

anti-apartheid iACTION!



October 1985

BAY AREA FREE SOUTH AFRICA MOVEMENT

No. 4

BAFSAM Opposes Trade With Apartheid

On October 8, the Bay Area Free South Africa Movement (BAFSAM) met with the Oakland Port Commission to demand that the Port of Oakland forbid the handling of both incoming and outgoing trade with South Africa. The struggle to get the Port Commissioners to agree to this demand is part and parcel of an international call to break all diplomatic, economic and cultural ties with the apartheid (racially-segregated) regime.

The call for breaking these ties with South Africa has been made by the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and other black trade unions. It has been endorsed by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and the International Labor Organization of the United Nations (ILO).

Given that the United States is South Africa's number one trading partner, the BAFSAM has always stressed the importance of cutting off trade relations with the South African regime. The BAFSAM joins with the workers and community activists of New Orleans, Vancouver, B.C., Los Angeles, Tacoma, and Vancouver in Washington state, and San Francisco who have refused to unload or have delayed unloading South African cargo, often risking violation of state and federal labor laws and existing contract agreements.

BAFSAM was formed last December to gather community, trade union and religious support for San Francisco dockworkers who, for 11 days last November and December, refused to unload cargo from the Dutch vessel Nedloyd "Kimberley". Since that time, the BAFSAM has kept up an on-going



picket line at the Oakland offices of the Pacific Maritime Association, and monitored and picketed other incoming ships laden with South African goods. On one occasion in mid-August, BAFSAM activists, in a small craft of the anti-nuclear Peace Navy, delayed the entry of another Nedloyd vessel for a considerable time before being arrested by the harbor patrol.

Organizing Against South African Trade

On August 17, members of BAF-

SAM, along with representatives from 20 other community organizations and trade unions, attended the West Coast Meeting to Stop South African Trade, held at the Local 10 meeting hall of the International Longshore Workers Union. Over 100 people attended in all. After a morning of spirited presentations from Leo Robinson of Local 10's African Liberation Support Committee, and from Solly Simelane of the African National Congress, there were afternoon presentations and workshops leading to

continued on page 4

Reagan's Toothless Sanctions

On September 10—in what the media called “a major reversal”—Reagan announced his decision to impose limited sanctions against South Africa. Administration officials admitted that the move was intended “to avoid foreign policy disarray . . . and humiliation at home.”

The Reagan Sanctions must be recognized for what they are: a new tactic to buy time for the apartheid regime. This move enabled the Administration to avoid having to veto stronger Congressional sanctions—a politically costly move. But close study of the sanctions proposed by Reagan reveals that most of the provisions are not even as strong as the measures already being implemented by many U.S. banks and businesses.

A ban on U.S. bank loans to the South African government has already been implemented by the banks themselves. Among them, the Bank of Boston, Citibank and Chase Manhattan have each decided to stop all lending to South Africa. They are fearful of the risky business climate created by the year-long rebellion.

The ban on sales of computer technology to agencies of the South African government that administer or enforce apartheid is misleading because under the current “state of emergency” all agencies of the South African government, as well as all businesses licensed for operation in South Africa, are required by law to assist in the enforcement of apartheid. (See BAFSAM/ ACTION #3, Ed.)

The ban on sales of nuclear technology has already been circumvented through the close cooperation with Israel—South Africa has been a nuclear power since 1979.

Finally, the ban on export assistance to U.S. corporations which fail to adhere to the fair employment practices outlined in the so-called “Sullivan Principles” ignores the fact that these voluntary principles are little more than window-dressing to justify the continued presence of U.S. corporations in South Africa.

Taken as a whole, the Reagan Sanctions reflect the Administration's recognition or political realities: as South

Africa's number-one trading partner, and one of its few remaining apologists, the U.S. government was taking a lot of heat for its cozy relationship with the apartheid regime. Each new incident of government violence—the mass shootings, police torture of detainees, the death squads—was a serious blow to the continued credibility of the Reagan administration's foreign policy.

There is some basis for concern that Reagan's move will serve to undermine the groundswell of support for strong sanctions against South Africa. At this writing, the Republican-dominated Senate has halted all further motion on the Congressional sanctions package. Reagan's supporters are claiming a victory, saying that the President's move has returned authority for making U.S. foreign policy to the Oval Office. Despite complaints voiced by South African President P.W. Botha, the apartheid regime is now assured that Reagan's “active constructive engagement” will be no different than the policy he's been implementing all along. Botha's so-called reforms demonstrated that the apartheid regime will continue its program of granting cosmetic changes while employing force to maintain the political and economic foundations of white minority rule.

