

THE SOUTH AFRICAN THREAT TO THE INDEPENDENCE  
OF BASUTOLAND, BECHUANALAND, AND SWAZILAND  
and a  
PROGRAM FOR AMERICAN ACTION

The apartheid regime in South Africa, while primarily a tragedy for that country's non-white majority, also compromises the fundamental rights of its small neighbors--Basutoland, Bechuanaland, and Swaziland. These three countries, having almost by chance escaped South African domination were known until recently as the British High Commission Territories. Historically caught up between the clash of British imperial interests and expanding Boer nationalism of the late nineteenth century, the tribal leaders of these peoples appealed for British protection rather than share the fate of their fellow Africans who were subjected to the declared racialism of the Boer community. Today, with preparations well under way for the withdrawal of British protection over Basutoland and Bechuanaland this year, and from Swaziland within the next few years, the possibility that South Africa may yet control the fortunes of these peoples poses a definite threat to the cause of human freedom.

While insignificant in numbers and power influence, the Batswana, Swazi and Basuto have tenaciously clung to their cherished freedom over the past century and have accepted poverty under British rule as the price for maintaining their human dignity. For while British rule excluded South African control, it consciously refrained from encouraging any political, economic or social development of the Territories likely to show up to disadvantage the repressive policies pursued by South Africa towards her non-white majority. But however dearly purchased was their national survival, these peoples have clearly demonstrated that human values can supercede the economic. Their actions also serve to refute the hollow protestations of some that international sanctions against South Africa would most adversely affect the non-white

majority and must therefore be set aside as impractical. For it has already been demonstrated that the non-white population, if consulted, would accept such sacrifice as a condition for eventual freedom. But these three Territories alone cannot challenge the South African monolith. Their support must be the international community and the rule of law. Their very survival requires that those States which officially profess a belief and respect for human values within the context of international law must now demonstrate their sincerity. True, these peoples are not in the limelight of the East-West struggle and support for their rights cannot be clothed in the more fashionable garb of an anti-Communist struggle. An American commitment in their behalf cannot be justified in terms of maintaining a power position. It can, however, prove to the world and to the Negro population of the United States in particular, that the American commitment in behalf of human liberty is just as sincere in respect to South Africa as it claims to be in Cuba or Viet-Nam. On the other hand, if the United States does not now seek to grasp and pursue those peaceful and legitimate methods at our disposal to precipitate a change in southern Africa, this country may well pay for its moral tepidity by seeing the Communist world fall heir to the richest portion of the African continent. At what a cost a real conflagration in South Africa would be to our own domestic institutions, one hesitates to speculate.

American interest in the plight of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland does not immediately, therefore, depend on national altruism. If, unfortunately, the American government can only respond to a crisis threatening its world position, even here there is ample cause for strong, positive action. It is precisely in regard to these three countries that the United States, alone or through the United Nations, can presently pursue

a course of positive action, the side effects of which may indeed challenge the South African government. For too long the specious argument has been advanced that American action vis-a-vis South Africa must be qualified by respect for the sovereignty of that state. Without arguing the merits of that position when challenged by the rights of the human person, we must at least equally defend the sovereign equality of these states embedded in the apartheid complex of South Africa, and equality which presupposes free and unrestricted access to the outside world. If the maintenance of these rights poses difficulties for the South African government, it is nevertheless the duty of the international community to see that these rights are not sacrificed. Secured against South African encroachment, these states may seriously undertake the creation of non-racial democracies, the example of which on South Africa's borders may well constitute the greatest threat to that government's racial mythology. It follows, therefore, that assistance to these countries will enable them to be less dependent on South African and free, within the bounds of national right, to speak out in support of human values. As showpieces of democratic life, these countries may demonstrate to South Africa that there is an alternative to its present course which can only lead tragically and inevitably to race war if not race suicide.

