

April 11, 1963

Letter, South African Ambassador to the United States, Regarding Armed Forces Attache's Report

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Summary:

The South African Ambassador to the United States writes to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs regarding an American report on their strategic interests that made no mention of Southern Africa.

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Ref. No. : 131/1EMBASSY OF SOUTH AFRICA
AMBASSADE VAN SUID-AFRIKA
WASHINGTON 8. D. C.
11th April, 1963.

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The SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

I attach a copy of the Armed Forces Attaché's report for March, 1963, dated 10th April, 1963, to the Commandant-General, for your information.

The contents of the report open up a vast and important spectrum of political/strategic/military issues but in order not to miss to-day's bag I offer a few comments only :

1. It is of interest to note the emphasis placed on internal security in the Military Assistance Programme in the so-called Tropical African countries (which seem to include, in the definition given, Ethiopia and Libya). One contrasts this with the attitude of the United States Government with regard to our own internal security.

2. It will be observed that the statement of Admiral Anderson, the Chief of Naval Operations, in referring to the waters of great strategic importance in the maritime sense connecting the oceans, omits Southern Africa. Whether he did so deliberately is not known - it would probably be politically (vis-a-vis the Administration) unwise for him to have included us - but it would seem that his views in this regard can with equal effect be applied to Southern Africa, and I have had occasion again, quite recently, to raise this point with the Deputy Secretary for Defence, Mr. Gilpatric. As you will recall the Secretary of the Navy, speaking privately some time ago, certainly included Southern Africa as of

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strategic importance in relation to the routes between the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans.

3. In the more immediate connection with South West Africa, one recalls the observations of Mr. Clarence Randall to me that the risk of South West Africa, however long the South West Africa coastline facing the Atlantic Ocean, passing under the control of some neutralist power or powers has been accepted by the United States Government. I am not in a position to confirm this statement. It is, however, of special interest that Admiral Anderson makes rather a big point of the activities of the Soviet fishing fleet and as you will know I have in the past repeatedly developed this consideration to the American authorities and again last week to Mr. Mennen Williams.

This is being sought.
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 I have noticed the report in the South African press of a statement by Admiral Tyree in regard to the route around the Cape of Good Hope and would only hope that he does not reflect the thinking at the highest professional levels in the United States Navy : he does not speak for Mr. Korth, at least insofar as the Secretary of the Navy's private opinion as expressed to me is concerned.

4. Referring in particular to Mr. McNamara's insistence on the importance of political stability in relation to Communism and referring in general to the United States policy vis-à-vis the developing countries, I had an opportunity the other day to say to Mr. Gilpatrick that it seemed to me personally that the United States, while on the one hand anxious to bring as many men home as possible out of the one million in uniform outside the United States, it on the other hand was pursuing a line of heightening tensions. The most immediate illustration was the attitudes of the United States to developments in Africa. The drain on American wealth must be

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considerable and there were to me many signs that the American taxpayers as well as the American balance of payments could not stand this strain indefinitely. Mr. Gilpatric agreed with me as to the drain on American resources and then added that they were "operating on a gold budget". There have been press reports of this but it was to me particularly significant that Mr. Gilpatric confessed that American overall policy today was of such a nature that all agencies of the Government were required to relate their activities to the gold position of the United States. I observed that if the dollar was lost the cause of the United States itself would be lost and the Western world would be in dire straits - he agreed.

5. I have every reason to think, although I am not in a position to prove it, that the concern which has been expressed to us many times in private conversation by responsible Americans at their inability to project their power into the Indian Ocean is now beginning to receive active consideration. Some experts hold the view that nuclear powered naval vessels do not in fact furnish the necessary mobility. A ship like the ENTERPRISE, the 85,000 ton nuclear powered aircraft carrier, has to be accompanied wherever it goes by a large screen of destroyers. However far and however long the ENTERPRISE can operate away from its base the destroyers have to be refuelled frequently and the fuel for the destroyers is carried by ENTERPRISE herself. Similarly the aircraft carrier also has to have the fuel supplies for all the aircraft aboard. All this places a very strict limitation on the field of operations of even the ENTERPRISE, the glorious pride of the United States Navy (on which I spent a week-end last year).

In the circumstances the United States Navy
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still found itself faced with a special problem in respect of any of its ships operating in the Indian Ocean and at the rate at which the British were evacuating their positions in Africa, in the East and in the Middle East, the stage would soon arrive that American naval vessels in the Indian Ocean would have to be supplied from Norfolk, Virginia, or from the Philippines.

The implications for us are obvious and will no doubt be exploited to the best advantage.

6. One last point is perhaps that I have reason to feel Admiral Anderson himself is very unhappy about the trend of affairs in the Pentagon : the professional servicemen simply do not like the extent to which power has passed into the hands of civilians. The officers of course remain loyal to the United States but life has become a little trying for them. In addition, in the case of Admiral Anderson, although he was promoted by President Kennedy over the heads of many officers, I have a feeling he also has reservations on the Kennedy Administration's political policies.


AMBASSADOR.