South Africa's Destabilization of the Southern African Region.

By REV. FRANK CHIKANE

THE racist white-minority regime of South Africa is waging a bitter war against the black majority in the country, in defence of the apartheid system. This is a war that is waged in defence of the last bastion of white rule in Africa.

Because of this war thousands of our people have been killed, detained and tortured, many have been thrown into prisons and many other thousands have been forced into exile. Millions of our people have been forcefully removed and relocated to the so-called homelands in order to make 87% of South Africa white. Millions of our people have been deprived of their citizenship, making all of us refugees in the land of our birth over and above all the South African refugees who are scattered around the world.

As the war intensified during the eighties we have seen how the system has used the tribal homelands to wage war against the people. We have seen the emergence of vigilante groups and death squads which systematically eliminate leading opponents of the apartheid regime.

The present state of emergency and the control of the media has created just the right climate for this brutal acts to be committed without being exposed. For this reason many people have been displaced, most of whom are school children. This should give you a picture of the degree of destabilization within the country.

But what concern us in this paper is South Africa's destabilization of its neighbours, which is inter-related to this internal form of destabilization. The war inside South Africa has engulfed the whole Southern Africa region. Since the eighties for instance, South Africa has:

- invaded and attacked the capitals of Lesotho, Botswana, Mozambique and Zambia;
- invaded and attacked Angola and Swaziland;
- backed dissident groups that have brought chaos in Angola and Mozambique and less serious disorders in Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Zambia;
- obstructed the oil supplies of six countries (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe);
- attacked the railways, providing the normal import and export routes of seven countries (Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe);
- blockaded Lesotho in 1986, which blockade, amongst other factors, created the necessary condition for a coup on January 1986.

Since the eighties, an estimated 0.5 million have died in this region and more than half of these were children under the age of five (1). Most of them were starved to death because of the South African-backed Mozambique's National Resistance Movement (MNR), which prevented drought relief to reach the people. Famine here was used as a weapon of war. More than one million have been displaced within their country or as refugees elsewhere.

Over the period 1980 to 1984 South Africa's destabilization cost this region USS 10 000 million which is more than all the foreign aid these states received in the same period (2). This has seriously affected development projects and has also reduced the very low living standard of most people in this region.

To understand this South African destabilization strategy of the Southern African region I propose that we deal with the background leading to this strategic position, the concept of destabilization, the three phases of destabilization between 1981 up to date, and then briefly look at the uniqueness of the Namibian situation.

In conclusion, we shall raise an issue about the legitimacy of the South African regime in the light of its policy of destabilization, and then end by proposing a way of stabilizing this region. Recommendations to the AACC's Fifth Assembly are presented separately as an annexure to this paper.

BACKGROUND TO SOUTH AFRICA'S DESTABILIZATION STRATEGY

The independence of Mozambique and Angola in 1975 altered the balance of forces in the Southern African region. It broke the so-called "cordon sanitaire" of white ruled colonies which gave the apartheid...
regime a feeling of security and confidence to suppress indefinitely the political aspirations of the black majority in the country.

The fall of the Portuguese colonies brought the battle front against colonial rule closer to the heartland of white oppression and exploitation (3). This created security problems for South Africa. The 1976 Soweto uprising followed by the November 1977 U.N. Security Council resolution on mandatory arms embargo against South Africa; the guerilla actions of the ANC which were fueled by the Soweto uprising; the economic decline from 1974 up to 1978; the substantial outflow of foreign capital; all contributed in deepening the crisis of the regime. White hegemony was clearly under slave.