A realistic American policy towards this area must be cognizant of South Africa's persistent demand for the incorporation of the High Commission Territories from the 1909 Act of Union, which gave birth to the Union of South Africa, until 1962, when Dr. Verwoerd, as prime minister, officially renounced the traditional claim. South African arguments for the incorporation of the Territories always stressed that geographically, ethnographically and economically they formed part of South Africa, an assertion which, were it not for the present minority rule in South Africa, would not be contested.

But South Africa was patently not concerned with the incorporation of the Territories for these reasons alone since she hardly intended to incur additional financial burdens without adequate compensation. Although on purely historic grounds it might be asserted that inasmuch as Britain prevented the Boers from acquiring these Territories, their take-over would provide handsome redress for earlier Boer defeat, this motive was not in itself sufficient. Of greater importance was the belief that the Protectorates were absolutely essential to the whole Bantustan concept, a plan for racial subordination especially promoted by Dr. Verwoerd. The blueprint for this scheme, as shown in the Tomlinson Report of 1956, presumed the incorporation of the High Commission Territories and thus enlarged from 13% to approximately 45% the amount of land supposedly to be set aside for the Bantustan project. Without the inclusion of the Territories, territorial apartheid would remain an unconvincing project. The South African reserve areas could not provide a living for even half the Africans of the country but with the addition of the High Commission Territories the scheme, at least on paper, would gain some credibility. For the purposes of foreign propaganda they seemed essential.

Although the incorporation of the Protectorates appeared essential for the realization of the Bantustan scheme, the Nationalist Party electoral victory in 1948 ruled out the possibility of negotiated transfer. The failure of the South African Government to develop along liberal British lines made it impossible for any government in London to believe South Africa's assurances that the paramount interests of the peoples of the Protectorates would be maintained. The departure of South Africa from the Commonwealth definitely precluded any possibility of direct transfer. Dr. Verwoerd therefore found it expedient to announce that the incorporation

of the Territories was "neither possible nor wise."

Despite this official change of heart, it would be perilous to conclude that South Africa has now abandoned its oft-repeated designs on the Territories. Even the Prime Minister's timely offer, in September 1963, to lead the Territories more quickly and with more financial assistance to full self-government than could be done by Britain was an obvious proof that the effort had not been abandoned. Crude methods calculated to effect transfer had indeed been rejected as undiplomatic and untimely. But the blandishments of immediate economic assistance and possible additions of adjacent lands in the Republic, all against the backdrop of threatened restrictions, may achieve the same object. It has also been suggested, even within South African political circles, that the independent Territories will provide the basis for the "big partition" of South Africa, whereby the African reserve or Bantustan areas of the Republic will be thrust towards the Territories which in turn will be tightly controlled through economic and other means. Dr. Steytler, of the South African Progressive Party, has not been alone in asking whether the Prime Minister's professed desire to establish good relations with the Territories means that the Protectorates must eventually accept policies similar to those of the South African Government.

In general, the Territories may be described as isolated, landlocked, rather poor, underdeveloped areas where nature has not been overly generous toward those who would wrest a living from the land. Although the inhabitants are mainly Africans of the Bantu language group, they have markedly different physical environments and economics. Basutoland, with an area of 11,716 square miles, or roughly the size of Belgium, is for the most part hilly or mountainous with elevations up to 11,000 feet. The country is traversed by a multitude of perennial streams, including the headwaters of the Orange

River and a considerable part of its tributary, the Caledon. The population has been estimated at 890,000 of whom approximately 2,000 are Europeans, with more than 200,000 employed at any given time in South Africa. Most of the population lies in the western lowlands which are heavily populated; this includes about 10,000 in Maseru, the capital. Of the three Territories, Basutoland is the poorest. Aside from some diamonds there is slight evidence of other exploitable minerals. Water resources have not as yet been utilized.