In the U.S., the anti-apartheid movement is faced with the challenge of regrouping and launching a new offensive. And while the character of its next campaign has not yet been determined, it is clear that the movement must continue to target the U.S. role in maintaining the system of apartheid.

“No amount of intimidation can stop us on our way to liberation.”

—Thami Mali, UDF

Government Terror

Apartheid's Bottom Line

Police and army terror are not new facts of life for South Africa's black majority. What is new, however, is that the nation's black majority has sustained a struggle against the apartheid (racially-segregated) government for over a year now. Government-sponsored “urban councils” have been dismantled and genuine people's councils established. Known police informers have been run out of town and in some cases killed.

The year-long struggle has been largely coordinated by the United Democratic Front (UDF), a multi-racial coalition of over 3 million people. The UDF was formed in 1983 to organize a boycott against sham elections in which mixed-race and Asian peoples were to be given limited citizenship and separate “chambers” of representation in a white-dominated parliament. The UDF turned the 87%-effective electoral boycott of August, 1984 into a full-blown campaign to make the apartheid system ungovernable.

BAY AREA FREE SOUTH AFRICA MOVEMENT

5424 E. 14th St., Oakland
(First Universe Baptist Church)
P.O. Box 3581, Oakland CA 94609

The Bay Area Free South Africa Movement (BAFSAM) is a local, multi-racial grouping of men and women—members of community, labor, religious, political, peace, youth and student movements—who are determined to change the United States government's policies supportive of the racist apartheid regime of South Africa, and support the liberation movement in South Africa.

Anti-Apartheid Action is published by the Bay Area Free South Africa Movement and produced by the Publicity-Media Committee. The newsletter is distributed free by the BAFSAM Outreach Committee.

Chairperson: John George
Coordinators: Franklin Alexander,
Lorenzo Carlisle, Willia Gray
Editor: Phil Gardiner
Media Committee: 436-7130
Divestment Task Force: 451-5127
Outreach Committee: 533-3392

The UDF has proven its ability to coordinate a long-term struggle. It is also an open secret that the African National Congress (ANC) has provided both the moral standing and political guidance in the UDF that has enabled the UDF to do its work well. After 25 years of underground existence as a banned organization, the ANC has emerged as the leading anti-apartheid force in South Africa. Nelson Mandela, the ANC's imprisoned leader, is considered by most South Africans to be that country's only legitimate leader.

Government Reprisals

The South African police have been doing much more than shooting men, women and children in hog-wild fashion. They have deliberately murdered and kidnapped UDF leadership. And they are trying other leaders for treason—to be hanged if convicted.

On August 1 of this year, for example, Victoria Mxenge stepped out of a car in front of her home in Umlazi Township, an all-black suburb of Durban. Her three children stepped out behind her. Suddenly, from the hedges across the street, four men came running toward her. One man shot her point-blank with a pistol. Another split her skull with an axe. All in front of her three children.

Victoria Mxenge, 43 years old, was murdered by a death-squad of the South African police. In the days that followed her brutal murder, as countless times before, the government and the police claimed that they lacked information to arrest the murderers and bring them to trial. They had done the same four years earlier when Victoria's husband, Griffiths Mxenge, was found dead—stabbed a number of times and tortured.

Griffiths had been a prominent organizer for housing and health care rights for black people in and around Durban, when he was slain in 1981. He had also been imprisoned on Robben Island for being a member of the ANC. Victoria was a nurse who, after many years of studying in evening school, became a lawyer. In the past year she had been a prominent leader in the UDF, as well as in the leadership of several women's and legal-professional organizations. Most important, she was the head of a team of lawyers defending 16 black, mixed-race and Asian UDF and trade union leaders charged with treason. For this she was killed.

On June 27, four prominent UDF leaders left a meeting in Port Elizabeth and started home to Craddock Township, some 120 miles north of the city. They had told people at the meeting that they would only stop for a police roadblock. They never made it home, and four days later the burned and mutilated bodies of Matthew Goniwe, Sparrow Mkhonto, Siselo Mhlawuli and Fort Calata were found in the sand dunes north of Port Elizabeth. The death squads had deprived Craddock Township of four of its leaders in the struggle for quality non-apartheid education and decent, affordable housing.

