

Claim 1 — Power

That white control of South Africa is complete and comprehensive; that Pretoria's military might guarantees the status quo permanently, and that black opposition is neither significant nor strong enough to challenge it effectively.

The Facts

(a) White control of South Africa is neither complete nor comprehensive, and Pretoria cannot indefinitely secure the 'stability' it claims to guarantee.

(b) Pretoria's military strength is seldom measured against its military weaknesses, and

(c) There is abundant evidence that black challenge to white rule is increasing significantly.

(a) According to intelligence reports quoted in the American press in 1982, there were at least 42 armed clashes during the preceding year between guerrillas of the African National Congress and South African army or police units on South African soil. In spite of military censorship limiting reports of such clashes, the seriousness of the situation was corroborated by the South African government's proclamation of parts of the Northern Transvaal, the Eastern Transvaal and Northern Natal as 'operational areas'. Since the Nkomati accords there has been a decrease, though not a cessation, of these 'incidents', along with an increase in sabotage attacks, bombings and unrest deeper within the country. White farmers are abandoning the rural areas on such a scale because of guerrilla activity that the Government has introduced major tax concessions, security assistance and direct economic inducements to persuade them to remain. These include agricultural grants, increased patrols and the establishment of radio links for the border farms, as provided in the early part of the Smith regime's campaign against guerrillas in pre-independence Zimbabwe. A rough survey of one region in the Eastern Cape Province, far from any 'frontline' border, suggests that fewer than one-fifth of bomb or sabotage incidents are reported in the local press and fewer still on South African national radio and television. Consequently foreign correspondents are unable to report the real level of violent black resistance.

(b) South Africa's military strength is frequently exaggerated by Pretoria, for obvious tactical reasons, and the resulting picture is misleading. Just as it suits the Botha administration to allow British and American television crews to film flyovers by South African fighter squadrons and military or naval reviews, it does not always suit the African National Congress or the Pan-Africanist Congress to allow the televising of their guerrillas in

training or to talk numbers as Pretoria does. The viewing world therefore sees massive power on one side and relative impotence on the other.

Officially, South Africa has more than 250,000 fighting men trained for combat, with the core of the army given as 20,000, and with 35,000 conscripts, 150,000 reservists, 9,000 air force, 5,000 navy and 20,000 police regulars, as well as 13,000 police reservists and 15,000 voluntary commandos. But the figures, as monitored by the Committee of South African War Resisters, are considerably lower in most of these categories. Also, the levels of skill, professionalism and motivation of the South African forces are in many cases considerably lower than suggested in propaganda from military headquarters in Pretoria. To mention a few examples: some of the 150,000 reservists are paper entries only, there being numerous instances of mail addressed to 'reservists' long dead or over the age-limit of 60; the voluntary commando personnel figures are inflated, and in 1979 when there was a call-up of the Moot Kommando of Pretoria fewer than 10 per cent of the members responded. In May 1980 when 84 members of the same unit were summoned specifically by name, only 12 reported. After this, the head of the unit, Kommandant Wolmarans, said disciplinary action against the defaulters had proved ineffectual as it had been followed by mass resignations. Consequently service in commando units has now been made compulsory.

Military default is officially acknowledged to be on the increase, although the only disclosed figure was for the year 1978, when the Defence Ministry gave the figure as 3,814. Since the invasion of Angola in 1975 it is estimated that more than 30,000 young white South Africans have refused or evaded military service. White morale is also affected by the regime's failure to crush Swapo in Namibia, where troops (officially 17,000; according to Swapo 110,000) have suffered increasing casualties in recent years. These casualties, too, are considerably understated by Pretoria. For example, in 1982 the official death toll of military personnel was 77, but Professor R H Green of the Institute for Development Studies at Sussex University estimates the real figure at around 850, calculating further that the death toll among white South African soldiers since the Namibia War began could be as high as 2,500, which as a proportion of South Africa's white population is three times the relative rate of American deaths in the Vietnam War. Professor Green also estimates that the cost to South Africa of holding Namibia (around five million dollars a day) now constitutes about 9 per cent of Pretoria's total government spending for 1984/85.

(c) In spite of suppression of and by the media in South Africa, news of black resistance is on the increase. Within the past year two major organisations have come to prominence inside the

country — the United Democratic Front, a widely-based coalition broadly reflecting the multiracial philosophy of the African National Congress, and the National Forum, which reflects the Africanist approach of the Pan-Africanist Congress and the Black Consciousness Movement. Bishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Prize winner for 1984, is a member of one and a patron of the other. These are the first significant movements openly to defy the ban on organised expression of both philosophies within the country.

Another significant development within the country has been the sharp growth in membership and militancy of black trade unions during the past four years. Union membership has grown in this period from 220,000 to 670,000, of whom 271,934 are members of 'unregistered' unions (the most militant) openly expressing discontent with the status quo.

Another discernible change over the past decade has been the protraction of 'unrest' in the black townships. Previously the authorities were able to quell such disturbances within days if not hours, but since 1977 it has taken longer to reimpose police, para-military and military authority. In late 1984 and early 1985 riot patterns persisted through two months of police and military operations. Clearly black anger is more manifest and widespread than ever before.

Finally, the casualty figures and the extent of such 'unrest' may be taken to be greater than the scale disclosed, because independent journalists are seldom allowed into the areas affected at the time. After the Langa massacre on 21 March 1985, 19 African deaths were officially reported. Eye witnesses, however, claimed that up to 40 people had been killed, and a priest concerned in the funerals said 30 to 35 people killed in the initial police shoot-out were buried.

Conclusion The extent of black resistance in South Africa is greater than reported abroad, on a wider scale than the authorities in Pretoria concede, and their capacity to contain it is exaggerated.