THE RIGHT TO SAY NO TO A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY

A Report on the Militarization of South Africa and the Right of Conscientious Objection

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Preface

Any society which teaches its young to live by fear of the unknown and forces them to die for a big lie is a sick society, which is sowing seeds for its own inevitable destruction.

This is the fate awaiting the racist white-minority-dominated society of today’s apartheid South Africa.

It is well known that the primary contradiction, at the present, in South Africa is the struggle for power between the black majority, on the one hand, and the fascist junta, under the leadership of the all-white Nationalist Party, on the other.

The struggle being waged there by the African nationalists and patriots is a direct result of, and also an answer to, this contradiction. The question will be finally resolved by the black majority, under the leadership of its national liberation movement. Thus will be established a socialist and democratic society in South Africa, which will serve the interests of the entire people; needless to say that the victory over apartheid colonialism is as certain as the commitment to wage a struggle against it is total.

The first-line victims of this system are the indigenous African patriots. That’s why they are the leaders and champions of the struggle for total liberation, by whatever means, including the military, which is fast emerging as the ultimate method in South Africa itself.

One group of the other victims are the young whites in South Africa. Succeeding generations of them are subjected to indoctrination through war psychosis and fascist propaganda. Apartheid South Africa makes absolute demands on them to sacrifice and offers them no meaningful alternatives, throughout their schooling, maturity and adulthood, outside the status quo.

The young whites are forced to augment the ranks of the Nationalist Party and to fight against domestic and foreign enemies, imagined or real.

In recent years, the white youth have been deserting the army and police. Some of them have refused to be conscripted and instead fled the country; others have gone to jail rather than serve in what they have come to regard as an imperialist war of self-destruction.

Like their counterparts in America and in other western countries during the Vietnam conflict, they are showing signs of anguish and demoralization. They have begun to ask, “Die for what?” in Namibia, Zimbabwe and in other African countries, far away from their homes and loved ones.

Yet, law and circumstances inside South Africa as well as outside conspire to block a way out for them. They should be encouraged and helped, as this will be another way to weaken apartheid, which was long recognized as a crime against humanity.

One way to help them is for them to be granted political asylum, especially in those countries which profess to be cradles of liberty, democracy and human rights.

That the present illegitimate regime of South Africa does not represent the black majority is an undeniable fact. But it is also equally true, albeit to a lesser degree, that the South African white youth and a number of groups in the white community are denied meaningful choices.

The young whites in the so-called South African Defence Forces, who are forced to fight against the national liberation movements and die without knowing why, are potential allies in the common struggles. They need guidance and camaraderie.

THEO-BEN GURIRAB
member of SWAPO
Central Committee and permanent observer to the United Nations

March 1979
Johannesburg. — A Roman Catholic priest has denied that he is militant — a label he was given after saying national servicemen should 'machinegun the life out of terrorists as their feet touch South African soil.'

Father Clayton-Jackson of Turffontein said he had been upset by a 'mischievous' newspaper report which labelled him 'militant.'

'I have refused to have any further dealings with the newspaper. My sermon, which was delivered on Armistice Day, was offered as encouragement to the young men serving on our borders. I have been telephoned by several people telling me they agreed with my message,' he said.

A Surgeon

Father Clayton-Jackson said in his sermon that if terrorists were truly fighting for justice they could do far more easily in their own countries.

He said a surgeon had to rip a body to remove the diseased kidney so that the rest of the body could live. This was the task of soldiers — terrorists being to South Africa like a diseased kidney.

Repugnant

"To in any way encourage our young school leavers to be conscientious objectors and refuse to carry arms, however subtly this encouraging is done, is just as irresponsible and repugnant as encouraging a doctor not to assist at the scene of a road accident," Father Clayton-Jackson told his congregation.

"If Christianity is to survive then we must win the border war," he said.