Larger than the British Isles, Bechuanaland is bounded by South West Africa, South Africa, Zambia (at a point on the map), and Rhodesia. The country is a tableland at a mean altitude of 3,300 feet and with elevations up to 5,000 feet, and is estimated to cover some 222,000 square miles. The regional difference of climate, soil and vegetation are considerable. Most of the west and south-west consists of Kalahari sand-veld and is largely uninhabited although it is not desert in the strict sense since it includes many large tracts of savannah. Everywhere water is in short supply. The 1965 census places the population at 542,104 of whom 3,900 are Europeans. The population is concentrated in the sub-tropical to temperate eastern region which is better watered and straddles the railroad to the north. Essentially it is the livestock industry which has raised the economy above the bare subsistence level.

Swaziland with its rich mineral deposits and excellent farm lands, stands in marked contrast to the other Territories. Together with one of the world's largest asbestos mines, mountains of high-grade iron-ore provide attractive incentives for outside investment. Highly developed forest enterprises, commercial crops, livestock and a host of exploitable minerals make this small country of 6,705 square miles a potentially viable state. The very attractiveness of the country resulted in the alienation of most of the land to Europeans. Even today, after government action and Swazi

land purchases, some 42 per cent of the land is owned by approximately 10,000 Europeans out of the country's total population of 280,000. The bulk of the population has scarcely benefited from the country's resources and is engaged in subsistence agriculture. Swaziland has a pleasant elevation in the west with mountainous veld averaging about 3,500 to over 5,000 feet. The middle veld averages about 2,000 feet and rainfall is plentiful. On the east, the low veld provides good grazing and is highly fertile, though the rainfall is low.

In each of the Territories the High Commissioner, acting through a Resident Commissioner, was proclaimed sole legislative authority -- Basutoland in 1868, Bechuanaland in 1885 and Swaziland in 1907 -- in a system theoretically known as indirect rule. The administrative responsibility for internal affairs was left on the whole to the chiefs, who continued to exercise their traditional political and judicial authority and in addition regulated the economic life of their people. If the inhabitants were not entirely satisfied with this arrangement, fear of their South African neighbor deflected the force of their protests. But traditional leaders, unaware of the nature of the economic forces in South Africa which were transforming their lives, and without real decision-making power, could not respond to the new challenge as it affected labor, agriculture, industry and tribal life without major institutional changes. Yet, any fundamental change in the traditional structure of society -- a condition for political advancement or constitutional evolution -- seemed to invite the loosening of British protection and conversely, the encroachment of the historic enemy.

In any event, the abrogation in late 1964 of the office of High Commissioner -- combined since 1961 with that of British Ambassador to South Africa -- reflected the changed political status of the Territories as each advanced towards independence. Already, in October 1963, the post of Resident

Commissioner was upgraded to Queen's Commissioner in Bechuanaland and Swaziland. A similar step was taken for Basutoland in August 1964 and thus each Territory received the equivalent of a Governor responsible directly to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Henceforth, the British Ambassador to South Africa would be informed about aspects of the three Territories' affairs affecting foreign relations or defense, but he would have no further responsibility for purely internal matters. This change, long demanded by nationalist leaders as a condition for proper political and economic advancement, was more than a symbolic act demanded by the times. Hopefully, it marked the end of an era of contradiction and uncertainty as Britain debated the relative merits of her various commitments and involvements in southern Africa.

Even before Britain undertook to bring diplomatic and political procedures governing the administration of the Territories and their relationship to South Africa into line with their movement towards independence, cautious if not reluctant concessions were made towards nationalist movements demanding responsible self-government. In 1960 Basutoland became the first of the Protectorates to receive a Legislative Council followed by Bechuanaland in 1961 and Swaziland in 1964. In each case, representative institutions were built upon the base of earlier tribal councils and were expanded to include, at least in theory, the evolving intellectual elite.

