OBSERVATIONS ON THE RELEVANCE OF U.S. POLICY TO SOUTHERN AFRICA

I am appreciative of the opportunity to present a concern about the direction of U.S. policy. For more than 20 years, the American Committee on Africa has been working in the field of U.S. - African relations. We hope that we can offer some helpful perspective on U.S. policy towards southern Africa coming out of our experience.

My purpose is not to focus on any one country of southern Africa, but rather to try to look at U.S. policy in the perspective of the whole southern African situation. My major contention is that U.S. policy is not dynamically related to the actual circumstances existing in southern Africa.

The Situation In Southern Africa

Southern Africa, like practically all of the continent, has been the victim of conquest and exploitation covering a very long period. The fact which distinguishes southern Africa, and is undoubtedly the reason for a current concentrated attention on that area of the world, and also is the rationale for these hearings, is that this conquest and exploitation persists today. This is true even though the change in Portugal brought about by the coup of April, 1974 has raised new hope for a resolution to the problems of exploitation in southern Africa.

In my statement, I do not intend to dwell at length on facts and statistics which have been documented in other sections of these hearings dealing with particular areas of southern Africa. It is inevitable that reference to South Africa should figure prominently because South Africa is the largest, the richest, and the most powerful of all the countries in the area. Also, it is not irrelevant to refer to the period of Portuguese domination in Angola and Mozambique because the changes there are so recent that the struggle for independence is fresh in memory.

The situation in southern Africa can be described under two principal headings. First, southern Africa is an area of racial, political, and economic exploitation.

In Rhodesia, with only 5% of the population white, 50 out of the 66 seats in the Parliament are held by white members. Under the 1969 Constitution, presently in force, African representation could never surpass that of whites in Parliament even if there were dramatic changes in the educational and financial circumstances of blacks. This Constitution was adopted with only 6,645 Africans qualified to vote. Under the Unlawful Organization Act and the Preventive Detention Act a succession of African political organizations have been banned. The Law and Order Maintenance Act gives the police extensive power to arrest nationalists and to ban meetings simply by arresting the speakers. The Land Apportionment Act and the Native Land Husbandoity Act puts the best land in the hands of whites. 6,400 white farmers have nearly all the best land. On an average the European worker in Rhodesia is paid ten times more than the African. The Industrial Conciliation Act so limits trade union rights for Africans that they are virtually powerless to change their working conditions and their relations with either the white workers or their employers.

In Namibia, approximately 13% of the population is white. No Africans are represented in the Legislature. Sixty-five per cent of the country is in the hands of whites. All African land is held by an agency called “The Bantu Trust.” Under the law, electoral politics for Africans are irrelevant because there are no elected positions for Africans as a whole in the government of the country. The South African government, which has controlled Namibia ever since the end of the first World War, has done everything it could to encourage a division of the country among ethnic groups. This was an attempt at a divide and rule policy the purpose of which is to maintain European control over the country for an indefinite period.

In South Africa, 19% of the population is white. By law no African may be elected to Parliament. Africans have no vote. The major African political organizations, which have existed primarily to protest injustices and to preserve as far as possible the rights of the majority of the people, have been banned, their leaders imprisoned, hounded by the police, or forced into exile. Under the apartheid system the majority of the people, the Africans, have only the privilege, not the right, of leaving the reserve areas, or Bantustans, which occupy only 13% of the land surface of the country. And yet, the economy of South Africa rests upon the labor of the Africans. A system of migratory labor has been imposed upon the Africans, they have been obliged to accept this in order to sustain themselves in the small areas of the country where they are supposed to have their homes. About 47% of the African population live in the Bantustans. But only 15% of the income of the people in the Transkei and 9% of the income of the people in KwaZulu (the two largest Bantustans) are earned within these areas. Over half of the blacks live below the $120 monthly income estimated as the poverty datum line for a family of five.

Second, southern Africa is an area of struggle and conflict. It is primarily because of this confrontation between the African majority and the white minority that the rest of the world has given unusual attention to the area. Most of the African countries achieved their independence through a struggle that remained remarkably non-violent. Algeria’s war for independence and the Mau Mau in Kenya, were the exceptions. Liberation movements of southern Africa were driven to violence because they saw no other way to end exploitation and colonial domination. Guerrilla warfare was finally successful in the three major Portuguese colonial areas of Africa — Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique. Not only did the liberation movements in these countries succeed in freeing themselves from the Portuguese, but they were the catalytic agents which brought about a fundamental change in Portugal itself.

In South Africa, for literally decades, the African National Congress attempted to bring about change within the institutions which the Europeans had created. The banning of the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress following the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 brought an abrupt end to the African strategy of non-violence.