"Regarding terrorists I would just like to mention two very special requests for when I die. First, I would like all the terrorists to come along and kneel on top of my grave for a second or two. And my second request is that I would like to be buried at sea."
by Don Morton

Introduction

The South African War Machine

It has been said that a crime against humanity as great as the Holocaust could never happen again — perhaps not against whites. Yet millions of South African blacks are currently the victims of genocidal policies which are every bit as monstrous in their implications as those which led to the deaths of six million Jews in Nazi Germany. Unless apartheid is stopped, the world may witness an even greater horror than that which came to light at the end of World War II.

All information about what can only be defined as a continuous war in South Africa is controlled by the Defense Farce and by draconian security legislation. Thus, what follows must, by definition, be only the tip of the iceberg.

To begin, let us examine events which were gleaned from South African newspapers on two typical days last year (Rand Daily Mail, The Star, The Citizen, Sunday Post, Sunday Times, Sunday Express, Post). These two days were chosen for their relative “normalcy.” There were other days in which more dramatic events occurred.

September 24, 1978

- The Machobane funeral (Machobane was the Soweto Students Representative Council leader who had been shot by the police 18 days before) is disrupted by the police with a “sneeze machine” (a massive chemical dispenser mounted on a truck), tear gas and dogs. Police allow only the family and a few friends into the cemetery, then attack the crowd of 5,000 mourners with batons. The attack was unprovoked.
- A man believed to have shot a white policeman in Soweto last month (though there had been no previous media reporting of the shooting of the police sergeant) is killed in a shoot-out with police.
- Residents of Meadowlands (a district in Soweto) must pay separate rent for their children. Families which moved there last year were promised that their children would be free.
- National servicemen will have to do “at least ten months border duty,” the Defense Force announces.

September 27, 1978

- Twenty-seven Johannesburg journalists lose appeal against conviction under the Riotous Assemblies Act.
- Soweto home of businessman is petrol bombed following allegations by some youth that he was serving as a front for white owners.
- Two executive members of the Soweto Students League are detained.
- W. Bakola is transferred to detention under Section 10 of the Internal Security Act. He has now been under detention for 470 days.
- Zola Nqini, former Robben Island prisoner, was detained under the Terrorism Act last year. Charges were withdrawn but he is now jailed for six months for refusing to testify as State Witness.
- Two unnamed Soweto youths are arrested and charged with incitement over the Machobane funeral.
- A ban on all public gatherings across the country is extended for another six months. This ban has been in effect since 1976.

In South Africa the worst atrocities become commonplace, and for blacks, the most mundane activities must be carried out under a state of siege. Led by a frightened government, with assistance from the Western powers, South Africa is run as a well-oiled war machine.

Recent revelations about the BROEDERBOND (the secret group of ardent and influential Afrikaaners whose expose has become a best-selling scandal in South Africa) reveal what was previously suspected: that the entire country, including the government, the army and the media, is directed by an organization with historical and ideological links to German Nazism. The stated aim of the BROEDERBOND is total control of South Africa for white Afrikaaner nationalist domination.

The following illustrations give some indication of the climate being generated in South Africa as part of the BROEDERBOND’s planned military strategy.

- Compulsory “national service” for white males was doubled in 1977 to two years to be followed by eight years’ service in the Citizens Force (probably three-month periods each
Recruitment into the permanent force of the South African Defense Force has increased by 80% over the past three years. Figures for 1978 are expected to be double those of 1977.

Commandos, local militia, operate in almost every white community in regular military training. Ottosdal, a typical small white South African town, boasts that only 5% of its men are not involved in either the Citizen Force or commandos.

There are over 150,000 school children undergoing cadet training, and minister of defense aims at doubling this figure soon. "Youth preparedness" (a racist ideology with a heavy paramilitary bias) is a compulsory subject taught in schools.

Under legislation enacted in 1978, immigrants become eligible for conscription after two years of residence in South Africa. Almost one million white South Africans (out of a total of four million) are now licensed to carry and possess firearms.

The government has set up a two-way radio system in rural areas linking farmers with their local commando unit.

