Churches Intensify Anti-Apartheid Campaign

"With one voice the Churches of America call on all Americans to join with us in making 1986 the decisive year of action against apartheid."

So declared 120 US church leaders, representing 25 communions (Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic) when they met in Washington, D.C. on January 13, 1986 to establish a "Churches Emergency Committee on Southern Africa." The meeting reflected the growing depth of US church leaders' commitment to the abolition of apartheid and opposition to US policy in the region.

The Washington meeting was an outgrowth of a World Council of Churches' December 1985 meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe. At that gathering, church leaders from around the world consulted with a delegation of 45 South African church leaders on ways in which the international religious community could take action against apartheid. The delegates adopted the first public and unequivocal call for comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa. While in Harare, representatives of the South African churches also held meetings with the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)—the first such consultations since the ANC and PAC were banned in 1960. Together, the Harare and Washington meetings represent a significant intensification of religious opposition to apartheid and to the US policy of "constructive engagement" with profound implications for the anti-apartheid movement.

Growing Resistance Moves Churches to Act

These meetings were clearly a response to the unprecedented rebellion in South Africa, now in its 20th month. The uprisings had spread rapidly, especially after the declaration of a State of Emergency on July 21, 1985, and the South African government had stepped up its attacks on Black leaders in an unsuccessful attempt to quell resistance throughout the country. The constant presence of South African troops in the Black townships, Pretoria's ban on reporting of the rebellion, and the dramatic increase in detention and deaths greatly disturbed many in the South African churches. In addition, the anti-apartheid leadership provided by South African church officials—especially 1984 Nobel Peace laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu and World Alliance of Reformed Churches president Dr. Allan Boesak—increased the religious community's awareness of the struggle and contributed to the call for the Harare meeting. Meanwhile, in the US, the launching of the Free South Africa Movement in 1984 and the subsequent growth and development of the US anti-apartheid movement in 1985 had drawn still more American clergy and laity into anti-apartheid activities.

As a result, South African churches issued an urgent call for rapid and fundamental change in an effort to stop the spiraling death rate and to establish a more just order. A growing number of church people, realizing that the apartheid system must be abolished rather than merely reformed, concluded that only the removal of the present apartheid regime could pave the way for a more just and democratic society. Many church leaders—including Bishop Tutu, Dr. Boesak and South African Council of Churches general secretary Dr. C.F. Beyers Naude—argued with growing insistence that political and economic pressure, including sanctions and disinvestment by the United States and other Western countries, was essential if there was to be any hope for reasonably peaceful change. As popular Black leaders were jailed or driven into exile by the regime, some South African church leaders took an increasingly activist stance, pressuring the American religious community to demonstrate its commitment to the eradication of apartheid through visible support for a more progressive US policy.

The Kairos Document, published in September 1985 after intense reflection by South African theologians on the crisis in that country, heightened the churches' criticism of apartheid (see page 4). Grounded in the experiences of the current liberation struggle and the crisis inside South Africa and influenced by such radical theological perspectives as the "Confessing Church" movement in Nazi Germany and Latin American and other liberation theologies, the document states: "The Church cannot collaborate with tyranny. It cannot ... do anything that appears to give legitimacy to a morally illegitimate regime." It urges the church to submerge itself in the escalating liberation struggle, to reject reformist notions of justice in South Africa, to create special church programs to aid the struggle and to call for the replacement of the present government.

International Church Leaders Consult At Harare

As the publication of the Kairos Document began to galvanize South Africa's religious community, South African church leaders asked the World Council of Churches to convene an emergency meeting with Western church leaders to discuss strategies for ending apartheid. On
December 4-6, 1985, church leaders assembled in Harare, Zimbabwe to adopt the Harare Declaration, a passionate plea for action aimed particularly at the churches of the US and Europe (see page 5). The appeal contains the first unequivocal call by international church representatives for the resignation of the South African government as "the most appropriate and least costly process of change" in South Africa. The Harare Declaration also called for: the observance of June 16, 1986, the tenth anniversary of the Soweto Uprising, as a world day of prayer and fasting; a refusal by international bankers to reschedule South Africa's massive short-term debt; immediate economic sanctions; support for South Africa's liberation movements; and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435 for the independence of South African-occupied Namibia.

Representatives of the ANC and PAC addressed the Harare meeting. As a result of extensive consultations with these liberation movements, the Harare Declaration includes a call for churches around the world to "support South African movements working for the liberation of their country," and expresses support for the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism, which has provided humanitarian aid to South African liberation movements for several years.