In South Africa sabotage and sporadic incidents of violence have occurred over the last decade, but the liberation struggle has not yet erupted into full-scale violence. The reason for this has been twofold. First, South Africa has been protected by buffer areas on its borders — the ocean on two sides, Mozambique under Portuguese domination, Botswana which has been economically dependent upon South Africa, and Namibia, a captive state. Second, the government of South Africa has protected itself by the creation of a militarized police state. Within the last three years military expenditures in South Africa have more than doubled now amounting to a billion dollars a year. The Republic now produces about 80% of its lighter weapons. More than 100 kinds of ammunition, rifles, explosives and armoured cars are produced annually in South Africa. In her testimony a few days ago before this sub-committee, my colleague, Jennifer Davis, outlined the military buildup in South Africa. The purpose of this military strength, of course, is to protect white South Africa from threats to its way of life either internal or external. Any opposition to the system of white domination is dealt with immediately and leaders of active protest are put under ban or imprisoned. Half a million or more Africans are arrested annually under the pass laws in order to maintain the separation of black and white peoples from one another even while the labor of the African is exploited to keep white prosperity alive.

That a dramatic change has taken place in southern Africa within the last year and a half is incontestable. The policy of the new government in Portugal was a victory for the liberation movements of Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique. The independence particularly of Angola and Mozambique, because of their strategic location in southern Africa, has had a tremendous effect on the objective situation facing South Africa and Rhodesia. Part of the buffer that South Africa has always relied upon, has been removed. The white minority government of Rhodesia faces new pressures of isolation. South Africa has reacted to this new development not with a change of internal policy, but with a change of international tactics. A “correct” policy has been adopted towards Mozambique. At least limited pressure has been applied to the government of Ian Smith to come to terms with the African nationalist movement there. A policy of detente between South Africa and black African states to the north is being attempted.

The approaches of the black independent states, led by Zambia and Tanzania, and of South Africa for detente are in contrast. The objective of Prime Minister Vorster is to try to stave off any external attack against his country’s security while tightening up internal machinery to preserve control. Efforts towards communication with African leaders such as Kaunda, the attempt to normalize relations with Mozambique, speeches for external consumption about changes due to come inside South Africa, talk about removing South African troops from Rhodesia, speeches designed to make South African policy on Namibia sound reasonable — all of this has the purpose of deceiving the international community into thinking a basic change is taking place in South Africa.

The approach of the independent African states to detente has a limited objective. It is designed not to lessen pressure for change within South Africa, but to try to remove South African economic and military power from Rhodesia and Namibia. This is quite clear from the statement which Tanzania submitted to a recent Organization of African Unity session in Dar es Salaam dealing with the question of detente. The statement read: “The willingness to talk to Vorster and his government about the transfer of power in Rhodesia and Namibia is quite a different thing from co-operating with him as he attempts to make friends in Africa in order to weaken the struggle for human rights and dignity within South Africa. All talking must be confined to matters of direct relevance to the transfer of power in those two countries, and in full co-operation with the appropriate nationalist movements.”

If South African power can be removed from Rhodesia and Namibia the change to majority rule may come about soon and largely through peaceful methods. It is unthinkable that the Smith regime can last in Rhodesia without the presence of South African troops, and without the cooperation of Mozambique and South Africa through access to their seaports.

The more fundamental question is whether change is taking place within South Africa itself. In explaining the new international tactical approach of South Africa, Prime Minister Vorster said to his own constituents “I have made no promises of change in domestic policy.” To a recent student conference, the Prime Minister said “I have spoken recently to many who have intergrationist tendencies. They are people who have already thrown in the towel . . . Do not advocate a course which would lead to a sharing of power over your own people and over other people.” The fundamentals of apartheid have not changed. The pass laws effectively limiting the right of the majority of the people of South Africa to travel around their own country, still exist. The Unlawful Organizations Act, the Public Safety Act, the Suppression of Communism Act, the Sabotage Act, the Terrorism Act, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, the Group Areas Act, the Bantu Education Act, the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, the Bantu Administration Act, and a multitude of others still exist. The legal right of black trade unions to strike and even to engage in effective collective bargaining, is still denied. Africans still cannot participate in government and their political organizations are banned. South Africa justifies its “separate development” and “homelands” policy by contending that South Africa is made up of many nations. It still spreads the fiction that each African “nation” can be independent when it is obvious to any observer that the homelands policy is simply a means of maintaining control over a divided black populace.

The recent changes in southern Africa with the independence of Mozambique and the forthcoming independence of Angola, far from removing the bases for struggle, intensify them. The white minority of South Africa is powerful. This minority has given no indication of a desire for fundamental change towards the establishment of a multi-racial society. The black majority in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia are inspired by the independence which they have seen in Mozambique. Their
profits are great and problems small. Capital is not threatened which refused recognition because it contended, the as a gold mine, one of those rare and refreshing places where almost embarrassing now to look at the official to neither encourage nor discourage investment and trade with whole infrequently and without enthusiasm.

