

South African boycott is madness

Few North Americans have any understanding of the immense importance of South Africa — either to Africa or to the West. Look for a moment at the nation — against which the West, by its boycott, has declared economic war.

Thirty-four nations make up the region south of the Sahara that we call black Africa. Yet South Africa accounts for nearly 75% of the Gross National Product of this entire area — three quarters of the industry, trade and commerce of sub-Saharan Africa. Over 700,000 people, mostly black, are employed in South Africa's mining industry, the world's second largest after the Soviet Union. By contrast, Canada, a competitor to South Africa, employs 140,000 in extractive industries.

Over the past decade, and in spite of the worst recession since the 1930s, income of South African blacks working in mining has gone up 300%. In sub-Saharan Africa, income of black workers has fallen over the past 20 years in all black nations save western-oriented Kenya, Ivory Coast, Malawi and South Africa. South Africa's blacks enjoy the highest living standard of any blacks on the African continent.

Incredibly, black South Africans own more private cars than do Russians. The nation's large black middle class has a higher living standard and far more personal freedom than do citizens of the Soviet Union. South Africa's mighty economy also employs 1.5 million foreign workers from Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Swaziland and Lesotho whose remittances support some six million people in these poverty-stricken nations.

In truth, all of southern Africa is dependent upon



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South Africa for everything from transport to electricity. At present there are 4,200 South African railway cars in Zambia and Zaire alone. Forty-five per cent of the total imports and exports of the nations of southern Africa go through South African ports and along its efficient railroad system. Without South African wheat and corn much of southern Africa would starve. Without white technicians from South Africa, nations like Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi would have no electricity, no phones, no railroads, no water and no airlines.

While these nations loudly denounce South Africa in the UN and urge the West to boycott it, their economies and technical infrastructure are run by South Africans; they buy arms and police gear from South Africa; they buy machinery — often marked "made in Czechoslovakia," and rely on South African medical teams to keep the tse-tse fly at bay.

Nigeria buys South African food and industrial products; Somalia buys South African arms. Even the USSR, that ardent foe of apartheid, quietly divvies up the world diamond market with South Africa's DeBeers.

It is only the gullible West, misled by disinformation and a liberal press determined to destroy South Africa,

that believes boycotting that nation is a brilliant idea. More irony. The western economic boycott hurts first and foremost South Africa's black lose their jobs. South Africa's business community, an ardent foe of apartheid, is injured; South Africa's Afrikaner farmers, stalwart defenders of apartheid, are hardly affected. The boycott throws blacks out of work and so heightens South Africa's tensions and violence.

Even Moscow could not plan a better way to destabilize South Africa's economy and society. Just as apartheid was being rapidly eliminated, the West administered economic chemotherapy that may well kill the patient rather than the disease. Worse, few people understand just how important a safe, secure South Africa is to the West.

South Africa has 83% of the West's supply of chrome, 86% of platinum metals, 49% of manganese, 50% of gold and 65% of vanadium. The only other source of many of these strategic minerals so vital to western industry — and particularly the defence industry — is the Soviet Union. With South Africa, the USSR controls 99% of platinum, 97% of vanadium, 93% of manganese, 84% of chrome and 68% of gold and a large share of the industrial diamond market.

If South Africa's mines were shut the Soviet Union would have a stranglehold over western industry. Without these metals the West could not build jet engines, supersonic aircraft, nuclear arms, tanks, submarines, missile components and many electronic systems.

This is the madness we are fostering in southern Africa. And waiting in nearby Angola are 35,000 Soviet-armed Cuban troops.