

Is South Africa next 'new order' target?

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Military experts in the Namibian capital of Windhoek are increasingly worried that the Republic of South Africa (R.S.A.) will be the next target of U.N. military intervention, possibly as early as this summer.

While Namibia has made a remarkably smooth transition over the past two years to political independence, and the situation in Angola appears headed in a similar direction, these sources are concerned that the R.S.A. is about to explode into a civil war, providing justification for outside intervention by the U.N. Security Council.

Since the beginning of April, several developments inside the R.S.A. have escalated these fears. First, the South African Communist Party (CP), long an important influence inside the ranks of the African National Congress (ANC), has begun agitating for a more violent response to both the rival Inkatha movement of Kwazulu chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, and to the DeKlerk government, which, the communists charge, is sitting on the sidelines allowing black versus black fighting to escalate out of control.

Chris Hani, a leading CP member inside the ANC's military wing Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), has called for the formation of self-defense units inside the black townships to thwart attacks by Inkatha and the South African police, the April 25 *Washington Post* reported. While claiming that these units would be separate from the ANC's military command and would only defend against outside attacks, in the same breath, Hani threatened that if the United States moved to lift sanctions against the R.S.A., the ANC-led coalition of anti-apartheid groups would launch a nationwide strike wave.

The U.S. Congress is scheduled to begin hearings at the end of April to take up the question of lifting sanctions. Early this year, the European Community moved to partially lift sanctions against the R.S.A. According to U.S. State Department officials, lifting sanctions would occur only if the DeKlerk government were to free all remaining political prisoners and repeal the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act, two laws that form the foundation of the Apartheid system. DeKlerk had announced his intentions earlier this year to comply with all three demands.

Adding to a tense situation, ANC leader Winnie Mandela, who is currently on trial for the torture-murder of four black youths in 1988, issued a threat on April 20 that the ANC would launch a coup d'état—as early as May 9—if

President DeKlerk did not fire his police and defense ministers. The threat, issued at an ANC rally, was reported in the *Sowetan*, the country's largest daily black newspaper. It marked the first statement by a top ANC official calling for the overthrow of the South African government since talks began between the ANC, the DeKlerk government, and Inkatha.

Other ANC officials have recently threatened to break off those talks if the government failed to take more direct action to curb the escalating communal violence.

Preconditions for U.N. action

According to military specialists in Windhoek interviewed by *EIR*, the economic situation for blacks inside South Africa is increasingly desperate. They say that as the result of the international sanctions, 500,000 blacks have lost their jobs in the past year, and that for every person unemployed, there are seven suffering from lack of food. This, they say, has led to a cycle of desperation and violence. Leading South African communists, now apparently cut free from direct control from Moscow (although KGB links are likely still intact), have seized upon this crisis to agitate for a more direct challenge to the DeKlerk government.

The Windhoek sources, who had been skeptical about the involvement of an outside "third force" in agitating for a full-blown civil war inside southern Africa, are no longer skeptical. In addition to the known role of the "cosmopolitan" faction of communist international operatives, these sources confirm that British raw materials magnate Tiny Rowland of the Lonrho Group has been active. Last year, Rowland played a destructive role in the early days of Namibian independence, promising to develop sugar refineries and then backing out of the deal at the last minute, thereby foreclosing other potential investment opportunities. Rowland has played a role in fueling civil strife in Mozambique, and was at the center of British destabilization of Iraq.

According to Windhoek sources, the DeKlerk government has, up until this moment, held back from calling up additional reserve troops to deal with the communal violence. However, they believe that if there is an escalation in ANC versus Inkatha fighting, as Hani and Winnie Mandela threaten, DeKlerk may be left with no alternative. That, these sources fear, could bring extreme right-wing elements into a more prominent role in counterinsurgency efforts, leading in turn to an even greater amount of bloodshed.

When French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, British Prime Minister John Major, and the Bush administration endorsed the doctrine of the "duty of interference" in the context of the recent Kurdish refugee crisis, many South Africans began worrying that the same doctrine could be imposed by the U.N. Security Council if the situation inside the R.S.A. blew up into a full-scale civil war. Already there have been calls from some quarters inside the republic for a U.N.-imposed "solution."