The Harare delegates included the general secretaries of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the heads of the German Protestant Church, the Church of Scotland, the Dutch Reformed Church of the Netherlands, the Church of Norway, the Anglican Church of Canada, and the United Church of Canada. Thirteen prominent US church leaders were in Harare, including Rev. Avery Post of the United Church of Christ, Dr. Oscar McCloud and Rev. Patricia McClure of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Bishop James Ault of the United Methodist Church, Bishop Reuben Speaks of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Dr. Lorenzo Shepard of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, and Dr. Sylvia Reed Taibb of the World Council of Churches Central Committee. Particularly important was the inclusion of four historically Black denominations in the US delegation: the Progressive National Baptist, African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal-Zion, and Christian Methodist Episcopal churches.

The church leaders were clearly moved by reports from the South African delegates. "We ... heard clearly the plea for effective action and... their despair over churches who speak but fail to act," the US delegation noted in a joint statement delivered at the meeting. "We promise each other and our sisters and brothers in South Africa that we will work to turn our words into deeds."

... US churches ... must move beyond prayers and appeals to conscience.

Rev. Avery Post reported that "South Africans have completely lost confidence in the United States as a responsible government in relation to their cause." Moreover, South Africans increasingly see US churches as complicit in US government and corporate support for apartheid. "[The South Africans at Harare] told us, 'Our people are dying because of your government. You [American churches] pass beautiful resolutions but you do nothing to put pressure on your government,'" noted Christian Methodist Episcopal delegate Rev. Mance Jackson. As a result of this criticism, the US delegation, in its joint statement, committed itself to: organizing lobbying efforts for US economic sanctions against South Africa, communicating the South Africans' concerns to the Reagan administration, intensifying efforts to divest church funds from banks and corporations investing in South Africa, and participating in local and state divestment campaigns around the US.

US Churches Respond

The returning US delegation, determined to initiate early action on the mandate of the Harare Declaration, convened a meeting in Washington on January 13. At this meeting, church leaders who had been in Harare reported the forcefulness and urgency of the South Africans' appeal for help. The meeting endorsed the Harare Declaration and designated 1986 as a year for religious action against apartheid. Representatives of the Africa Office of the National Council of Churches, the American Committee on Africa, the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility and the Washington Office on Africa outlined to the conference concrete strategies for the implementation of the Harare Declaration and the joint statement issued by the US delegation at Harare. The delegates subsequently adopted a statement, "With One Voice" (see page 5), and established a "Churches Emergency Committee on Southern Africa" to coordinate effective action by the participating denominations.

The challenge presented by the South African delegates at Harare has led many US church leaders to conclude that they must move beyond prayers and appeals to conscience. These strategies have been demonstrably impotent against a government determined not to relinquish significantly its illegitimate power. This reality is reflected in "With One Voice": "Apartheid is an unmitigated evil, the product of sin and the work of the devil... After prayerful consideration, we have concluded that economic pressure on South Africa is the most important non-violent method for helping to end the apartheid system."

Indeed, the Harare meeting united churches worldwide behind the South Africans' call for economic sanctions as the last major non-violent means of bringing about fundamental change. "The word... was consistent and demanding," noted the US delegates in Harare in their joint statement. At the Churches Emergency Committee meeting in February, participants endorsed a strategy of generating further economic pressure on the apartheid regime by intensifying lobbying efforts in support of strong economic sanctions against South Africa.

Discussions with the South African churches have therefore produced an increased commitment among US church leaders to withdraw their own funds from banks and corporations continuing to do business in South Africa. During 1985, the United Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church, the Unitarian Universalist Association of Churches...
and the Presbyterian Church (USA) voted resolutions to divest some or all of their funds from apartheid, joining a number of other denominations which had already adopted similar policies.

The Churches' Goals and Plans

As a result of the Harare meeting, the Washington meeting, and the establishment of the Churches Emergency Committee on Southern Africa, American churches have now moved to a new level of anti-apartheid action. For example, given the South African church leaders' conviction that the present South African government is incapable of changing and that the meaningless "reforms" being undertaken by Pretoria are merely designed to forestall international criticism and extend white rule, the churches have demanded the resignation of P.W. Botha's Nationalist government. Accordingly, individual denominations at the Churches Emergency Committee meeting on February 10, 1986 sent telegrams to those banks involved in international discussions on the rescheduling of South Africa's short term debt urging that they make "the resignation of the present regime" a condition for the roll-over of current loans and the extension of further credit to South Africa. Many churches also participated in the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility's post-card campaign to discourage the banks from rolling over South Africa's debt. Although on February 20, 1986, South Africa and the banks reached agreement on a debt rescheduling plan, Pretoria was disappointed with the plan's unexpectedly harsh terms and the limited time allowed for loan repayment. The churches' appeal was undoubtedly partially responsible for the severity of the banks' restrictions.

