

Book review

W. C. J. van Rensburg and D. A. Pretorius (H. Glen ed.). *South Africa's strategic minerals — pieces on a continental chessboard*. Johannesburg, Valiant Publishers, 1977. 170 pp. R12,00. (Obtainable from The Librarian, Foreign Affairs Association, P.O. Box 26410, Arcadia, 0007 South Africa.)

This book provides the answers to many questions relating to what minerals South Africa produces and in what quantities, what mineral industries and trade she practises, and what mineral resources and reserves she possesses. All this information is presented against the background of the minerals situation in Southern Africa and in the rest of the world. Being the world's fourth largest producer of non-fuel minerals and an important exporter of a wide range of strategic metals and minerals to the West, South Africa has a critical role as a stabilizing influence on the regulation of mineral supplies and their prices.

The authors make a detailed analysis of minerals in the years between the beginning of 1960 and the end of 1975. These they call the Prologue Years 'because they witnessed the preparation for the crucial East-West confrontation that is to be played out in Africa in the closing decades of this century'. Their detailed analysis

is presented in 41 tables and 34 coloured diagrams, which are accompanied by a text that examines the effect of a denial of South African strategic supplies to the West.

This denial is discussed in terms of security of supplies to the West, increased prices, the bargaining position of other mineral exporters, and the establishment of producer cartels. It is concluded that, although the U.S.S.R. is largely self-sufficient in strategic metals and minerals, any control of South Africa's minerals by the Communist Bloc would greatly enhance the U.S.S.R.'s economic and strategic position. This, in turn, would lead to increasing pressure on other pro-West mineral producers such as Australia and Brazil.

Harold Macmillan's 'wind of change' that heralded the 'struggle [in Africa] for the minds of men' has become a whirlwind of war for the mineral wealth that the men possess. According to the authors of this book, 'strategic minerals [have become] the pieces to be moved on the chessboard [of Southern Africa] by the grandmasters of the game as they [devise] their strategy for victory'.

H.W.G.

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Rustenburg Platinum Mines Limited (Rustenburg Section).

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