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Notes for a discussion: Southern Africa,
The Military Basis of Colonialism & Apartheid

I. The Southern Bloc

South Africa, the most highly industrialized area in Africa, although comprising only 6% of its population and 5% of its land area, accounts for 22% of the entire Continent's Gross Domestic Product and 40% of its industrial production. It is also the center of a close-knit military and economic alliance with Portugal and Rhodesia - the Southern Bloc or "unholy alliance" and the center of what has been termed a sub-Imperialist system in Africa. South Africa is economically expansionist - a function of its growing economy which must constantly find new markets and areas of investment - hence its considerable investment in Angola, Mozambique, and Rhodesia as well as independent Africa. It also seeks to buffer itself against the future by surrounding itself with a horseshoe of "friendly" states which will provide no bases for any developing liberation struggle, or pose any direct threat themselves.

Examples: military and strategic links in the Southern Bloc

1. South African troops, termed police, using armoured vehicles and helicopters, in Rhodesia, patrols on the Zambesi, etc.
2. South African troops work closely with Portuguese in border areas of S. Angola; South Africa has heavily fortified, in neighboring, illegally occupied Caprivi Strip in Namibia.
bases
3. South African battalions in Tete (Mozambique)
4. Rhodesian troops killed in Mucumbura region of Tete - death of some Rhodesian troops reported by UK press as basis for "reprisals" taken by Portuguese against local population; the Mucumbura massacres recently reported.
5. South African supply of repair services for complex equipment, back-up services, medical support, etc. to Portuguese and Rhodesians.
6. NB: Top-level security chiefs are acknowledged by their Governments to meet regularly in planning sessions (eg: Smith-Caetano talks late 1972) knitting the defense of the whole area into interlocking re-inforcing system.
7. Joint Cunene and Cabora Bassa projects.

II. South Africa - Only a Mini-giant

South Africa would be hard-pressed to provide sufficient support for its Portuguese and Rhodesian allies if the wars of liberation continue to escalate as they have so dramatically in the last two years, nor can these countries manage on their own. Already in 1971 the annual report of the Rhodesian Chief of Staff Lt. General K. R. Coster admitted that the Rhodesian Army, severely strained by lack of men and money, was incapable of meeting the joint threat on

two borders. According to General Kaulza de Arriaga the Portuguese now have to spend 30% of their budget on the war in Mozambique alone. The strains are obvious.

South Africa, however eager to supply all the assistance demanded of it, dare not spread itself too thin. Particularly important in this context is the shortage of white labor-power, for at this point the South Africans rely almost entirely on the white population for armed troops and there would be very great risks for it in changing that policy. Ground forces under arms at any one time comprise a 10,000 man professional force, a current intake of about 22,000 draftees, and a 33,000 police force. Permanent Airforce and Navy personnel add another 8000 to the total. That could be reinforced within a few hours by the police reserve, the roughly 60,000 commandos and a citizen reserve force but if that happens the whole country would be in a state of total emergency. The South Africans rely heavily on labor-saving defense and war-making techniques. By 1972 South Africa had completed an extensive radio communications coastal network including a \$20 million communications center called Silvermine sunk into the mountains at Cape Town and designed to withstand nuclear and biological attack. This enables it to keep track of aircraft and ships both along its immediate borders and all the way from South Africa to Antarctica within 12 nautical days of the Cape. It had erected a network of frontier-control checkpoints, all linked to a central computerized nerve center in the Eastern Transvaal; it had increased border patrols and built many bush landing fields. Aircraft carry out constant searches along the northern air-space. South Africa's military budget has grown dramatically - 1973 budget was \$630million - \$158 million more than '72 - and this excludes certain capital expenditure. By 1972, in April, South Africa was able to manufacture all military equipment necessary for internal defense including armoured cars, jet aircraft, and electronic equipment. Nevertheless, South Africa is still dependent on Western technology, capital, and major heavy equipment.

III. South Africa's Defense Philosophy

South Africa faces two fronts, internal and external; much training and equipment being directed towards internal control. It sees independent Africa as threatening primarily because of its role as a base for "internal disorder", and real South African defense planning probably fears a Russian attack far less than it does a peasant rebellion in Pondoland.

It uses knowledge and understanding of Western strategy to push for alliances --now concentrating heavily on its potential crucial role as defender of access to the Indian Ocean and important in the South Atlantic.