The Emergency Committee also urged US government action to expedite Namibian independence under UN Security Council Resolution 435. Consistent with the Harare Declaration, the churches will also observe June 16th, the tenth anniversary of the Soweto Uprising, as a World Day of Prayer and Fasting to end unjust rule in South Africa. In addition, American churches will expand support for campaigns against apartheid organized by the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism, the South African Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches' Africa Office.

The committee gave special emphasis to "South Africa: Agenda 1986," a National Council of Churches Africa Office program to conduct educational campaigns in the churches, sustain lobbying efforts in Congress and raise funds for South African refugees and victims of apartheid within South Africa.

The church is also awakening to the regional impact of apartheid in Southern Africa. Through contacts with churches in the Frontline States, American denominations have begun to appreciate that South Africa not only perpetrates horrible violence against its own population, but that it also instigates the economic and military destabilization of its neighbors. The choice of Harare as the site for the December meeting reflected not only the location's convenience for the South African delegates, but also a desire to draw attention to apartheid's threat to the region and to Zimbabwe's successful non-racial government as a model for South Africa. The Harare meeting clearly recognized its responsibility to respond to the regional impact of apartheid in South Africa. Delegates demanded the immediate implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 435, the internationally recognized 1978 plan for Namibian independence which South African has consistently obstructed.

This regional focus was sustained at the January 13 meeting in Washington. Participants heard how US aid to the South African sponsored UNITA rebel movement in Angola furthered South Africa's efforts to destabilize Angola and to destroy the Namibian liberation movement, SWAPO. Aware of the Reagan Administration's plans to aid the UNITA rebels, and of the approaching visit of UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi, the Washington delegates amended the "With One Voice" declaration to include language "opposing any and all forms of aid to the anti-government UNITA rebels in Angola as part of our on-going opposition to US government actions which encourage South Africa's policy of destabilization." The delegates also made a commitment to participate in the emergency lobbying efforts underway to stop any aid to UNITA.

Moment of Truth for US Churches?

The churches in the United States have been presented with a major and historic challenge by the Christians of South Africa. This challenge has come at a time of profound crisis in that country. Not only are repression and violence mounting, but the integrity of the churches and their professed faith is in balance. Bishop Desmond Tutu, during his recent visit to the US to raise funds for the South African Council of Churches' programs to provide support to victims of apartheid, noted repeatedly that his own credibility among South African Blacks is decreasing. Lamenting the lack of positive results from his constant pleas for non-violence, Tutu said: "If I were younger, I would have rejected Bishop Tutu long ago."

The American churches have heard the urgent appeal of their South African brothers and sisters for support in their efforts to remove the chains of apartheid. The community of faith has begun to respond by altering its agenda and reallocating resources to address this crisis.

The new energy injected into the churches' long concern over South Africa must now be translated into systematic efforts to organize people in the community and the pew to become more involved in the anti-apartheid movement. In neighborhoods throughout the country, churches must increasingly become major centers for local and national divestment activism, boycott campaigns, anti-apartheid educational projects, and the renewed drive for comprehensive Congressional and administrative economic sanctions against South Africa.

Furthermore, the churches must not only support the anti-apartheid struggle, but also help to counter religious apologists for apartheid—such as Rev. Jerry Falwell, the Moral Majority, and its adherents in mainstream churches—who have often attacked the church's criticism of current US policy. For the US churches, this is indeed the moment of truth, the "Kairos." Like the South African churches, they, too, must assume the moral and political lead in opposing the evil of apartheid.
The Kairos Document: A Challenge to the Apartheid Regime

In September 1985 an event of great historic importance took place in Johannesburg. One hundred and fifty church leaders issued the Kairos Document, a powerful, uncompromising critique and indictment of apartheid, and a challenge to the church and Christians in South Africa to work to hasten the dismantling of the racist system. Its impact can be seen in the Harare Declaration and in the response of the U.S. churches, “With One Voice” (see sidebar).

The Kairos Document is part of a growing historical confrontation between Christianity and apartheid. The Church has always seen apartheid as a special problem for Christians because of apartheid’s roots in a religiously motivated community which claims biblical and Christian justification for its policies. South African church leaders first rejected such theological justifications of apartheid at a conference in Cottesloe, near Johannesburg, shortly after the 1960 Sharpeville massacre. Subsequent South African Council of Churches and Christian Institute programs (such as the Study Project on Christianity in an Apartheid Society) have helped to expose apartheid’s fundamental incompatibility with Christianity. The South African Council of Churches’ 1968 “Message to the People of South Africa” called apartheid “hostile to Christianity,” but stopped short of declaring it to be a subversion of the Church. In 1982, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches declared the use of scripture to defend apartheid to be heresy, and the delegates elected anti-apartheid activist the Rev. Allan Boesak president of the body.