But while these changes were rapidly transforming the political life of the Protectorates, South Africa made it clear that any action on the part of the Territories likely to run counter to her own interests, as she defined them, would not be permitted. The fact that the Protectorates were increasingly regarded after 1960 as places of asylum for South African refugees was embarrassing to the Republic's prestige and supposedly threatened her internal security. Thus, from early 1963, South Africa initiated a number of policies



designed to impress the Territories with her retaliatory powers. In place of unrestricted access to and from the Protectorates, border posts, barbed wire fences and rigid passport controls were imposed. Without consulting the British Government as Protecting Power, railway passenger service was suddenly eliminated to Basutoland. Henceforth, passengers were required to detrain some fifteen miles from the border, transfer to buses and then proceed to the border, after which they would carry their luggage by hand across the border bridge at Maseru. This humiliating action went uncontested by the British Government even though the South African Railroad was engaged in international commerce. No effort was made to challenge South Africa with retaliatory regulations affecting South African rail communications with Rhodesia through Bechuanaland.

Additional restrictions soon followed. In September 1963, the South African Government announced that no airplanes would be permitted to fly to, from or between the Territories without first landing at one of 27 designated airfields. Thus, at South Africa's fiat, inter-Territorial travel and access to the outside world required a valid South African travel document. As far as these countries were concerned, no direct journey could be made via Johannesburg's international airport.

Typical of Britain's timid approach to matters involving South Africa, no public protest was made against this infringement of international right of access nor was the question brought to the attention of any international body. Since Britain had obviously failed to challenge South Africa, the Republic continued, as she does today, to deny the legitimate rights of the Territories. Some of the more notorious examples of this high-handedness may be cited. In mid 1965 ten Basuto students were turned back from the Johannesburg International Airport after they had arrived on a British

flight from East Africa. They were refused permission to return to their own country on the grounds that they had received training in China and were without South African travel documents, - documents which the South African Government then conveniently refused to grant. Without regard to whether or not the students had been in China, an allegation which they vigorously denied, their legal and moral right to return to their homes cannot be denied and in this demand they have been supported officially by the Basutoland Government. These students are presently drifting from country to country as a warning to all other travelers from the Territories what their fate may be should they not meet with South African approval.

Other examples of South Africa's disregard of the rights of the Territories include the refusal of a transit visa to the President of the Basutoland Senate, Dr. Seth Makotoko, in October 1965. Even a member of the Senate of the University of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland (UBBS), Dr. Samuel Guma, has been refused permission to take up a teaching position in the United States or to attend the Senate meetings when held in the other Territories.

Although numerous examples could be cited of South Africa's interference with the rights of the citizens of the Territories, the Republic has also acted to prevent citizens of other states from enjoying free access to the Territories. I might refer in particular to my own unpleasant experience in this regard. In May 1965 application was made for a transit visa so that I might visit the Territories under the sponsorship of Lincoln University. Despite repeated requests and numerous direct inquiries and expressions of concern by the United States Department of State, no transit visa was granted. Again in December 1965 the request was renewed and a formal proposal was advanced to fly directly by charter plane to the Territories. This request was refused and, in conjunction with the Portuguese authorities in Mozambique,

all access was denied. To this date the Department of State has received no reply to its inquiry concerning the access rights of Americans to the Territories.

Since it is patently evident that I could not be considered a threat to the South African Government, it can only be concluded that my past public expressions on the dangers faced by the Territories have led to my exclusion. If members of the American academic world are thus denied the ordinary rights of research and communication, it is inconceivable that the United States Government should permit, let alone foster, the presence in this country of South African researchers. This is a responsibility which the United States Government must assume if there is to be any hope of a free atmosphere in the Territories.

Not the least of these detrimental actions against the Territories, is the activity carried on in the United States by South African consular and diplomatic personnel who endeavor to keep close watch over the activities of nationals of the Territories. In a document to be submitted to appropriate authorities is an instruction to the South African Consul General in New York from the Department of Interior in Pretoria making him responsible for maintaining a watch over the activities of a national of one of these Territories so that the South African Government may know if a return transit visa is to be granted.

