

S O U T H E R N A F R I C A - T H E N E X T V I E T N A M ? ? ? ? ?

It is not easy now to think beyond the present tragedy in Vietnam.

However, already another major conflict is emerging in white-ruled Southern Africa. And the stage is being set for deeper American involvement in this war as well.

Many people have at least heard of the racist policies of South Africa. Few know that guerrilla warfare has already begun. In "Portuguese" Guinea, Angola, and Mozambique, in Rhodesia and South West Africa, African guerrilla units fight the white armies of Portugal, Rhodesia, and South Africa. South Africa's "buffer zone" is at war. Once again in this century, it seems that the spirit of Nazism with its accent on "herrenvolk" white supremacy will be put down only after a bloodletting of gigantic proportion.

This war of liberation is being fought on the following fronts:

1. In small "Portuguese" Guinea in West Africa, one of the most successful of African Liberation movements has expelled the Portuguese from 4/5 of the territory.
2. In Angola, the Portuguese colony on the west coast in Southern Africa, the war that began in 1961 continues. In northern and eastern Angola, several movements harass the Portuguese. Faced with rapid and savage suppression in 1961, Angolan nationalists didn't give up. Since 1966 the conflict has expanded -- the Portuguese are faced with guerrilla action in 9 of the 15 Angolan provinces.
3. In Mozambique, Portugal's east coast colony, approximately 10,000 guerrillas of the Mozambique Liberation Front confront 60,000 Portuguese troops. There are liberated areas in the three northernmost provinces. In 1968 a new front was opened in Tete province, and the massive Cahora Bassa hydroelectric project on the Zambeze River, a joint Portuguese-South African project, is threatened.
4. In Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) over 2000 black guerrillas engage 10,000 white Rhodesian and South African forces. The Zimbabwean forces are members of Joshua Mkombo's Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and Ndabaningi Sithole's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). Both leaders have been in concentration camps for over five years as a result of their non-violent political action before the war began.

ZAPU forces mount joint operations with the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa. ZAPU forces also guide ANC units until they reach the South African border. In Zimbabwe black South Africans are already confronting white South Africans. The prelude to the full struggle in South Africa itself is being played out in this "buffer zone."

5. South Africa and South African-controlled South West Africa are so far protected from extensive fighting by the buffer states of Angola, Rhodesia and Mozambique to the north. But in South West Africa (Namibia), in which South Africa's trusteeship has been declared void by the United Nations, small groups of African guerrillas are active. And even in South Africa itself, the ultimate bastion of white racism, underground groups of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the African National Congress (ANC) are active.

The struggle for liberation is many wars, one may say. But it is also one war. For white-ruled Southern Africa works together. South Africa plays the key role; its "outward" policy recognizes the importance of the protection provided by friendly states to the north. The "Unholy Trinity" pact of October, 1965 between South Africa, Portugal, and Rhodesia made provision for a common integrated defense system against increasing guerrilla activity. South African troops have been in action in Rhodesia, and the presence of South African troops and air support has been reported in Angola and Mozambique as well. South Africa has just completed a vast inter-service forward strike base (called Swift Kill) in the Caprivi Strip, just opposite the village of Sesheke, in independent Zambia.

The African liberation movements in turn have been forced to cooperate and coordinate their activities. They have the full moral support of all independent Africa, as expressed in the Organization of African Unity, and some few African states match their verbal commitment with material aid. More aid comes from the socialist countries of Europe, Asia, and Latin America.

South Africa and Portugal identify the nationalist movements as communist aggression and justify aggressive anti-guerrilla action, as they justified their suppression of peaceful dissent, by posturing as the pro-western bastion of Christian civilization in Africa. Thus, as the conflict escalates, the stage is set for greater western involvement.

For the war will escalate. The population ratios mean that the forces of white Southern Africa do not have the 10:1 military manpower ratio deemed necessary for successful counter-insurgency operations. And guerrilla forces are increasing in size. But South Africa is an industrial country, rich and fanatical. Its resistance to majority rule is likely to be long and bloody struggle. Sooner or later Portugal or South Africa may attack the independent African states to the north where the guerrillas gain aid. But whether escalation comes with a jump, or bit by bit as it has so far, the outside world cannot help but be involved.

The United States (and its European allies, especially Great Britain) are already tied to white-ruled Southern Africa. Among the most important links are the following:

1. Portugal, as a member of NATO, receives direct military aid and advice from the United States.
2. Under the Simonstown agreement, Great Britain has the use of a naval base in South Africa, and carries out joint maneuvers with the South African navy.
3. Southern Africa, since the closing of Suez, has assumed a new strategic importance, for the western role in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean.
4. The United States has over \$800 million in investments in South Africa alone; Great Britain \$3 billion.
5. South African gold production is key to the functioning of the International Monetary System.
6. White Southern Africa is very "anti-communist" and "pro-Western". It is, therefore by definition, a leading part of the "Free World."

The result of these and other links is clear. Under Kennedy and Johnson, the United States (with other Western powers) consistently refused to abide by U.N. General Assembly resolutions passed by overwhelming majorities condemning South African apartheid and Portuguese colonialism, and calling for action against them. Nominal support for independence and equality has been combined with adamant refusal to break those links, military and economic, which sustain racism and colonialism. Today there is danger of retreat from even the nominal support for African rights. While even Great Britain has cut diplomatic ties with the white settler regime of Rhodesia, the Nixon administration retains the U.S. consulate there. Portugal is hopeful of increased military aid. New investment in South Africa is encouraged.

It may be that no American administration would be quite stupid enough to send American troops to defend the white racist regimes of Southern Africa. Given past history in other parts of the world, it would hardly be wise to be complacent on this point however. The excuses are there already: anti-communism, military ties, economic interests. Investment that supports the white regimes is sure to grow, military aid may grow as well. The United States is committed in words to the side of independence and racial equality, while by its actions it is committed on the other side.

AS THE STRUGGLE INTENSIFIES, WHERE DO YOU THINK THE U.S. WILL STAND????