The Kairos theologians’ challenge breaks new ground in the discussion of the Church’s role in apartheid society. Observers have compared it to that of the 1934 Barmen Declaration in which a small but significant group of prominent German Christians called the Church to resist the growing ideological influence of Nazism. After several years of efforts to eradicate racism within its own structures, the Church is called by the Kairos Document to focus its work outwardly on the transformation of South African society.

The Kairos theologians believe that the crisis in South Africa is to be understood as a moment of truth for the nation and for the church. The church is found to be divided, with some people accepting a theology which “blesses injustice, canonises the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy,” while others have a theology which, although it is critical of apartheid, “relies on a few stock ideas derived from Christian tradition and then uncritically people.” Tyranny, violence, and terror are the fruits of an illegitimate government rather than acts which make the government illegitimate.

“... the church cannot collaborate with tyranny ... Christians must quite simply participate in the struggle for liberation and for a just society.”

An illegitimate government and its immoral laws have no claim on the obedience of Christians. The Kairos theologians propose, therefore, that the Church defy the regime’s authority. The Church, they say, “will sometimes have to confront and to disobey the State in order to obey God.” Among other things, the church must support consumer boycotts and stayaways and engage in acts of civil disobedience.

Regular activities of the church, such as Sunday services, communion, Sunday school and funerals must be “reappropriated” to “further the liberating mission of God and the Church in the world.” The church will need to develop additional programs, campaigns and projects for “the special needs of the struggle for liberation in South Africa today” to serve “the real religious needs of the people.”

The Kairos theologians criticize prevailing church theology for promoting a reformist notion of justice, “... a justice that is determined by the oppressor, by the white minority, and that is offered to the people as a kind of concession.” They conclude that a reformist justice is being promoted by the church because its primary way of seeking change is through appeals to the white minority authorities rather than seeking “... the more radical justice that comes from below and is determined by the people of South Africa.” A commitment to radical justice requires that the church abandon its traditional “third party” role as a mediator between the government and the people and that it become involved directly in the popular struggle for South Africa’s liberation.

Reconciliation with such an inherently evil and unjust regime is out of the question.

and repeatedly applies them to our situation: ... reconciliation (or peace), justice and non-violence.” The document calls for a prophetic theological analysis which will understand the present crisis as a conflict between the oppressors and the oppressed and will proclaim that God takes the side of the poor and oppressed and liberates them. Some of the other key points made by the Kairos theologians follow:

“... the apartheid regime is indeed the enemy of the people ... [and] has thereby made itself the enemy of God.”

For the first time, church leaders have rejected the legitimacy of the apartheid state. Previously the Church had confined its attacks to specific apartheid laws. Now, the Kairos theologians point out that white minority rule is inherently “hostile to the common good of all the
"...the apartheid minority regime is irrefrangible. ...The conflict is between an oppressor and the oppressed. The conflict is between two irreconcilable causes or interests in which the one is just and the other is unjust."

The Kairos theologians challenge a major assumption underlying church policies toward the state: that it is capable of repentance and conversion. Instead, the document rejects the goal of reforming the apartheid government and is skeptical of the regime's professions of intent to reform apartheid: "...all of its reforms must ensure that the white minority remains on top."

Reconciliation with such an inherently evil and unjust regime is absolutely out of the question. Therefore, "no compromise is possible." Talks with P.W. Botha and other leaders of the regime by leaders of the church are viewed as wasteful ventures which lead nowhere. "The present crisis with all its cruelty, brutality and callousness is ample proof of the ineffectiveness of years and years of Christian moralising about the need for love." They conclude that to plead for reconciliation and peace in the South African context is unchristian if it is done before the present injustices are removed.

"...[the minority regime] can only be replaced..."

The Kairos theologians state publicly what many Black Christians have held privately, since the apartheid regime is not their government and since there has never been any sign that it could be reformed, it must, therefore, be replaced. Churches now believe that the resignation of the government is the basic step to a peaceful resolution of the present crisis and the creation of a just and democratic South Africa.

"Throughout the Bible the word violence is used to describe everything that is done by a wicked oppressor. It is never used to describe the activities of Israel's armies in attempting to liberate themselves or to resist aggression."

One of the most significant segments of the document deals at length with the issue of violence. The Kairos theologians make a clear distinction between legitimate and illegitimate violence within the disorder of apartheid's brutality and oppression. They caution against blanket condemnation by the church of all the violence occurring in South Africa. The violence of the apartheid system and its repressive security apparatus cannot be equated with the defensive and resistant violence of the poor and oppressed. "How can acts of oppression, injustice and domination be equated with acts of resistance and self-defence? Would it be legitimate to describe both the physical force used by a rapist and the physical force used by a woman trying to resist the rapist as violence?"