National Defense Bonds — run like a lottery at R5 a unit — raised over R300 million in one year to supplement the Defense Budget, which increased from less than R500 million five years ago to over R1.5 billion in 1978.

ARMSCOR, the SADF’s coordinator of arms manufacture, now hands out work to over 1,200 private industry contractors. Legislation gives the government power to seize any land, property or corporation in the interests of defense.

Foreign multi-nationals (most notably General Motors) have drawn up contingency plans that would be used “in times of emergency” to assist the South African Defense Force.

Soldiers are given exceptional privileges in South African society. The Southern Cross Fund, a charity established ten years ago to provide home comforts for those in uniform, has raised over R3 million in the last three years.

Soldiers are allowed to travel free on any public transport. A massive glorification of the role of the brave white soldier up on the “border” is also indicated by the granting of other emoluments, such as discounts at hotels, paid leaves, etc.

— A leading toy manufacturer claims that sales of war games increased by 500% in the last year.

In case there are still doubts about the total militarization of South African society, the 1977 Defense White Paper leaves no room for speculation, as the following excerpts indicate:

The resolution of a conflict in these times in which we now live demands interdependent and co-ordinated action in all fields — military, psychological, economic, political, sociological, technological, diplomatic, ideological, cultural, etc. Germany had already realized this before World War II. We are today involved in a war whether we wish to accept it or not. It is, therefore, essential that a Total National Strategy be formulated at the highest level. Our country’s defence is not a matter for the South African Defence Force alone.

What is frightening to realize is that these words were spoken by a known Nazi sympathizer, a member of the BROEDERBOND, the architect of the invasion into Angola and now the Prime Minister of South Africa, Piet-“Wapen” Botha. “Wapen” is his nickname and means weapon.

So all are agreed that South Africa is in a highly developed state of war. The next question to address before looking in some detail at the issue of conscientious objection is whether this is in any way a just or unjust war.

Beginning with St. Thomas Aquinas through John Calvin, Mahatma Gandhi and modern scholars like Jacques Ellul and J. Davies, certain traditionally established guidelines have enabled us to determine what is a just or unjust war. Let’s examine these guidelines in relation to the situation in South Africa.

(a) **The war has to be declared by a legitimate authority.** War, in other words, is to serve public, not private, ends. In South Africa, war is declared by a small white minority for very private and privileged ends against over 80% of the people of South Africa.

(b) **The cause must be just.** Such a cause might be severe aggression or the suppression of fundamental human rights. In South Africa, it is the white regime which is the aggressor (invading...
Angola and Zambia as well as Soweto, Sharpeville, etc.). It is the black majority whose basic human rights have been systematically destroyed.

(c) **It must be taken as a last resort**, only when all legitimate means of achieving just ends have been explored. In South Africa, the rule of thumb is usually to shoot first and ask questions later. In addition to refusing to negotiate any meaningful change, the apartheid regime has continued to escalate its military and war intentions.

(d) **It must have just goals.** There is no doubt about the goals of South Africa’s war: total domination, not just of South Africa but the whole sub-continent under white supremacy, with the total subjugation and exploitation of the indigenous black people.

(e) **The means employed must be just.** Though it is doubtful whether any means of warfare are “just” today, South Africa’s capacity to use nuclear, chemical and biological warfare techniques is frightening. There are numerous well-documented examples of mass genocide (Casinga, Soweto), as well as a host of other war crimes committed by white forces: torture, beatings, electronic shock techniques, etc.

Perhaps the case is best put by a young man who was drafted in March 1978. This is what he said in a letter to his commanding officer in refusing to serve:

I find myself a citizen of a country which has lost its way, a country in which the solution to every problem is the introduction of new and harsher legislation. Such an unjust and discriminatory social order inevitably arouses opposition. Repressive measures are then taken to deal with all opposition. This opposition is then driven underground and driven to violence.