Griffiths, Victoria, Mathew, Sparrow, Siselo and Fort all died victims of a deliberate campaign to eliminate the leadership of a people who, for over a year, have been in rebellion aimed at destroying apartheid. The purpose is quite clear: the government wants to make people afraid to step forward and take leadership in the struggle against South African racism.

Treason Trials

The upcoming treason trials in Pietermaritzburg are yet another attempt at intimidation. Here, 16 black, mixed-race and Asian leaders of the UDF and some black trade unionists are on trial for their lives. The accused include Thozamile Gqueta, the national chairperson of the South African Allied Workers Union; Ismail Mohammed, who is now

the chief defense lawyer since the murder of Victoria Mxenge; Albertina Sisulu, whose husband, Walter, is serving a life sentence along with Nelson Mandela; and Archie Gumede, 70 years old, a life-long activist in the Asian community.

South African President P.W. Botha makes speeches offering sham citizenship to blacks in South Africa while South Africa's black leadership is being assassinated or put on trial for their lives. Government blue-ribbon commissions call for the scrapping of identity passes while upwards of 16,000 people have been arrested for political offenses in the past year. The whereabouts of at least 27 of those arrested—all known UDF leaders—are unknown to the police, so they say.

These speeches and commission reports are for public consumption outside of South Africa to offset the growing international isolation of the apartheid state. In South Africa itself, the government continues to speak its mother-tongue: violence.

But a year of struggle against the African continent's best-armed government shows no sign of ebbing. "We will fight and we will expect a blood bath," said ANC President Oliver Tambo to a Newsweek reporter, "but then again the West knew it had to make many sacrifices when it fought to break the Nazi regime. This regime will be broken, as was Hitler's."



"Constructive engagement" with South Africa.

S.A. Trade

continued from page 1

resolutions concerning such topics as cargo-picketing, product boycotts and refusal-to-handle campaigns, making demands of port commissions, and organizing liberation support committees in trade union locals.

One of the main resolutions that came out of the conference was that port commissions be asked to schedule public meetings to consider banning cargo going to or coming from South Africa. So far, no U.S. port authority has banned the handling of goods coming from or going to South Africa. Here, in Oakland, South African cargo is brought into port primarily through the Israeli shipping firm, Zims.

Were the Port of Oakland to ban South African trade, in conjunction with the strong city ordinance passed on July 9, banning corporate investments in South Africa or to business with firms that have such investments, Oakland would set a precedent for the country as a whole in the struggle against South African racism.

The Political Cost of Trade With Apartheid

Nearly \$5 billion worth of trade was conducted between the United States and South Africa last year. This

included the U.S. export of \$219 million worth of aircraft and aircraft turbines, and \$122 million worth of computers and computer parts, as well as other vital machinery for South Africa's mining and manufacturing industry. Some \$2.5 billion worth of South African gold—the Krugerrand—is marketed and sold in the United States. One-half of that amount is marketed and sold on the West Coast.

Such trade, in addition to bolstering the South African economy, is lucrative for U.S. companies that move to South Africa where the wages of black workers are much lower than the minimum wage standards of the U.S. In 1983, here in California, the Del Monte Corporation shut down its Yuba City cannery and its Merced peach orchards—then the largest peach orchards in the world—and moved these operations to South Africa. The effect on workers in the canning industry and in the fields was devastating: 40,000 cannery workers are now employed where only a few years ago the number was 80,000. If you have on your kitchen shelf peaches and other canned fruits labelled Del Monte, Monarch, Continental, Esco or Alex—then chances are that the contents were picked, or canned, or both, by black South Africans making \$300.00 a year at best.

“There is no morality in investing in an abnormal society like South Africa, where the majority of people are oppressed and exploited,” said Thozamile Botha, Administrative Secretary of the South African Congress of Trade Unions. He put the issue this way: “No company goes to South Africa because it has the interest of the black people at heart; they go because they want to maximize profits. They are doing so under the protection of the racist South African laws.”

This is the trade relationship that the South African liberation movement and its supporters seek to break up. The BAFSAM and its community and trade union friends intend to make this break a reality at the Port of Oakland.

The struggle to cut trade ties with South Africa “helps people in the community, in the unions, and the unemployed see that they have a direct interest, and a direct impact, on what is happening in South Africa,” stressed David Bacon, chairperson of BAFSAM's Labor Committee. And he added: “It is not just a question of feeling sorry, but of understanding that the success of the South African people's liberation struggle will directly benefit us.”