In response to this crisis the apartheid regime produced the 1977 Defence White Paper which laid the basis for P.W. Botha's concept of a "total onslaught" from beyond South Africa's borders. The "total onslaught" needed a "total national strategy". The "total onslaught" which South Africa was facing was articulated as a communist plot. Joseph Hanlon presents this view of South Africa as follows:

"The concept of total onslaught equates the 'red peril' with, and defence of apartheid with defence of Western Christian values.(3). He says that his formulation has two advantages for white South Africa. Firstly, it makes all criticism of apartheid to be dismissed as communist. Secondly it creates a condition which makes both white South Africans and the West to see South Africa as the last bastion against communism,

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The "total strategy" to counter this "total onslaught", consisted amongst other elements of the following:

* The need to forge some kind of national unity government to defend white rule. The present tri-cameral parliament developed from this need. This racist tricameral system and the so-called black local authorities were meant to co-opt the so-called Indian and Coloured populations in South Africa and some middle class black Africans into a junior partnership with the white minority against the black majority.

* Repression of all anti-apartheid...
heil activists and those who resist this system.

The imposition of South African hegemony over the whole Southern African region to silence those opposed to apartheid and to neutralize mainly the African National Congress (ANC) guerilla warfare against South Africa. This would consist of a combination of diplomatic/political economic and military strategies. The 1977 Defence White Paper identified the need to maintain a balance relative to all Southern African states and also called for economic action to promote "political and economic collaboration amongst the states in Southern Africa. This proposed collaboration was later called the constellation of Southern African States (CONSAS).

The total strategy therefore was aimed, in this sense, at establishing South Africa's position as a "regional power" and establishing a "constellation of states" under its tutelage. This would develop a "common approach" on both the security and economic fronts against "what was called expanding communist influence of the region.

It is the third element of the "total strategy" of South Africa which laid the basis for the development of the destabilization strategy against the Southern African states.

THE CONCEPTS OF DESTABILIZATION

Arne Tostensen defines the destabilization policy of South Africa as:

"A deliberate and systematic policy on the part of the South African apartheid regime to engage in insurgency actions against neighbouring states with the aim of undermining the credibility and legitimacy of their lawful governments by rendering development efforts and national reconstruction virtually impossible(4)."

Arne Tostensen continues to say that:

"to this end a wide range of means are employed, including veritable military invasions; sabotage of economic and social infra-structure; terror against the civilian population; support for surrogate organizations (i.e. UNITA, MNR, and LLA); sophisticated and covert forms of economic sabotage; propaganda, and disinformation; as well as selective use of 'carrot-and-stick' tactics to drive a wedge between cooperating partners within the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC)."

South Africa obviously does not articulate this policy the way Tostensen defines it. For them the aim is to stop the harbouring of ANC and Swapo 'terrorists' and thereby curb the advance of communism.

But Deon Geldenhuys, the major South African theoretician of the concept of destabilization comes more openly on this strategy of South Africa, actually sets out to establish South Africa's right to destabilize its neighbours and elaborates on the methods and tactics to be used. In setting out the objectives of a destabiliser he says that:

"The destabiliser's primary objective is an avowedly political one. Essentially, he wishes to produce (force) profound political changes in the target state. They may not involve structural changes in effect toppling the regime in power - but certainly would involve major changes in the target's behaviour. At the very least the destabiliser demands a fundamental shift as reorientation in the target state policy vis-a-vis the destabiliser (5)."

In my study of South Africa's total strategy of which destabilization is part I see a direct relationship between this strategy and the Reagan Doctrine. Maybe it is for this reason that some political scientist call this strategy Botha's Doctrine. All of them go beyond just supporting those governments which are fighting revolutionary forces, (perceived as extension of Moscow) but they destabilise established governments which are seen to be revolutionary, and those which gained their independence through revolutionary means. Infact the Reagan Doctrine goes as far as trying to roll back established governments.

(The U.S.A., for instance, supports, the Contras: In Nicaragua whilst South Africa supports Renamo (MNR) in Mozambique. Both support UNITA in Angola. This simi-
larity in the strategies of these two countries will show itself in the dilemma the U.S.A. finds itself in when considering support for the Southern African states’ SADCC programmes.