He goes on to say,

A state in which the police and security forces have the power, either in law or in practice, to arrest and detain anyone for an indefinite period and to hold that person incommunicado for long periods whilst they interrogate the detainee, and do this without any form of judicial control, is a Police State. Such is the position of our country not only in practice, but also in law. It seems to me that the prime responsibility for the insurGENCY on our borders rests more upon the shoulders of politicians within South Africa, who have banned virtually all forms of democratic political activity by Black South Africans. In this country, defence is not primarily against foreign invaders, but against fellow countrymen who seek to change the political order—many of my close friends have been banned, house arrested, detained or forced to flee the country. How is it then, that I am now expected to participate in the defence of the very institutions which have victimized my family, my friends and my colleagues? For these reasons I ask that my application for exemption be granted.

This young man is now one of many rotting in jail. In 1973, 109 persons were sentenced to detention for refusing to fight in the apartheid forces. In 1974 the number sentenced in the first six months was 122. In 1975 South Africa invaded Angola and the number increased three-fold to 605. In 1976 (the Soweto uprisings), it was 916 who were sentenced. In 1977, 532 were sentenced to jail.

![Image](100x100) Just as significant are the figures of those who have refused to report for service (from Hansard, Questions and Replies, question 167, columns 181-182):

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This means they cannot reside or associate with friends or family, cannot get a job (income tax law requires collaboration with Defense Force Intelligence), and cannot enroll as students anywhere in South Africa.

In addition to over 1,000 in jail and thousands “underground,” there are numerous soldiers who have fled into exile, only to find that no western country will grant them the normal status of a political refugee.

During the Vietnam War, a massive effort was launched to assist Vietnam War resisters. The GI movement, the draft dodgers, the deserters, the...
soldiers' newspapers, the Gold Star Mothers, the Peace Movement, the asylum granted to resisters and deserters by Sweden, Canada, and France, the coalitions and mass mobilizations that were formed and prominent individuals in the political, art and academic fields all joined hands around one unified cry of "Stop the War." There is no doubt that this movement saved countless lives and took years off the Vietnam War. The time has come to build such a movement in support of those resisting the South African war machine.

White Resistance to the South African Military

The South African Military Refugee Aid Fund (SAMRAF) is a newly formed group of South Africans and Americans doing support work for the desperate plight of South African war resisters. There are a number of specific recommendations arising from this report which SAMRAF would like to submit for consideration.

Churches and peace groups in the United States could make a major contribution to creating a peaceful and just society in South Africa:

(1) Very little is known about soldiers in revolt against apartheid. Churches and peace groups could publicize educational material, such as this study, and disseminate it through existing networks so as to make this issue one of concern and action to a broad mass of American people.

(2) Humanitarian material and legal aid need to be mobilized and channelled to the war resisters arriving in the U.S.A. seeking asylum in exile. Jobs and places to stay are hard to find, for example.

(3) A massive coordinated campaign to win asylum for South African War Resisters in the U.S.A. needs to receive priority treatment. At present, this administration, in spite of proclamations about human rights, does not grant refugee status to draft resisters or deserters from the apartheid army.

(4) Research on the South African military: its strengths and weaknesses, how the arms embargo is being violated, what methods are being used to control people, recording known cases of war crimes, atrocities and torture; all of these are difficult to research but very important to do.

(5) Churches in the U.S.A. need to be in constant dialogue with their sister churches in South Africa to formulate support mechanisms for war resisters who are in jail or underground in South Africa.

(6) The current effort to reinstate conscription in the United States provides the most concrete reason why the work SAMRAF is trying to do must be directly related to the drive to stop the draft.

Three bills now before Congress call for mass registration this year. The Pentagon is claiming that the United States is incapable of mass mobilization of ground forces in any major war: "Enforcement is the key issue in peacetime registration. Signs of public hostility could seriously degrade the deterrent value of our forces and invite adventurism by potential adversaries. On the other hand, unopposed registration could help recruiting and strengthen United States posture."

People are drafted because someone wants to go to war, in this case the United States. The question is, "Which war?"

