countries even more than in the United States fails to see the Soviet Union as a great threat," (14); "... the Soviet Union

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(13) Cf. a. Ibid. pp 102, 103.

b. Goure. op. cit. pp 2, 33 - 34.

(14) Rosecrance, Prof. Richard. *Strategic Deterrence Reconsidered*. Adelphi Papers Number One Hundred and Sixteen. International Institute for Strategic Studies. London 1975. p 18.

and China are no longer the intransigent foes of yesteryear", (15) and "Fewer Americans are willing to honour their deterrent obligations to Europe than at the peak of the cold war tensions. Fewer Europeans are willing to spend monies to devise alternative means of defence." (16)

Regrettably I can find no credible basis for assurance that the leaders of the "socialist block of states" share these theories or that their peoples participate in Western sentiments in this respect. All the facts at my disposal would appear to support the exact opposite unless we were to ascribe to the opponent the same standards, the same motives and generally the same characteristics as our own. This would entail believing the opponent when he releases prepared statements in French and in English for international consumption, while disregarding his doctrine and refusing to believe what he says at home in his own press in his own language for his own people. This is too tenuous a premise to justify a relaxation of preparedness. Therefore the RSA will continue to be on guard and to contribute to the defence of the Free World to the maximum extent within its competence (in spite of detractors) because we are determined to defend ourselves.

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(15) Ibid. p 20.

(16) Ibid. p 33.

## MARXISM AND INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT

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In 1975 anyone attempting to discuss the problem of Marxism and Industrial Conflict automatically lays himself open to the charges of either hunting for "Reds under the bed" or of being an heir of the late American Senator McCarthy. Yet to avoid the problem would not only be cowardly but would also be a refusal to face what is likely to become the crucial issue during the coming period in most of the advanced industrial societies which are based on a mixed market economy. This is especially so because of the acute inflationary problems facing many countries, not least among them Britain, when all history, from the time of the Roman Empire to the present day, teaches that no political system has long been able to survive the impact of severe and continuing inflation.

A report, published in February, 1974, entitled "Sources of Conflict in British Industry"\* noted that:

"It is worth stressing the obvious, but frequently overlooked, fact that at any moment of time the majority of workers in this country are working normally and peacefully; in this sense peace *is* the norm, and the common self-interest is evident. But there will always be real and fundamental conflicts of interest - at its simplest on how management and labour divide the cake. In that respect, conflict is endemic in the system. *If real and fundamental divisions of interest cannot be reconciled, some overt conflict, whether in the form of strikes or other manifestations, must take place.* Genuine bargaining is dependent on both sides having what American trade union officials call "a club in the closet". The right to withdraw labour (or for management to lock out workers) is one of the essential ingredients of a free society."

This statement is indeed an accurate description of the industrial scene under what might be called "normal" conditions. What needs consideration is the perspective which can be opened up under conditions of acute economic stress.

Much of modern management theory has confused the issue by denying

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