THE THREE PHASES OF SOUTH AFRICA’S DESTABILIZATION OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGION

Eduardo Da Silva divides South Africa’s application of the total strategy policy into four distinct phases. The first phase consists of the effort to launch a Constellation of Southern African states (CONSAS). This occurred at the same time as the development of the reform strategies internally.

The second phase for Da Silva is the period from mid-1980 to the end of 1981. This phase consisted of the application of destabilization tactics in a fairly generalized and indiscriminate manner. The third phase consisted of refined strategies of destabilization. It was selective and related to the particular target state's conditions.

This phase covered the period between 1982 and 1983. The last phase for Eduardo Da Silva covers the period after the Nkomati Accord in 1984.

Eduardo Da Silva’s four phases of the total strategy are of course related directly to the Mozambican situation. But I found his four phase distinction of this strategy helpful to understand the related phases of the destabilization policy of the apartheid regime. I would like to identify three phases of the destabilization policy of the apartheid regime. The first phase is the same as Eduardo Da Silva’s second phase of the total strategy. This is the period mid-1980 to the end of 1981. The second phase covers the period of both the third phase and fourth phase as identified by Eduardo da Silva. My third phase covers the period after mid-1986, the period after the Nkomati era.

GENERAL AND INDISCRIMINATE DESTABILIZATION PHASE

Before we deal with the first phase of the destabilization policy of the apartheid regime, let us look at the immediate events which led to the application of this policy.

There are two major events which led S.A. to apply its destabilization strategy by mid-1980. The first one was the defeat of the Muzorewa forces in the Zimbabwe independence election in 1980. Eduardo Da Silva says that the Constellation of states proposal, in its original form, was “predicated on Zimbabwe achieving independence under a collaborationist Muzorewa government”. Under this CONSAS they would have had what was then called Zimbabwe-Rhodesia under Muzorewa; Namibia under the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance; the three members of the customs union (Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland) along with Malawi whom they assumed would all join; and the bantustans (the so-called independent homelands). They also saw Zaire and Zambia as other possible members. This grand vision of P.W. Botha was dashed by the defeat of Muzorewa as we have already said.

The second event which lead to the application of the policy of destabilization occurred two months later. On the 17th April 1980 the majority ruled states of Southern Africa established the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) which defined its primary objective as the reduction of economic dependence on South Africa. This involved the following countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This came as a major reversal to South Africa’s strategy for the region. It dashed the hopes of forming the constellation of Southern African states (CONSAS).

These two events did not only affect Botha’s total strategy but they also caused difficulties for the U.S.A. and other Western governments. Firstly, it dashed the belief that S.A., irrespective of its apartheid ideology, would be an anchor of the stability in the Southern African region. Secondly, the development of the two regional system (S.A.'s proposed Constellation of states and, the SADCC) created difficulties for them. They were forced to review their policies in relation to this region.

It is because of these two events, coupled with internal pressures and the intensification of the armed struggle by the African National Congress which made South Africa resort to a generalized, random and indiscriminate attacks on its neighbours. They invaded Angola in January 1981, attacked Matola in Mozambique and supported surrogate forces like the MNR and UNITA. They flexed their economic muscle by applying coercive economic techniques. This was the first phase of the destabilization strategy.


The second phase which
started in 1982 consisted of more refined and sophisticated strategies of destabilization. The regime became more selective depending on the specific conditions in the particular country in question. This refined strategy, maybe, was a result of the one and a half years of experience the regime acquired. As we have seen from the section on "The concept of destabilization" expert theologians like Deon Geldenheys began to emerge by 1982.

The objectives of a destabilization policy were now clearly defined. Firstly, it was to force neighbouring states to flush out the African National Congress (ANC), in particular, and the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO). The 1984 Defence White Paper saw South Africa's threatening military capacity as essential to advance the peace process. They called this the 'policy of deterrence'.

Secondly, it was to force the Southern African states to sign non-aggression pacts to maintain South Africa's political and economic hegemony. They wanted to reduce the degree of criticism by these states of the apartheid system and to stifle the efforts of the South African states to reduce dependency on South Africa through the SADCC.