The next major world war is already unfolding in Southern Africa. The ground forces the Pentagon now could send to repress any black major offensive against white racism in South Africa are themselves composed of over 30% black and Third World people. Hence, they must reinstate the draft in order to induct more white kids to go and fight blacks in South Africa.

In South Africa, young white soldiers are using the same Agent Orange discovered to be rotting the bodies of young GI's who used it in Vietnam. The people who struggled to resist United States intervention in Vietnam, and the senseless killing that took place fighting an unjust war, must now link hands with those of us struggling to resist another Vietnam in South Africa. We call on those who built the revolutionary GI movement in the United States to help build a South African GI resistance movement today as important as the U.S. movement was in Indochina.

The potential human disaster that has already been and will continue to be unleashed in South Africa threatens to drag us all down in a racial explosion that may yet prove to make the potential danger of the Harrisburg syndrome pale by comparison.
The South African Churches and Conscientious Objection

by Cos Desmond*

The major churches of Christendom have never been noted for their pacifism. They have given their blessing to everything from crusaders' banners to nuclear submarines; their cathedrals are bedecked with regimental flags and ornamented with stained-glass memorials to war heroes; valor in battle has long been considered a Christian virtue. They have always maintained that certain criteria must be met before a war can be considered justified, but, in practice, there has generally been an assumption in favor of the judgment of the ruling secular power. The South African churches are part of this tradition.

The statements of the church leaders quoted in this report simply reiterate the traditional Christian teaching on the right of the individual to be a conscientious objector. For the most part they only suggest that individuals should consider whether or not they should exercise this right. It is difficult to see how even the Nationalists could object to this as a general principle, since many, in fact most, from their own ranks refused to fight against Nazi Germany. However, in raising this question, the churchmen concerned are implicitly challenging the assumption of the rightness of the ruling power's decision. If that decision is wrong, the right to be a conscientious objector becomes a duty. And Archbishop Hurley, for one, has, quite unequivocally, come to that conclusion: "It is our duty to discourage people from getting involved in this military conflict because of the realities of the South African situation."

Moral questions cannot be decided in the abstract. The question of the right and duty of individuals in South Africa to be conscientious objectors and of the church's duty to support them can only be answered in the light of the present situation in South Africa and of the role which the South African Defense Force plays. The Nationalist government would have us believe that the primary role of the Defense Force is to halt the advance of communism in Southern Africa. There are many White Christians in South Africa who accept this and who therefore reject their leaders' support and encouragement of conscientious objectors. Others, and these would doubtless include the vast majority of Blacks, believe that the Defense Force is simply a means of maintaining the present oppressive system. For many Blacks the "communist threat" is not a threat at all, since they consider that no system could possibly be worse than the present one.

The basic question, therefore, particularly for White Christians, is whether the South African Defense Force is an instrument of oppression or a bastion against communism. If it is the former, it is difficult to see how any Christian could object to the stand of the South African church leaders. If it is the latter, many, both within and outside South Africa, would see it as their Christian duty to support the Defense Force.

The Nationalists attempt to "justify" all their most oppressive measures — detention without trial, banning, etc. — as being necessary to combat the threat of communism. It is at least debatable whether even the threat of communism would be sufficient to justify the use of these means, but, in fact, the reality of this threat has not been proved. It is true that any guerilla attacks on South Africa would probably have the support of Russia and Cuba. But there would not be any guerillas on the border if there were a just society in South Africa. South Africa is only threatened from outside because of the injustice of the present system. To seek to overcome that threat by violence implies a refusal to defuse it by changing the unjust system. The Nationalists have clearly shown that they are not prepared to change; they have chosen to maintain the present system by violent and military means. The churches, and others, have repeatedly condemned this system as being unjust. It is only logical, therefore, for them to go on to support those who do not wish to defend it.