There will undoubtedly be church leaders who decline to support the Kairos Document because of its militancy. Bishop Desmond Tutu has expressed his disagreement with the document's harsh criticism of the church leaders who have carried on the churches' struggle against apartheid faithfully for years. Some, also, will challenge the Kairos theologians' treatment of key concepts like reconciliation and non-violence. Nevertheless, the "Challenge" will touch all levels of the Church, stimulating ongoing debate and altering the perceptions and actions of clergy and laity alike in the growing confrontation between the church and the oppressive apartheid regime.

"Challenge to the Churches" can be ordered from: Theology in Global Context Project, Stony Point Center, Cricketown Road, Stony Point, NY 10980 ($1.50 each; 5 or more copies, $1.00 each).

THE HARARE DECLARATION is the call issued by South African, African, European, Australian and American church leaders at a meeting in Zimbabwe, on December 6th, 1985. It documents a desperate appeal for help by South African Christians in the face of the deepening crisis of violence and oppression in their country. They have called the churches, particularly in Europe and America, to help bring an end to apartheid.

The declaration makes a moral and political denunciation of the South African government. This global church declaration is significant for its call for the "international community to apply immediate and comprehensive sanctions on South Africa" and for the "churches inside and outside South Africa to support movements working for the liberation of their country." The Harare Declaration was issued in response to what the delegates called the "cries of anguish of the people of South Africa trapped in the oppressive structures of apartheid." It represents the Church's determination to move to a new level of commitment and action to end apartheid. It is the Church's strongest denunciation, to date, of the apartheid regime, which the document describes as "against God's will, ... morally indefensible ..." and having "...no credibility." The Declaration calls for:

- an end to the state of emergency,
- the release of Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners,
- the lifting of the ban on all banned movements,
- the return of exiles.

The intensifying struggle in South Africa clearly convinced the churches that a strong, clear and unambiguous statement was needed to demonstrate their support for the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and, most importantly, to commit themselves to strengthen and expand the efforts of the global community to end economic support for apartheid.

WITH ONE VOICE was issued as the initial response of American churches to the Harare Declaration and the crisis in South Africa. At the January 13th meeting in Washington, the 25 denominations present resolved to work against apartheid "with one voice" and with a greatly increased commitment of energy and resources. "We are comparing this," said Joan Campbell, of the US-WCC office, an organizer of the meeting, "to our work in the past for the civil rights bill and the major effort we made on Vietnam." The church pledged to speak WITH ONE VOICE in:

- opposing the rollover of bank loans to South Africa,
- urging comprehensive economic sanctions,
- supporting the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility campaign against twelve corporations,
- educating congregations on the issues of southern Africa,
- commemorating Soweto on June 16, 1986, and
- urging US churches to provide increased support for the WCC Program to Combat Racism.

Political Prisoners of South Africa Bracelet Program

International Possibilities Unlimited (IPU) offers brass bracelets bearing the names of South African Political Prisoners. A portion of the proceeds from sales benefit the Free South Africa Movement, the International Defense and Aid Fund and the Washington Office on Africa. $6.50 each plus postage. Bulk order rates. Write: IPU, P.O. Box 2542, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Phone: 313-973-2016.
An Interview with Willis Logan

The Rev. Willis Logan is the Executive Director of the Africa Office of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA.

WNA: Churches in the United States have opposed apartheid in various ways. Looking back over the last few years, what do you see to be the most important aspects of that opposition?

Willis Logan: The church has been at the center of the anti-apartheid movement in this country. We have been raising the issues, mobilizing forces and bringing pressure to bear on both the US and South African governments. In 1977 the National Council of Churches of Christ's "Southern Africa Policy Statement" clearly confirmed the churches' opposition to apartheid, exploitation and destabilization in southern Africa. Through the NCCC Africa Office, the church became actively involved in the Free South Africa Movement during 1985 and member communions were involved in the daily demonstrations. We generated thousands of letters, cables and telephone calls to the Congress, the President, the Secretary of State and South African President Botha. The NCCC Board of Governors called for comprehensive sanctions against the Republic of South Africa in May 1985.

WNA: The churches recently established an Emergency Committee on Southern Africa. What is its purpose?

WL: The purpose of the committee is to coordinate and expand the work of the churches vis-a-vis southern Africa, to communicate with those who set forth and carry out the work of the churches in the United States have opposed apartheid in various ways. Looking back over the last few years, what do you see to be the most important aspects of that opposition?

WNA: What will be the contribution of the National Council of Churches Africa Office to the new efforts to bring justice and peace to southern Africa?