General R.C. Hiemstra, then Commander of South African Defense Forces stressed this aspect in a statement in 1969:

"In the entire ocean expanse from Australia to South America, South Africa is the only fixed point offering modern naval bases, harbors, and airfield facilities, a modern developed industry, and a stable government. A strategist cannot look with a quartermaster's eye at the strategic importance of the possibilities of such a continental base with harbors at Cape Town, East London, Port Elizabeth, Durban, and Walvis Bay, thinking in terms of logistic problems and supplies without comparing this with the facilities offered by a small island such as the Ascension...South Africa assumes a key position as fort-

ress for the Western naval forces in the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans against the Soviet threat from West Africa and the Middle East.

" We are like certain shares on the stock market. There was a time when nobody wanted us. A time will come when everybody will bid for us. But South Africa is not for sale."

At the end of 1972 Admiral Biermann, now head of the South Africa Defense Force, published a long and important analysis of the post-Vietnam period in its impact on the African situation -- warning of a looming power struggle in this strategically vital global defense region, and pointing out the geopolitical similarities between Mozambique and Vietnam - Tanzania being equated to North Vietnam!

The major thrust of his appraisal of the coming period was the well-reasoned urging of a common front with the U.S., U.K., and other Western countries, and his obvious conviction that his thinking was well within the mainstream of Western strategy.

IV. Western Strategy

Despite rhetoric and UN arms embargoes the West has never severed strategic military links with Southern Africa - South Africa in particular.

Examples:

1. UK Simonstown agreement. Supply of Equipment. Joint British-South African naval manouvres. One of biggest Royal Navy squadrons to visit South Africa - 6 ships including nuclear submarine had joint exercise in July, 1973. Visits of military personnel, eg Admiral Edward Ashmore, Britain's top Admiral in late 1972.

2. French continued supply of arms and aircraft; and the recent Plan Bleu.

3. NATO responses -- NATO Parliamentarians have even visited South Africa and suggested that the NATO defense border be extended to meet the so-called Soviet threat in S. Atlantic. Role of NATO countries in supporting Portugal, a NATO member. These relationships are crucial to the survival of Portugal as a colonial power.

4. US links with South Africa and Portugal. Many examples of US aid - Boeings, herbicides, helicopters, Azores Pact, Ex-Im loans.

V. The Basis of Western Strategy - with an emphasis on US approaches

General context is still that of East-West conflict; the war against Communism. Also importance of securing markets raw material sources, etc. Southern Africa presents "reliable" allies; they can be used as part of the whole process of recolonizing Africa.

Very specifically, however, the emerging stress on the importance of the Indian Ocean in terms of OIL must be examined.

The US relies heavily on oil for its energy(43.8%). It has been estimated

that by 1980 the US may need 1.100 - 1.200 million tons of oil a year - and may have to import close on half of that, mostly from the Middle East. Oil provides 62% of Western Europe's energy - 82% of that comes from the Middle East. In fact, Middle Eastern oil provides 51.2% of all European energy at the moment, and oil imports will have almost to double by 1980.

With the closing of Suez, all that oil has to round the Cape and run through the Indian Ocean. Increased dependence on raw materials, particularly oil, from overseas has fixed attention on control of trade routes.

This, added to the general importance of control of the Indian Ocean since Britain moved out in the late '60's lays the foundation for Western concern for a friendly Cape. The Cape controls one of the few entrances to the Indian Ocean. The Silvermine communications center at the Cape reportedly already supplies the U.S. with intelligence about ships monitored. All indications, such as the reports that emerge of the focus of gatherings like the recent "Current Strategy Forum" at the Naval War College in Newport indicate a heavy regional emphasis on the Indian Ocean. U.S. Armed Forces Journal (June 1973) on South Africa, Its Problems and Potential (only the fourth such profile of "the armed forces of significant nations"), gave a very lengthy and sympathetic review. Other indicators are the establishment of a US base at Diego Garcia; the Nacala interest.

US relationships with Iran: the appointment of ex-C.I.A. director Helms as Ambassador to Iran, the closer links between Iran and South Africa (diplomatic relationships, Iranian participation in the construction of a major South African oil refinery, the visit of Iranian military personnel to the opening of Silvermine) all indicate the importance of these oil-oriented links to the United States.

Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Chief of Naval Operations, (U.S.)

has urged a very much stronger U.S. naval presence in Indian Ocean waters. It is likely that there will be in fact a coalescence of interests between the white powers of Southern Africa and the Western powers still looking over their shoulder at the Soviet Union. The United States' stance on this is not ~~stated policy~~, yet the Azores Agreement made last year with Portugal on grounds that were quite insufficient, unless Portugal's continued stable presence in Africa was seen as worth paying a high price for, seems to indicate that the US will in fact support such Southern Strategies, thus involving itself in ever greater commitments to the reactionary minority regimes of Southern Africa.

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