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*Cos Desmond is a former South African Roman Catholic priest now living in exile in Great Britain. He is the author of *The Discarded People*, which has been banned by the South African government.
The churches' stand on conscientious objection might well lead to the full-scale Church-State confrontation that has been impending for some time. The potential for such a confrontation is always present in South Africa. The basic cause for potential conflict lies in the Nationalists' claim to complete authority in every sphere of life, including the religious. They claim to allow freedom of religion, but they also take it upon themselves to determine what constitutes 'religion.' The churches have, unfortunately, in many instances been prepared to conform to the government's definition of 'religion' and have thus avoided major confrontations. There are numerous aspects of the government's policy which are just as immoral as its insistence that people should participate in the violent defense of the system. Many of these, the churches would agree with the government, are 'political' rather than 'religious' or 'moral' matters. The question of conscientious objection, however, clearly falls within the churches' understanding of 'morality' and so they are not prepared to allow the government to exclude it from their area of concern.

At present many young people are solving their moral problem by leaving the country when they become eligible for military service, but this is going to become more and more difficult and some are going to be faced with the stark choice of jail or military service. Some will doubtless have the courage to choose jail and the church leaders will have to support them and encourage others to do so. Further, many Blacks are already expecting the church leaders to take more positive steps to discourage their fellow Christians from taking an active part in their oppression and in the killing of their brothers. The churches, therefore, will not be able simply to let this issue slide, as they have done on other occasions. The pressure, from both Blacks and Whites, might push them over the brink into open defiance of the government.

Conscientious objection might be the only meaningful contribution that young white South Africans can now make towards changing the present unjust system. Whether they go to jail or into exile, they need the support not only of the church in South Africa but of all of us. We overseas, for example, could help by trying to persuade the government to grant political asylum to conscientious objectors and indeed to all South African political refugees.

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Conscription in South Africa

by SAMRAF

South Africa's defense is governed primarily by the Defense Act of 1957. Under Section 3, every person domiciled in the Republic shall be liable between his 12th and 17th year to undergo training as a cadet, and every citizen between his 17th and 65th year shall be liable to service in the South African Defense Force. This act has been implemented with ever-increasing demands on national servicemen.

In 1974, the situation was as follows:

All white male South African citizens who are medically fit are liable to national service. They register during the first two months of the year in which they turn sixteen, but are not called up for service before the year in which they turn eighteen. Their initial service liability is a continuous period of twelve months. This is followed by five annual training camps, each not exceeding nineteen days. When this commitment is fulfilled, they qualify for appointment in the controlled reserves on which they stay for ten years before being transferred to the national reserve.

As from January 1977, the initial period of service was increased to twenty-four months. The annual training camps of nineteen days were increased to three months in December 1975 (at the time of the Angolan War) and have remained this length despite continual promises by the Minister of Defense to reduce this to one month a year for eight years. The Minister of Defense has unlimited powers on the periods of service in terms of sections 91 and 92 of the Defense Act, which deal with mobilization in "time of war" and for the

6 The Right to Say No
“combating of terrorism, internal disorder or other emergencies.”

Under the Defense Act (section 126A — 1978 Amendment) any person who fails to report for service or having reported for service, fails to render military service or to undergo military training is liable on conviction to a R2000 fine or two years’ imprisonment or both. Once this sentence has been served, the person is again drafted and liable to the same penalties if he again refuses to serve up to the age of 65. Members of recognized pacifist denominations (Jehovah’s Witnesses) are liable to three years’ imprisonment, but can only be charged once under this section.

Also under the Defense Act (section 121 — pre-1974), it is an offense to induce, or to attempt to induce, a member of the Defense Force or any auxiliary service to neglect or to act in conflict with his duty, or to aid or incite a member of the Defense Force or auxiliary service to evade or infringe a lawful order given to him or any law or regulation with which it is his duty to comply.

The South African Council of Churches
National Conference
Hammanskraal, August 1974

The annual conference of the South African Council of Churches gathered at Hammanskraal on 31st July 1974. With the escalation of events in Southern Africa, particularly in Mozambique, a paranoia of war was mounting amongst white South Africans. More and more national service-men were being sent into the operational areas to defend the system against the snowballing momentum of the liberation movements. Internal repression was increasing in a more brutal fashion. Against this background, the Conference met under the theme of “Daring to Live for Christ.”