Thus, even before the removal of British protection, the South African Government has seriously undermined the substance of independence. In the absence of any international presence or active interest on the part of those countries capable of exercising influence on South Africa, the likelihood that Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland can secure even the basic prerequisites of sovereignty is open to question. If the citizens of Berlin could be saved from a threat to their fundamental freedom, is it too much to expect of this Government that an equally strong effort should be made

to preserve the rights of these peoples? Again the righteous demands of all conscientious Americans, particularly Afro-Americans, requires an action consistent with past professions.

Between 1948 and 1963, as the lights of academic freedom flickered and died in South Africa, the High Commission Territories were increasingly looked to by the non-white youth of South Africa as an escape from the nefarious Bantu education laws prevailing in the Republic. At considerable sacrifice youngsters were sent off to mission schools in the Territories and in ever growing numbers to Pius XII University College in Basutoland. In all of southern Africa, here alone students could receive a university education free of the apartheid ideology. Needless to say, the presence of South African students at the University was viewed with growing alarm by the South African Government. Consequently, when, in 1963 the University passed from religious to secular control, the South African Government acted to halt the exodus of South African students. Within a short time, the student population, previously more than fifty per cent from South Africa, was reduced to a fraction. In the meantime, however, the United States Government, through AID, began a program of financial assistance to the University.

Unfortunately, however, the United States Government made no effort to bring pressure upon the South African Government to permit the continued enrollment of South Africans. Here, again, it was clearly in the interest of the United States that every effort be made to induce the South African Government to permit university students to attend the University. Could this matter not legitimately be connected with the accessibility of American academic facilities to South Africans, particularly inasmuch as American technology is responsible for much of South Africa's atomic research and development? Indeed, it can be further argued that unless fairly large

numbers of students from various countries enjoy the right to enroll at the University in Basutoland, the atmosphere necessary for any proper university development will be lacking. Moreover, the University deserves the fullest support of the American Government so that both by reason of its facilities and its free academic atmosphere there may yet remain a true university in southern Africa. On the other hand, American support should be contingent upon firm guarantees by the Government of Basutoland, that South African pressures will not restrict the freedom of the University community to probe the basic problems of that region.

Educational assistance to the Territories should not, however, be confined to local endeavors. Rather, scholarship assistance enabling students to receive education in the United States must be vastly expanded. Although in normal circumstances the needs of the local African university might be the prime consideration, here the need for potential leaders to break through the apartheid curtain of southern Africa is at least of equal importance. Moreover, it cannot be forgotten that South African pressures operate even now to limit the opportunities of those who might see existing political configurations as adjuncts to South African policy.

American and international encouragement must also be given to the expansion<sup>of</sup> media of public information and communication in the Territories. The development of extensive broadcasting facilities capable of piercing the apartheid curtain of South Africa will place in the hands of the Territories another bargaining counter in dealing with South Africa. Although it would not be expected that the governments of these independent states would launch a radio offensive against South Africa, the objective reporting of regional and international news would offer a ray of hope to South Africans, white and black, laboring under the burden of a rigidly controlled government radio.

On the economic side, American technology is urgently required if Basutoland is to succeed in developing its most valuable assets; agriculture, water and diamond mining. Although the sale of water or hydroelectric power to neighboring South Africa may be a condition for short-range economic development, such projects as the OxBow Scheme must not be postponed until South Africa sees fit to negotiate. On the contrary, the possibility of cheap electricity and water might bring some startling demands on the part of rural white South Africans that their Government make an adequate response. Considering that the rural white population has always provided the backbone of Afrikaner Nationalist strength, demands from this quarter on Pretoria might precipitate a weakening of the internal apartheid structure. Moreover, South Africa has already initiated certain projects on the Orange River without coming to a formal understanding with Basutoland where this international waterway has its source. Given sufficient external support, Basutoland, while the most captive of the Territories, might be rendered more secure. The advantages in increased diamond mining are obvious and can be shipped with some facility to the world market. Intensive agricultural development would also reduce its heavy reliance upon the export of labor to South Africa. Hopefully, Basutoland might once more provide the bulk of its own grain needs. Modern agriculture would also release the potential of thousands of youngsters presently tied down to the tasks of herd-boys thereby permitting them to receive formal schooling or engage in productive agriculture