Thirdly, if some states were not complying they would then create chaos in those countries by applying economic sanctions, attacking them militarily, use surrogate forces, death squads etc. This is a model used by the old Rhodesia against Mozambique and Zambia, and, that of Israel in Jordan and Lebanon. Joseph Hanlon says that "the goal was simply to create chaos in the neighbouring states, especially those who could not be forced into line," to prove to white South Africans and the world at large that black majority rule does not work, "It was an attempt", he says, "to replace the old 'cordon sanitaire' with what was sometimes described as a 'cordon of instability'." Eduardo Da Silva says that this selective application of destabilization incentives tactical package clearly sought to divide the states of the region. It is history now that to achieve the first goal of destabilization South Africa has gone on the attack against most of the Southern African states. To achieve the second goal South Africa signed, a 'secret' non-aggression pact in February 1982 with Swaziland. In February 1984 South Africa signed the Lusaka Agreement with Angola, which seemingly was never effected. In March 1984 they signed the Nkomati Accord.

It is clear that by the time they signed the Nkomati Accord South Africa was convinced that she had succeeded on attempts of Southern African states to move from a dependency relation with her. She saw the possibility of going back to the concept of constellation of states. P.W. Botha at Nkomati talked about his vision of a 'veritable constellation of states' in Southern Africa. After Lusaka and Nkomati, South Africa saw itself as the regional power again, and, expressed a lot of self-confidence.

BACK TO THE 'OLD' DESTABILIZATION TACTIC

This aura of self confidence of course did not last for a long time. The Gorongosa event in Sofala province on the 28 August 1985 'shocked the Nkomati Accord' to the ground. The crisis of apartheid at home also deepened, and, pressure was building up on the economy of South Africa. The threats of sanctions against South Africa and the participation of the Southern African states in international forums on the question of economic pressure against South Africa angered the apartheid regime even more. This forced the apartheid regime to return to the old destabilization tactics which were indiscriminately applied against all the Southern African states.

Although we cannot give details about this last phase of destabilization policy of the apartheid regime up to date because of space problems, I would like to make a number of observations about this period which can be used as a form of evaluation of how the apartheid regime fared in this regard.

Firstly, it is important to note that although military pressure on the Southern African states to flush out the ANC from within their countries was effective and affected the ANC in many ways, this pressure has forced the ANC to operate more from inside the country than from outside. There is ample evidence that many units of the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, are based-within the country.

That instead of the Southern African states submitting themselves to the apartheid regime there has been a move to strengthen the South African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) and even countries like Malawi which were 'viewed as obvious
ally of South Africa were
moved more closely to be
Southern African states and
further away from South
Africa. The only place
where South Africa could
come to the extent in Swaziland,
which with the sanctions
make more and more
Western states are taking
side with the Southern
African states in the form
of development aid and to
some extent in military aid.
The only country which is
still having difficulties as far
as its Southern Africa
regional policy is concerned
is the U.S.A. They are
faced, of course, with the
contradiction of finding
themselves supporting
UNITA and in some way
South Africa (on the
Nambian question) whilst
on the other side wanting
to plunge in on the side of
the Southern African states.
That instead of South Afri­
a becoming as a regional
superpower, it is more
isolated than ever before.
Instead of being seen as the
'peacemaker' and a
'stabilizing' factor in this
region, it is now seen as
the source of instability.
Simon Jenkins puts this
succinctly when he says
that: "Destabilization is not
control. South Africa can
throw its weight about the
subcontinent; it cannot rule
it. Its achievements will be
anarchy.'."

This evaluation of their
efforts since the second phase
of their destabilization policy
forced them to resort to the
crude form of destabilization.

**DESTABILIZATION OF
NAMIBIA - ITS UNIQUENES**

Before concluding this
paper I suggest that Namibia
be presented as a unique
entity (although still part of
the whole Southern African
reality of the destabilization
policy of the South Africa
regime. What is the differ­
ence? Namibia, unlike the
other states which South
Africa tries to destabilize has
never achieved political inde­
pendence at any stage in its
modern history.