On the first day, Rev. Douglas Bax, a Presbyterian minister from Umtata, stood up during a lively discussion on the role of the churches in South Africa. He claimed that:

neither the churches nor the SACC had been in the lead of doing something practical to change the status-quo in South Africa. Isn’t it time for us to consider seriously whether the SACC should challenge young men on the score of conscientious objection?2

The following day he placed a motion before the conference, maintaining that this was the only thing churches could do rather than just talk.

“There is no time left,” he said. “This motion is an attempt to dare to live for Christ.”

There was an attempt to drop the motion, but Dr. Beyers Naude argued that over the past year,

We have all been agonizing about problems raised in this motion, and thus none of us has come to this subject unprepared. To wait for another year for the next SACC conference would be too long, since the situation of violence is going to escalate.4

The motion was finally discussed on the third day, voted on, clause by clause and passed with a few amendments. The vote on support for the Resolution in general passed unanimously.

The Right to Say No 7
The South African Council of Churches Resolution

Below is the text of the Final Motion as amended and passed by the SACC National Conference, August 1974.

The National Conference of the SACC acknowledges as the one and only God Him who mightily delivered the people of Israel from their bondage in Egypt and who in Jesus Christ still proclaims that He will “set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18). He alone is supreme Lord and Saviour and to Him alone we owe ultimate obedience. Therefore, “we must obey God rather than men” in those areas where the Government fails to fulfill its calling to be “God’s servant for good” rather than for evil and for oppression (Acts 5:29, Romans 13:4).

IN LIGHT OF THIS, THE CONFERENCE:
1. Maintains that Christians are called to strive for justice and the true peace which can be founded only on justice;
2. does not accept that it is automatically the duty of those who follow Christ, the Prince of Peace, to engage in violence and war, or to prepare to engage in violence and war, whenever the State demands it;
3. reminds its member Churches that both Catholic and Reformation theology has regarded the taking up of arms as justifiable, if at all, only in order to fight a “just war”;
4. points out that the theological definition of a “just war” excludes war in defence of a basically unjust and discriminatory society;
5. points out that the Republic of South Africa is at present a fundamentally unjust and discriminatory society and that this injustice and discrimination constitutes the primary, institutionalised violence which has provoked the counter-violence of the “terrorists” or freedom fighters;
6. points out that the military forces of our country are being prepared to defend this unjust and discriminatory society and that the threat of military force is in fact already used to defend the status-quo against moves for radical change from outside the white electorate;
7. maintains that it is hypocritical to deplore the violence of “terrorists” or freedom fighters while we ourselves prepare to defend our society with its primary, institutionalised violence by means of yet more violence;
8. points out further that the injustice and oppression under which the black peoples of South Africa labour is far worse than that against which Afrikaners waged their First and Second Wars of Independence and that if we have justified the Afrikaners’ resort to violence (or the violence of the imperialism of the English) or claimed that God was on their side, it is hypocritical to deny that the same applies to the black people in their struggle today;
9. questions the basis upon which chaplains are seconded to the military forces lest their presence indicate moral support for the defence of our unjust and discriminatory society.

THE CONFERENCE THEREFORE:
1. Deplores violence as a means to solve problems;
2. calls on its member Churches to challenge all their members to consider in view of the above whether Christ’s call to take up the Cross and follow Him in identifying with the oppressed does not, in our situation, involve becoming conscientious objectors;
3. calls on those of its member Churches who have Chaplains in the military forces to reconsider the basis on which they are appointed and to investigate the state of pastoral care available to the communicants at present in exile or under arms beyond our borders and to seek ways and means of ensuring that such pastoral care may be properly exercised;
4. commends the courage and witness of those who have been willing to go to jail in protest against unjust laws and policies in our land, and who challenge all of us by their example;
5. requests the SACC’s task force on Violence and Non-violence to study methods of non-violent action for change which can be recommended to its member Churches;
6. prays for the Government and people of our land and urgently calls on them to make rapid strides towards radical and peaceful change in our society so that the violence and war to which our social, economic and political policies are leading us may be avoided.