WL: Our program, "South Africa: Agenda 86" will focus on the church struggling for justice in South Africa, Mozambique, Angola and Namibia. Agenda '86 will lend visibility and support to the work of the church in southern Africa and to the work of the anti-apartheid movement in the United States. For April we are planning to generate increased interest and advocacy activity by Christian campus organizations. Also in April, there will be a conference on divestment to survey current policies of member communions and to encourage them to act. During May representatives of the Christian councils in southern Africa will be available to speak throughout the country. In July there will be a photo exhibit displaying the horrors of apartheid. For October we are planning a consultation on "Women and Apartheid." Then, in November we will have a national convocation, "South Africa: Moral Challenge for the American Churches."

WNA: What will the churches be doing this year to bring pressure to bear on Congress and the administration?

WL: In June the churches will commemorate the tenth anniversary of Soweto and use that occasion to pressure our government. On June 14th, church people throughout the country will visit the home offices of Congress members to lobby for the passage of comprehensive sanctions legislation. June 13th will be a National Day of Prayer, with church services to commemorate Soweto. On June 16th church delegations from all over the country will join in a National Service of Commemoration in Washington, DC and a Capitol Hill briefing in preparation for a June 17th "Witness Day" when church delegations will lobby Congress in support of comprehensive sanctions. These activities, planned by the Churches Emergency Committee, are geared to demonstrate the churches opposition to US policy toward South Africa.

NEWSBRIEF

South Africa's State of Repression Continues

On March 7 the South African government formally lifted the State of Emergency imposed on July 21, 1985 to quell growing anti-apartheid protests in South Africa. In his announcement of March 4 State President P.W. Botha said the martial law decree had been lifted because the violence in the country had subsided. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Moments before Botha spoke yet another explosion rocked Johannesburg at its main police headquarters. On March 9 police reported widespread violence in 15 Black townships. The daily massacre of Blacks reached yet another high on March 26 when 40 people reportedly were killed and scores wounded throughout South Africa. Most died at the hands of the police.

Despite the formal lifting of the State of Emergency, Botha made it clear that the blanket of existing security legislation predating the emergency decree would be strengthened with the addition of new laws to control the mounting rebellion. Press coverage remains greatly restricted. The state of repression therefore remains fully in effect. During the 7-month-old emergency decree an average of 1,100 persons were detained monthly, totalling some 8,000 overall. More than 1,400 persons—mostly Black—have died in the continuing violence over a 20 month period.

The lifting of the state of emergency had more to do with political maneuvering than with control over the internal crisis. The decree had increasingly become a political liability for a government struggling to polish its image at home and abroad. Botha's government wants to counter growing calls for comprehensive economic sanctions by the international community and domestic opponents. Bishop Desmond Tutu made just such a call on April 2. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), a 500,000 member coalition of 36 trade unions, has called for a nationwide passbook-burning campaign by May 1 if the government has not abolished the pass laws, withdrawn troops from the townships and lifted the emergency decree. COSATU's leaders have also called for economic sanctions. South Africa is also concerned about the attitude of the banks with whom it reached a piecemeal settlement on the repayment of its $24 billion debt on February 20th. Under that agreement South Africa extended its moratorium on short-term debt repayment for one year but would have to pay a higher interest on the remaining principal. Decisions on new loans will no doubt be influenced by the ongoing crisis in South Africa.
US Military Aid Flowing to Savimbi

While the issue of sanctions against South Africa’s apartheid regime dominated the southern Africa-related legislative agenda during the first session of the 99th Congress, the second session has focused on countering “communism” in Angola. Both administration officials and members of Congress are seeking aid for Jonas Savimbi, the head of the South African-backed UNITA rebels. Savimbi arrived in Washington on January 29th to begin two weeks of lobbying in support of these efforts. The public relations firm of Black, Manafort, Stone and Kelly (with whom Savimbi had signed a $800,000 contract) arranged meetings for Savimbi with President Reagan, Secretary of State Shultz, Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole (R-KS), and other leading administration and congressional luminaries.

Reagan Sends Covert Aid to Savimbi

Savimbi’s visit was carefully timed. Late last year, press reports indicated that the Reagan administration was preparing to provide covert military funding to UNITA. In January, 1986, Reagan reportedly notified the House and Senate Select Committees on Intelligence that he had authorized nearly $15 million in assistance to UNITA, in spite of CIA and State Department analyses which suggested that UNITA has no chance of defeating the Angolan government and little chance of ever forcing a coalition government. Reagan’s covert package was sharply criticized by both committees, although the Senate opponents were clearly angered more by the secrecy of the plan than by its implications. Savimbi’s visit was doubly intended to consolidate political support for the aid package.