It was originally colonized
by Germany, and in 1920
the League of Nations gave
South Africa the mandate to
be caretaker of Namibia on its
behalf. But in 1946 when the
United Nations replaced the
League of Nations South
Africa refused to be account­
able to the UN on admini­
strating Namibia. In 1948 the
Nationalist Party denounced
the mandate given by the
U.N. and dealt with Namibia
(thus called South West Africa)
as a colony of its fifth pro­
vince.

In fact therefore South
Africa is occupying Namibia
illegally as declared by the
1971 International Court of
Justice. The destabilization
of Namibia therefore takes two
forms:

"The international and the
external. The South African
regime destabilizes Namibia
the same way as it destabilizes
South Africa. It has declared
war against the people of
Namibia, brutalises them as it
does with South Africa, and
denies them of their right to
self-determination as a people.

The South Africa regime
has occupied Namibia as an
external force and created an
economy of dependence.
Because of the combination
of these two forms of desta­
bilization, Namibia destabili­
ization takes on a more
complex form. And unless

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion I would like
to raise three issues. The first
one is the question of the
de jure legitimacy of the South
African regime. Secondly, it is
the cultivation of enemy
images as an integral part of
the destabilization policy of
the apartheid regime. And,
lastly, a need to find another
way of stabilizing this region.

The Lusaka statement (May
1987) was drawn jointly by the
Church in South Africa and
the world at large, and the
liberation movements.

Extensive debates are taking
place back at home about the
question of the legitimacy of
the South African regime. To
facilitate this debate the
Institute for Contextual Theo­
logy (ICT) organised a seminar
jointly with the Centre for
Legal Studies of the Univer­
sity of the Witwatersrand on
the legitimacy and illegitimacy
of this regime during June of
this year. The SACC in its
last National Conference
adopted the following resolu­
tion in this regard:

The National Conference
takes note of Churches pro­
nouncements on Apartheid as a
Heresy which call in question
the moral legitimacy of the
South African regime as a
basis for questioning de jure
legitimacy of that regime.
Therefore, recommends to the
member churches to question
their moral obligation to obey
unjust laws such as:

* The Population Registration
  Act
* The Group Areas Act
* The Land Acts
* The Education Acts
The Separate Amenities Acts
Further calls upon member churches to support the structure which are recognized by the people as their authentic legitimate authority in the eyes of God.

In the light of the destabilization policy of the South African regime we need to take this argument further into the international arena. The task of a government is usually to ensure stability, justice and peace for its citizens and its neighbours. It needs to protect the rights of all and should be responsible for the good and peaceful relationships with its neighbours.

Because South Africa is pursuing the opposite of the very fundamental tasks and function of what constitute a government. We can conclude that it is de-facto an illegitimate government. This is based also on the criterion of the human rights concepts.

Secondly, we need to realize that South Africa uses enemy images to justify their destabilization policy. For instance, they present the liberation movements in South Africa as tools of communism and of Russia aimed at overthrowing the S.A. government and replacing it with an atheistic regime. In this way they try to mobilize the religious sentiments, particularly of white people, in S.A. They also present the neighbouring states as enemy territory by arguing that they are harbouring terrorists. The independence of Southern African states from colonial powers is presented as an advance of communism which is going to sweep the whole of Southern Africa.

Lastly, we need therefore to find another way of addressing the question. Southern Africa at present is a subcontinent of refugees and exiles because of this policy of both internal and regional destabilization. The other way should establish a Southern Africa which is a united homeland for all people. I am convinced that if the economic potential of the regime could be loosened it would not only benefit people in Southern Africa, but the whole African continent. Maybe it is this very potential which threatens western countries to an extent that they are not prepared to commit themselves to the removal of the apartheid regime in the region.

Without removing apartheid there will be no peace in the region, and also for the whole world.

United action for people's power!