Bechuanaland's economic position is only slightly better than that of Basutoland. Presuming that the illegal regime in Rhodesia is brought down, Bechuanaland (Botswana) will look more easily towards the north. At present, however, the country's half-million people subsist on ranching some one and a half million poor-grade cattle. Still, however gloomy the situation,

money and training can make a vital difference. The Economic Survey Mission led by Professor Morse of Cornell University reported in 1960 that the additional expenditure of approximately eight million dollars over the next five years, over and above existing minimal subsidies, would "set in motion in the Protectorate a series of processes that will gradually enable it to stand on its own feet." Scarcely more than a quarter of this amount has yet been made available by the British Government. Not only must the cattle industry be promoted, but urgent projects must be initiated to relieve famine conditions through sound agriculture planning. The exploitation of rich sodium-carbonate brines in the Kalahari and vast coal deposits along the railway line must yet be undertaken. The abundant, clear waters of the Okavango River in the north-west can be canalized to provide both irrigation water and barge transport for this desperately dry country. The Morse Report suggested that the modest sum of \$210,000 would suffice for the construction of a canal without without lining. The expansion of health, education and communications will also correspondingly reduce the dependence of the country on South Africa.

Swaziland's more favored economic position has scarcely affected the ordinary Swazi and approximately 28% of the male labor force must still seek employment in South Africa. Despite an abundance of natural resources such as asbestos, iron-ore, timber and good farm lands, profits are not even partly ploughed back into Swaziland development. Leases have been made by the British Government which have not only deprived the Swazi of share holdings and effective participation in company directorship, but have even failed to provide effective guarantees for the training of Swazi in skilled work. In Swaziland as in the other Territories, education, public health, communications and transport have been scandalously neglected. Effective economic assistance would serve not only to offset the disproportion-

ate influence of South African capital, but <sup>would</sup> promote cooperatives and other economic activities primarily of a developmental character. Although Portuguese Mozambique offers little choice as an alternative access to the outside world, it might realistically be assumed that Portugal cannot long resist the Mozambiquan liberation struggle, at least if American support for Portugal can be eliminated. A liberated Mozambique will offer Swaziland new choices and a new role vis-a-vis the problem of South Africa.

American commitments in the Territories must reveal a bold and dynamic approach to the southern African area. Needless to say, if American interest in these areas is to be dictated by the inadequacy of its programs to the north, then it will be obvious that the United States does not intend to challenge the apartheid structure of South Africa. The very fact of an obvious American interest will, on the other hand, concretely demonstrate this country's repugnance towards South African policies and will encourage the political leaders of the Territories to remain loyal to their historic opposition to South African encroachment. Already South Africa has influenced to a marked degree political events in Basutoland and Swaziland. A large sum appropriated by the South African parliament to secretly promote her interests in the Territories is even now bearing fruit. Unfortunately, local British authorities, particularly in Swaziland, have reversed policy under the new Queen's Commissioner, and have encouraged, under the guise of "moderation", the combination of white South African interests and aristocratic tribal conservatism. In general, the object of the British Government has been first to reduce the bargaining power of the Territories vis-a-vis South Africa before granting independence by restricting radio operations, imposing overly harsh regulations governing



the right of asylum and by turning away from such external assistance as non-British groups offer. Inasmuch as British policy is clearly designed to take account of her enormous investments in South Africa, it follows that no creative or bold counters to South Africa can be expected from that source. It would be tragic if American policy, with independence, continues its present disinterestedness based on the assumption that the British Government is sincerely committed to the development of the Territories. Even if this assumption were true, the United States must strike out on its own diplomatic and economic initiatives in southern Africa if we are yet to show the world's non-white majority that our commitment to freedom is indivisible.

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