

Boekbesprekings / Book Reviews

L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan: *South Africa. War, Revolution or Peace?* Published by the Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, Stanford, California. 85 pages, tables, bibliography and index. Price not mentioned.

South Africans today have practically resigned themselves to expect nothing more than emotionally subjective works when foreign academics discuss the Afrikaner people and their republic at the southern tip of Africa. It was, therefore, a pleasant surprise to read Drs Gann and Duignan's calm analysis of certain key aspects in connection with that most criticized state, its rulers, its peoples and its future. As the authors are both well-known historians, who have teamed up for the production of numerous works on the history of Africa, and as both have travelled in South Africa, have met its peoples and have discussed their problems with them, the book should be regarded as authoritative, especially as many of the most trustworthy available sources were used in its compilation.

In their preface the authors state clearly that they disagree with claims such as the following: That South Africa is 'governed by a neo-fascist regime that shackles freedom of thought and enslaves the non-white majority;' that American power 'should be used to break the fetters of brown and black people in South Africa;' that a 'South African revolution is inevitable'; and that the battle against the existing South African establishment is 'yet another chapter of the civil-rights struggle in America.' In their opinion our country is, because of its multi-ethnic population, more similar to Cyprus than to the United States. 'It is like other African countries split by ethnic rivalries and populated by backward, tribal peoples. South Africa's problems cannot, therefore, be resolved along American lines.' The authors, therefore, propose their own interpretation which they see as more realistic than most others which come to notice.

The first chapter deals with South Africa as a 'pariah state.' The authors state that double standards are applied by writers and commentators all over the world when it comes to judging South African circumstances. Other states are not censured for employing far more oppressive measures. The United States even carried on normal relations with states that have been responsible for systematic discrimination against and mass

expulsion of particular population groups. South Africa is, according to Gann and Duignan, rightly attacked for certain of its oppressive measures. But, on the other hand, they admit that 'no Indian businessmen in Durban or Johannesburg would prefer black rule of the Tanzanian or Ugandan variety to South African white rule.' And South Africa differs from most communist countries in that it 'does not have to build fences and walls to keep its people in, nor is it avoided by its neighbours; something like 1.5 million Africans from Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and other countries have voted with their feet to live in South Africa.' The authors therefore conclude that South Africa should not be treated as a pariah state, that 'it should be dealt with it in the same manner as communist states or other authoritarian, nondemocratic regimes.' They acknowledge that this view is not at all 'fashionable', but believe that it should be honestly explored, especially by those Western intellectuals who apply double standards.

In the second chapter South Africa's strategic and economic potential is discussed. The Cape sea route, 'already the world's most crowded shipping lane,' is described as a major asset to the West, especially in the light of the increasing dependence of the United States on oil from the Middle East. Secondly, South Africa is stated as being of vast importance to the West because of its richness in strategic raw materials. The country's mineral potential is analysed in a fairly detailed table. It is conceded that a left-wing revolutionary government in South Africa might continue to sell raw materials to NATO-members, but those states could hardly want to depend 'on the fleeting goodwill of a government allied with the Soviet Union, which is itself committed to the overthrow of Western democratic governments.' And such a situation could well be avoided if the West was to adopt 'reasonable policies' towards South Africa. Such policies should, according to Gann and Duignan, be in accordance with their main supposition, namely: 'There is no need to support radical liberation movements in South Africa; the United States should work through the country's moderates, not its militants. We want to prevent racial wars, not encourage them, and to stimulate the evolution of a stable society in South Africa.'

The third chapter is entitled, 'The Defence Infrastructure.' The authors analyse South Africa's defence potential, defence expenditures, weapon systems, defence organization and manpower. The police force is also discussed, and it is clearly stated that the country is not a 'police state.' That statement is made on the grounds that, firstly, the proportion of policemen to civilians in South Africa is smaller than it is in the United States, and, secondly, public order in South Africa has been maintained with relatively little violence. The authors claim that no revolution in Southern Africa will get off the ground as long as the police establishment is not effectively disrupted.

Gann and Duignan have clear suppositions on the two contentious subjects of nuclear capacity and the arms embargo. The last, they state, has come too late to cripple South Africa. As for the first: 'The South Africans have not as yet tested nuclear weapons, but they have the industrial capacity, the technical knowledge, and the raw materials required to construct a substantial nuclear arsenal and a tactical delivery system.'

The fourth chapter starts with the rhetorical question, 'South Africa: A Revolutionary Situation?' The possibility of a conventional war against South Africa is first discussed. The authors rule out the possibility of combined action on the part of the Organization of African Unity. As for the members of the Warsaw Pact even if they 'were willing to risk armed action in South Africa, and assuming that they were able to overcome the political obstacles in their way, they would still face extraordinary difficulties.' Suitable bases will be the most important of those difficulties. Providing that South Africa would have no nuclear weapons to prevent a seaborne invasion, that strategy might be considered as an alternative to an assault by land, but such a 'D Day' operation, the authors warn, would be more difficult to undertake than the landings in Normandy during World War Two. Thus the 'chances of establishing a liberal, pro-Western regime in South Africa as a result of armed intervention are nil.'