South to the need to which it is supposed to relate. The capital of the Republic of Guinea, where the for liberation movements from other parts of interests or circumstances. Conakry, the capital of the Republic of Guinea, where the in that it is in reality related to an entirely different set of from the Portuguese territories. The American ambassador in to avoid disturbing a profit-making enterprise. In the case of liberation movements from other parts of the majority of the people want to run their own affairs. As long as the white minority looks upon this as a threat, struggle, conflict, and confrontation are inevitable. This is as it should be. This is the way change takes place in history. There is always hope when a repressed majority are unwilling any longer to accept the inferior status which has been forced on them.

The United States’ Response
The policy of the United States has never come to terms seriously with the southern African reality. This is not new. It only became necessary for the United States to have a policy toward Africa as a whole after the mid and late 1950’s when newly independent African states were emerging. Up to that time Africa was considered an extension of Europe. In spite of the fact that the United States has always given verbal support to the principle of self-determination, it is rather ironic that one of the last acts of the Eisenhower administration was to abstain on the decolonization resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1960. For a very brief period, towards the beginning of the Kennedy administration, there was some indication that the United States Government might begin to accept a new reality in Africa. The United States voted to censure Portugal for its policy in Angola just after the armed struggle began in 1961. The United States took some steps to challenge the continuation of French colonial domination in Algeria. The United States voted for an arms embargo against South Africa. But with a few exceptions the United States has lagged shamefully on colonial questions, taking no effective initiatives and giving the conflict in southern Africa low priority on the agenda of issues with which it was concerned.

As suggested in the title I have given my statement, I raise the question about the relevance of U.S. policy to the dynamics of the southern Africa struggle. A policy which is irrelevant to an objective situation is useless, or bankrupt, or deceitful. Any irrelevant policy is wasted motion because it does not meet the need to which it is supposed to relate. Or it may be deceitful in that it is in reality related to an entirely different set of interests or circumstances.

If it is true that the southern African situation is characterized primarily by the struggle of the majority of the people against exploitation, then the contention that United States policy is irrelevant has substance. One important aspect of United States policy towards southern Africa, and particularly South Africa, has been to avoid disturbing a profit-making enterprise. Economic ties dominate the relations between the United States and South Africa. The official policy of the U.S. government is to neither encourage nor discourage investment and trade with South Africa. Over 300 American firms have investments in South Africa and the average rate of return has been about 19%. An article in Fortune magazine remarked “The Republic of South Africa has always been regarded by foreign investors as a gold mine, one of those rare and refreshing places where profits are great and problems small. Capital is not threatened by political instability or nationalization. Labor is cheap, the market booming, the currency hard and convertible.” (John Blashill, “The Proper Role of U.S. Corporations in South Africa,” Fortune—July, 1972.) With business conditions in the white community so profitable, investment could not be discouraged unless it was a matter of national policy.

It is clear that American business is in South Africa for profit, not to bring change about in the internal situation. In fact various surveys and studies made of the attitude of the average American businessman in South Africa reveal that he is quite content with the status quo . . . Many who are seemingly ready to accept the argument that American investment tends to bolster up the regime say “Let us make the best of a bad situation. What pressures can American business enterprises in South Africa bring to bear to help change the internal situation?” The U.S. government rationale is that “improvements in labor practices can be a catalyst for change in the South African situation.” If there is any virtue in this position it is certainly not by design. The design of the policy of “business as usual” is to try to make a virtue out of profit-making with claiming that American firms working within the law to make slight improvements in wages and working conditions will bring new pressures for change upon the South African government. This is deceitful. It is illustrative of what a policy of irrelevance is all about. It says nothing about the fundamental injustices of the system which denies citizenship rights to the majority of the people living within the borders of the Republic.

Another aspect of U.S. policy towards southern Africa is that it is designed to maintain a good working relationship with those in power, the white minority. The assumption of policy is that if changes are to take place, the initiative will come from those in power. The role of the liberation movement has never been taken seriously. During the long years of the struggle against Portuguese colonialism, the policy of the State Department was never to receive representatives of movements from Guinea-Bissau, Angola, or Mozambique in the State Department building itself. It was thought that the Portuguese government would look with suspicion on any such meetings. American ambassadors to sensitive areas in Africa had to be very careful in their contacts with the liberation movements from the Portuguese territories. The American ambassador in Conakry, the capital of the Republic of Guinea, where the PAIGC had its headquarters during the long years of struggle, told me that he had virtually no contact with the PAIGC leadership. The representatives of the liberation movements reciprocated by not wishing to have any contact with the official American representatives.

In the case of liberation movements from other parts of southern Africa, their representatives could visit the State Department if they so desired. However, this was done on the whole infrequently and without enthusiasm.