In the wake of his visit, South Africa’s allies in the White House and on Capitol Hill marshalled their supporters in a concerted drive to rush military aid to UNITA. Sen. Dole extracted from Secretary Shultz an assurance that the US would provide UNITA with anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons which Savimbi had requested. In return, Dole offered to push his resolution of support for UNITA aid, S. Res. 280, through the Senate as a means of providing the administration with “political cover” for a covert aid plan.

On 18 February, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held hearings on Dole’s resolution. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker testified: “We intend to be supportive of UNITA in an effective and appropriate manner. … [W]e want to support all those fighting for freedom.” Crocker’s fanatical harangues against the spread of “Soviet influence” in the region left little doubt that the Reagan administration is unconcerned about those fighting to free themselves from South African apartheid and terrorism. Moreover, under questioning by Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT), Crocker admitted that the administration had already begun to send assistance to UNITA. In light of Crocker’s testimony, and the lack of support for UNITA aid in the Foreign Relations Committee, Dole and committee chair Richard Lugar (R-IN) decided not to bring S. Res. 280 to a full committee vote.

House Intelligence Committee Strikes Back

In late February, Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee met with the House Democratic leadership to discuss strategies for blocking President Reagan’s support for “contra” forces in Angola and Nicaragua. Following the meeting, House Speaker “Tip” O’Neill (D-MA) spoke out strongly against UNITA aid, stating that he is “absolutely opposed to covert aid to Savimbi” and calling Savimbi “an agent of South Africa.”

On February 27, House Intelligence Committee Chair Lee Hamilton (D-IN) introduced HR 4276 with the co-sponsorship of seven of his Democratic colleagues on the committee. The bill would make any US support for paramilitary operations in Angola contingent upon Congressional approval of a formal, public, Presidential request for such aid. The restriction, however, is limited to fiscal years 1986 and 1987. The Intelligence Committee approved the bill on March 18th by a vote of 10-6. The bill is now before the House Foreign Affairs Committee and is unlikely to be considered by the full House prior to its Spring recess, in spite of supporters’ attempts to expedite its passage.

Unfortunately, the oppressively right-wing atmosphere in the Republican-controlled Senate has stifled interest in companion legislation to the House bill. Little of the overwhelming bi-partisan support for the last year’s effort to impose sanctions on South Africa has translated into opposition to South Africa’s destabilizing foreign policy. While many young Republicans hoped to dissipate the party’s racist image through support for sanctions, they remain rabidly anti-communist and, therefore, supportive of South Africa’s racist policy of regional destabilization. Their promotion of Reagan’s distorted Cold War vision of southern Africa has had particular impact in the Senate where support for UNITA has become a key anti-communist litmus test.

Although many Senators would impose legislation to aid Savimbi, none—including Senate Intelligence Committee Chair David Durenberger (R-MN) and the Committee’s ranking minority member, Patrick Leahy (D-VT), both of whom expressed opposition to Reagan’s covert aid plan—are willing to seek a Congressional ban on covert aid.

Savimbi’s supporters have also launched an economic war against Angola. Two bills now pending in Congress would apply economic sanctions against Angola. During Savimbi’s visit, Assistant Secretary Crocker made veiled threats against Gulf Oil’s operations in Cabinda, which produce most of Angola’s $2 billion annual oil output. The ultra-conservative American Security Council initiated a campaign to boycott Gulf because of its Angolan investments. Meanwhile, six members of Congress, together with Holden Roberto and his now-defunct FNLA rebels, have filed a lawsuit designed to halt Export-Import Bank credits to Angola. Such tactics can only exacerbate the suffering already caused by South Africa and its UNITA allies. Angola is now the site of the International Committee of the Red Cross’s costliest famine relief program. Up to two and one-half million of Angola’s eight million people face starvation in 1986.

The CIA has reportedly decided to escalate its covert involvement in Angola as a part of the “Reagan Doctrine” policy of destabilizing governments considered to be “unfriendly.” Thus far, Angola and Nicaragua have been the primary victims of the policy. In Angola, US policy is meant to deflect attention from the growing terror and repression inside South Africa. With the news blackout in that country, Congress and the administration are seeking to shift the spotlight from apartheid terrorism to “Soviet expansionism.”