As for a naval blockade, the authors are of the opinion that it will hurt the West more than it will hurt South Africa, and it will hardly affect the economies of the Warsaw Pact States. The West will be injured in two respects: 'a blockade would interfere with facilities for the vital tanker traffic round the Cape, and would (secondly) deprive the Western nations of their commerce and their returns from South African investment.' It would

not by itself bring about the overthrow of the South African government, and might rather benefit it by forcing the diversification of economic production.

As for the prospects for a violent revolution, it will primarily depend on the actions of people of African, Coloured and Indian origin. These groups, Gann and Duignan point out, are split along ethnic and cultural lines, and their leadership suffers from serious structural weaknesses. The conceited history of the South African Communist Party, whose role in a possible revolution has often been magnified, is briefly dealt with before the authors state that 'the tales ... concerning an impending Marxist revolution in South Africa should be consigned to the realm of political fable, where they belong.'

Nonviolent and semiviolent ways towards a revolution are also discussed. As for an industrial strike, a formidable political weapon, there would be considerable obstacles in the way of such an action. The main reason is that South Africa's labour force is ethnically split. The same problem would confront the organizers of riots or wide-scale sabotage. As the authors point out, the riots of June 1976 did not succeed in setting off a serious urban insurrection and thus left South Africa's basic structure unaltered. By 1978, furthermore, overt resistance has stopped and the students are back in school.

Gann and Duignan object to the view of would-be revolutionaries who see guerrilla warfare as 'the surest way to victory in South Africa.' In South Africa, they point out, 'the guerrillas cannot mobilize regular forces of the kind that Mao Tse-tung considered indispensable to victory in guerrilla warfare.' A host of technical problems would face any sizeable guerrilla attack against this country, the most important being the economic dependence of neighbouring states on South Africa and the country's physical size. Urban terrorism may disrupt essential services, and guerrillas would certainly become 'a serious nuisance to South Africans.' Thus the hopes for a violent overthrow of the South African system belong, according to the authors, 'in the realm of military fantasy.'

In their fifth chapter the authors discuss South Africa's position in world politics. They are of the opinion, and the South African Government would certainly agree, that there is no reason for the West to regard this country as a pariah state. It would make more political sense to

support the moderates than to favour the radicals in South Africa. Above all, they state, a racial conflict in this country must be avoided, as it could never resolve the country's problems. They fear that internal consensus may well be impossible to achieve. Therefore they propose what they term a consociational system. This embodies 'continued social and ethnic diversity, based on a policy of pragmatism.' The homeland-policy is not completely ruled out: a federal system, partially based on the homelands, would have to be worked out. Another premise of their proposal is that 'all racially discriminatory legislation and practices will have to be ended ... In short, apartheid will have to be dismantled.' All this would have to come from within, and all must be derived from the ruling Nationalist party rather than from the opposition. Thus, considerable changes in government policy would have to come about. Gann and Duignan claim that Nationalist supporters are ready for such changes. Should their estimate be correct, South Africa might be moving in the direction of their consociational system.

The last chapter specifically deals with the United States and South Africa. It starts off with the question: How should Americans react to the South African situation? Gann and Duignan answer: in a quiet way. Americans should quietly press for what they call 'improvements', by which they mean the 'gradual ending of apartheid, more education and job opportunities for blacks and Coloureds, more self-government for urban blacks, and more democracy in the homelands.' They are of the opinion that there is nothing to be gained by a moral interventionist stance, such as the Carter administration is adopting. Such a policy could lead to a racial war, and, as the authors point out in the very last sentence of the book, 'welfare, liberty, and the rights of man would disappear from the face of Southern Africa if the issues are decided by a racial war.'

Although *South Africa: War, Revolution, or Peace?* was written for an American reading public, moderate South Africans of all races will be glad to find in it a positive view of their attempts to build a peaceful society. The authors reveal a keen insight into the problems facing the peoples, and a sympathetic understanding of ethnic differences which make the chances of a political settlement accommodating all claims extremely remote. They correctly argue that, by supporting the radical elements in the South African community, the United States not only endangers her own na-

tional interests, but helps to complicate the political arena and increase the possibilities for an all-out racial war on this sub-continent.

J.E.H. GROBLER

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Rubén A. Ramirez Mitchell: *Abstracts on Strategy*. Published by 'Escuela De Defensa Nacional', Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1976. 307 pages, bibliography and index. Price uEs 30 dollars.