In the case of Guinea-Bissau, there was considerable pressure put upon the U.S. government to recognize the government after it proclaimed the existence of its state in September 1973. This was several months before the coup in Portugal. It is almost embarrassing now to look at the official U.S. response, which refused recognition because it contended, the PAIGC
had the allegiance of only about 10% of the population of the country while Portugal was still in control of between two-thirds or three-quarters of the country. It should not have come as a surprise to the government that there was no official representative from the United States invited to the independence celebration in Mozambique. A Mozambique representative explained that the celebration was for those who were supporters of their struggle against the Portuguese. The United States government could hardly qualify on this basis.

In both Dar es Salaam and Lusaka, which have, in recent years, been the principal listening posts for information about southern African liberation movement activities, the U.S. representatives appointed to keep in contact with the movements found themselves increasingly isolated.

The United States followed a policy of placating the pre-coup government of Portugal for military and strategic reasons. Even while claiming to follow a policy of support for self-determination and independence, the United States remained neutral in Portugal-African wars. In December 1971 a great deal of attention was given to the agreement between the United States and Portugal for the use of the Azores. In exchange for continued use of this base the United States agreed to a $436 million economic aid package to Portugal in loans and grants.

In the case of South Africa, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration established three tracking stations in South Africa. A cooperative arrangement was worked out between the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission and South Africa's Atomic Energy Board and South Africa's first nuclear reactor was inaugurated in 1965.

Relations with the Rhodesian government have not been so cordial because the United States did close its consulate in Salisbury and supported the United Nations boycott against South African goods. The effect of this policy was dulled considerably by the passage of the Byrd Amendment and the rather lackadaisical attitude the White House took towards defeating the amendment when it came up for reconsideration.

In the case of Namibia, the United States has supported the termination of South Africa's mandate, but has not gone much further to implement this policy.

Jennifer Davis pointed out in her testimony several days ago before this Sub-committee that the United States was permitting violations of the embargo on military goods to South Africa, particularly through the sale of planes. The continued sale of planes, helicopters, diesel locomotives, trucks and spare parts can by no stretch of the imagination be interpreted as implementation of the policy to support the liberation struggle. These are policies designed to strengthen the status quo. As such they are relevant to the southern African situation only as they strengthen the power which perpetuates the injustices.

**U.S. policy supports the thesis that change can take place without confrontation and struggle.** The assumption on which the policy of dialogue and communication is based is that the governments in southern Africa would respond to friendly persuasion. The U.S. government has encouraged American black athletes to visit South Africa in line with this policy of communication. The United States has welcomed leaders of South Africa in the United States presumably on the assumption that this would help to change policy there. The U.S. strongly supported the initiative of Kurt Waldheim, Secretary General of the United Nations, when he proposed entering into dialogue with South Africa on the Namibian question. The representative of the United States said in the Security Council "The U.S. continues to believe that such discussions are also the most realistic way of gaining self-determination for the people of Namibia ..." The United States works on the thesis that economic and demographic pressures will naturally bring about the change without the necessity of the sort of struggle which took place in the Portuguese territories for over a decade. Thus, **U.S. policy is not related to the real situation in southern Africa. It rests on the assumption that the white minority will bring change about through their own efforts and on their own terms. It operates on the assumption that American investments can continue, that profits can be made, and that this in itself will somehow contribute towards change. It operates on the thesis that the liberation movements have an insignificant role to perform and that they should be looked upon with suspicion because the source of their international support is suspect.**

In spite of unemployment and inflation, and attendant economic problems on the homefront, is the United States too satisfied with its level of education, health, and general standard of living to relate to the dynamic of change in southern Africa? The people of southern Africa clearly are not satisfied. Their struggle for self-hood and independence has begun, and will continue until basic change has been brought about. This change need not be brought about through wholesale violence, although it would be foolish to think that violence will not play a role. When in history has a preferred minority willingly given up the position, power, and supposed security it has? The change in southern Africa cannot take place easily or without struggle or with no inconvenience to the rest of the world. This struggle can easily spread, particularly because of the racial implications of a black majority struggling against a white minority. This struggle will be compounded by the fact that great powers in the world have investments in opposing sides. The United States, Britain, and France among Western powers, and Japan in the Far East have an economic stake in the status quo. Some African states, Russia and China support those who intend to overthrow the system which perpetuates white minority rule.

The irrelevancy of the United States policy to the dynamics for change in southern Africa assumes a relevancy to the forces attempting to maintain the status quo. If United States policy is to be relevant to the struggle in southern Africa it must reverse its direction. Instead of supporting in any way the white minority regimes, it should encourage those struggling to eliminate them. Instead of permitting trade in materials which might benefit the white minority regimes, it must put a stop to such transactions. Instead of in any way encouraging a continued business investment in South Africa, the policy must unmistakably urge withdrawal.