The Washington Office on Africa has been working to mobilize opposition to UNITA aid. The day after Savimbi’s arrival in Washington, WOA called a press conference featuring WOA’s Executive Director Dr. Jean Sindab, Rep. George Crockett (D-MI), Association of Concerned African Scholars Co-Chair Dr. David Wiley, and former CIA Angola Task Force Chief John Stockwell. Their message to Congress and the administration was unambiguous: Aid to UNITA is aid to South Africa. WOA also co-ordinated demonstrations against UNITA aid at all of Savimbi’s speaking engagements and organized lobbying visits to over 60 Congressional offices on February 5th. Concerted action to block UNITA aid will continue as HR 4276 moves to the House floor in late April.
NAMIBIA UPDATE

South Africa, with the United States' blessing, is continuing its efforts to forestall Namibian independence. In his March 4th speech announcing the lifting of the State of Emergency, South Africa's State President P.W. Botha stated that Pretoria was prepared to implement UN Resolution 435, the internationally accepted plan for Namibia's independence. However, Botha also reiterated a long-standing strategy for the obstruction of Namibian independence by making implementation of 435 contingent upon the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, this time by August 1st.

This US-backed policy of linkage has long been rejected by the Southwest Africa Peoples Organization (SWAPO), Angola and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). While the White House hailed the announcement as a major breakthrough, the proposal is another blatant attempt by South Africa and the Reagan administration to stall Namibia's independence and make SWAPO and Angola appear uncooperative. Anglican Bishop of Namibia, James Kaluma, noted in January that the Namibian people and their churches "believe that this irrelevant linkage the United States and South Africa have made has brought a statelet that has completely paralyzed negotiations. Unless the United States drops this condition of linkage we will only consider their policy a destructive one and not constructive as they claim it to be."

US funding for UNITA, the South African-supported Angolan rebels, represents another setback for Namibian independence. It also illustrates that the administration is clearly more intent on aiding South Africa in its efforts to topple the Angolan government than in pressing it to move forward with Namibian independence. In fact, the administration is already preparing the next obstacle for Namibian independence. After talks between Crocker and senior SWAPO officials in Luanda last month, SWAPO Secretary of Information, Hidipo Hamutenya, said that Washington was now "pressing for a second linkage" to get the Angola government to accommodate the demands of the UNITA terrorists.

The negotiations for Namibian independence are unlikely to move forward given the increasingly unacceptable demands being advanced by the Reagan administration and South Africa. Meanwhile, the suffering and repression of the Namibian people continue unabated under the fraudulent 'Multi-Party Conference' government installed by South Africa last year. Although he insists that the US does not recognize the new government, Crocker recently met with two of its members at the US ambassador's residence in Pretoria.

The churches of Namibia have been under increasing harassment in the past few months for their support of SWAPO and their criticism of the South African-engineered "transitional government." On January 18, 1986, the Oshigambo Secondary School, owned by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, was burned. In addition, vandals have recently attacked the offices of the Evangelical Lutheran Church newspaper, Immanuel, The Namibian newspaper, and the Namibian Literacy Programme. Reports from church sources indicate a growing fear that church property and programs may become fair game for future attacks. On January 23, 1986, the Council of Churches of Namibia's Windhoek offices were gutted by arson, and the city engineer has notified the Council that it cannot reopen its offices. Commenting on the fire, the Council of Churches of Namibia's General Secretary, Dr. Abigail Shejowal, stated, "This in itself is nothing other than sabotage."

SWAPO has also been victimized by South Africa's intrigues. On February 16, SWAPO's newly-appointed Foreign Relations Secretary and former United Nations Representative Theo-Ben Guribi announced that a South African spy network of over 100 people had been uncovered within SWAPO. Four of the South African agents were members of SWAPO's central committee. Many had been forced into South Africa's service through threats and blackmail. The announcement came at the culmination of two years of investigations.

STOP PRESS: Tutu Calls for Sanctions

On April 2, Bishop Desmond Tutu called for comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa. "Our land is burning and bleeding, and so I call on the international community to apply punitive sanctions against this government . . . I have no hope of real change from this government unless they are forced," he said. Tutu's announcement came after the March 31st deadline he had given the government some months ago to show that certain significant steps were being taken to dismantle apartheid. The bishop concluded that "We face a catastrophe in this land and only the action of the international community by applying pressure can save us."

Bishop Tutu's announcement followed closely the call for disinvestment by 1500 teachers, parents and students meeting in Durban on March 29. The Durban conference of the National Educational Crisis Committee called on the American people to oppose the Reagan administration's policy of constructive engagement and U.S. aid to the South African-backed UNITA rebels in Angola. Nationwide protests, work-stoppages and consumer boycotts are planned for May 1 and June 16-18. Delegates agreed to end the schools boycott and to liberate the educational system by using the schools as centers for political education and organization against apartheid. Even before leaving Durban, however, students were challenging the decision and may well stay away from the schools.

At the same time, Winnie Mandela's lawyers announced the relaxation of her banning order. She is now permitted to live in her Soweto home and returned there immediately to be greeted by jubilant family and neighbors. Other restrictions remain in force, including a prohibition on public quotation of Mandela.

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