

More on South Africa

by Steve Godfrey

Canada and South Africa: Challenge and Response edited by Douglas G. Anglin. Ottawa: The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, 1986, 64 pages, \$6.00.

Southern Africa in Crisis: an Analysis and Bibliography by Timothy M. Shaw. Halifax: Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie University, 1986, 48 pages.

Canadian activism — official and public — on Southern Africa has never been greater than today and these two short monographs are welcome Canadian contributions to the complex issue of apartheid, and how to deal with it.

Tim Shaw's compressed essay is partly an appeal to his academic peers to delve deeper into the economic relations which explain why the independent states of Southern Africa can simultaneously be in a virtual state of war, while trading extensively with South Africa. Shaw takes us into the heart of this extraordinarily complex region by emphasizing the way in which class and economic structures rooted in history cut across the lines of race and state. Genuine regional cooperation can only emerge when the regionalism defined by South Africa's economic and military supremacy is replaced in a post-apartheid society. Shaw's useful bibliography is selective, but from an important Canadian center such as Dalhousie we could in future expect in a bibliography a section on Canada and Southern Africa to recognize the growing corpus of material on this topic.

Challenge and Response is an account of a much fuller debate about the prognosis for apartheid as a system of racial and economic exploitation. It was conducted by two distinguished academics working in Canada, Dan O'Meara and Heribert Adam. Both agree that in the mid-eighties the South African government is facing a fundamental challenge quite different from that of Sharpeville or Soweto in previous decades. Their radically different analysis of what next, however, provides a highly instructive insight into the policy options which Canada faces in the region.

O'Meara argues that the current crisis is terminal for the apartheid system. His catalogue of the psychological, economic and political defeats suffered by the Nationalist Party since the crisis began in 1984 describes an Afrikaner society at a dead end. The Nationalist Party has no political response capable of mobilizing the white population to meet the combined challenge of black resistance, economic stagnation, the fracturing of white politics and the steady growth of external pressure. The only response left is the application of even greater doses of violence and repression. The formidable strength of South Africa's security apparatus will be the measure of how long it takes for white minority rule to be replaced, and at what human cost.

Heribert Adam, on the other hand, starts from the assumption that the main trigger of change is the self-interest of the white population, since he believes that white rule is entrenched into the next century. Apartheid is incapable of meeting the needs of a modern industrialized economy, and capitalism — the business community — is the most likely force to displace apartheid. In this scenario, reforming capitalists team up with black labor unions as a stabilizing and workable reform bloc and the political stalemate is broken by universal suffrage to an assembly which, under the watchful eye of government, negotiates a new constitution. Adam's essay is rich in observation of the contradictions in South African society, but provides a one-dimensional view of the ingredient which, Shaw and O'Meara argue, has made this moment so different in South African history — the depth and strength of black opposition. His reduction of the African National Congress which "to all intents and purposes represents an aspiring and hitherto excluded middle class," mocks the history of the founding movement of African nationalism and is quite inaccurate. This assertion that "race constitutes an invidious distinction that can be discarded when it becomes dysfunctional" would be met with incredulity in the townships and homelands where the apartheid system has been "dysfunctional" for South African blacks for two generations, without mitigation.

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Letters to the Editor

Sir,

In his review, "Misunderstood Security" (May/June, 1987), of our book, *Canada and Collective Security: Odd Man Out*, Professor Peyton Lyon demonstrates that his thinking about Canadian defence policy is frozen in the Cold War and distorted by an infatuation with political symbolism.

In our book on Canadian defence policy, Professor Joseph Jockel and I argued that Canada's military posture was likewise still frozen in the Cold War because Canadian governments feared that to change any part of it would undermine Ottawa's political standing amongst allies. This attitude, combined with chronic under-funding of defence, has resulted in a glaring and growing gap between Canada's commitments and capabilities to the point where none of its contributions to collective security were militarily effective. Our book argued that Canada owes whatever influence it has within NATO to the skill of its diplomats rather than to its military contributions to collective security. We also pointed out that Canada has had very little influence on major NATO decisions.

Professor Lyon would have Canada continue to concentrate its efforts in Germany rather than on "peripheral fronts," which to him include not only Norway, but Canada and the high seas. The German commitment must be maintained at all cost because it is only by being in Germany that Canada can deliberate upon the "destiny agenda" of international security affairs and influence the policies of the major powers. According to Professor Lyon, it is not even important that this military commitment "make sense" for Canada to use it to buy influence, "but rather that it be what the allies most cherish," a "token" of our solidarity.

Professor Lyon found it shocking that we would dare to criticize Canada for not pulling its weight in NATO, as well as our suggestion that if all else failed and Canada did not improve its posture, the alliance might be justified in excluding Canada from certain allied roles. Canada, according to him, has nothing to be ashamed of and still merits the trust and confidence of its allies. Canada should especially not blush