Proposed: D. BAX
Seconded: C.F.B. NAUDE

8 The Right to Say No
Immediate Reactions

The resolution caused a flurry of reactions from many varied sectors of South African society.

The Prime Minister, Mr. B. J. Vorster, said:

I want seriously to warn those who are playing with fire in this way to rethink before they burn their fingers irrevocably.5

The Minister of Defense, Mr. P. W. Botha, said his department was taking legal opinion on the resolution.6

The leader of the Opposition, Sir de Villiers Graaff, said his party believed it was the duty of every South African to assist in the defense of South Africa against aggression including terrorism.7 The Opposition spokesperson for Defense, Mr. W. Vause Raw, claimed that encouraging refusal of military service went beyond legitimate political criticism. He condemned churchmen who sought to give terrorism a “cloaking of sacrilegious respectability.”8 A spokesperson for the Progressive Party, Prof. F. van Zyl Slabbert, stated:

The Progressive Party strongly disagrees with this resolution also because it spreads a defeatist spirit towards peaceful change and because it draws attention away from crucial political issues that are negotiable in our society.9

The Moderator of the N. G. Kerk General Synod, Dr. J. D. Vorster, said that the N. G. Kerk rejected the resolution entirely as it did not have Scriptural foundation and that the language they speak is the language of the World Council of Churches, which is always against war unless it is a leftist war. I do not say these people are communists, but they are playing into the hands of the leftists.10

Many leading churchmen dissociated themselves from the resolution and most churches cautiously stated that they would refer the matter to their respective governing bodies.

The media reacted with vigor. The SABC described the SACC resolution as a menace to the country’s security.

Die Hoofstad stated:

Obedience to the authorities is a Biblical injunction. Therefore refusal to do military service is not reconcilable with the Bible.11

Die Ooggendblad:

This is evidence of disloyalty to South Africa. Even worse: Refusal to do military training is a criminal offence. Does it become church leaders to encourage youth to do this?12

The Star:

But we strongly question the Council’s right or wisdom, in suggesting that South Africans should refuse to defend their borders against outside attack.13

Only the Rand Daily Mail was somewhat more sympathetic:

... it is correct that we should not ask anyone to die for a country unless he is granted the right to live for it too — in the fullest sense of the word.14

In a response to all the heated reaction, the General Secretary of the SACC, Mr. John Rees, said that:

It should be remembered that of the ten million Christians in fellowship with the SACC, 95% are Black and to date practically every Black who has reacted has stood solidly behind this resolution.15

The Right to Say No 9
The National Union of South African Students Statement

One of the most significant reactions, in that it came from people directly affected by the resolution, was a joint statement issued by members of the National Union of South African Students in late 1974:

Nearly all the responses to the SACC stand on Conscientious Objection have been typically negative and short-sighted. Their resolution calls above all for a deeply considered response to the escalating conflict on our borders.

It is the young people of South Africa who are being called upon to fight this war. Many of us are questioning two fundamental issues relating to this conflict. Firstly, the readiness with which the government is committing the people of South Africa to a prolonged war in defence of a system which promotes and protects the interests of whites and which discriminates at all levels against blacks.

Secondly, the repression of organised and peaceful black opposition to the conditions of domination and exploitation in our society has been responsible for black fellow South Africans taking up arms. It could be argued that we are being called upon to fight a civil war, the cause of which is rooted in the inequalities of our society.

If we are to seek sincerely a peaceful resolution to this conflict it is issues such as these which must be openly and fully debated. But the government, through its propaganda is developing a widespread war psychosis which blindly clings to militarism as the only cause of action open for resolving this conflict. Many of us believe that this war can be avoided if the inequalities in our society are rooted out—if the aspirations of blacks to share equally in the political process and the wealth of the land are met.

But in the absence of any sincere indication by the government that they intend meeting these aspirations and for as long as we are called upon to fight a war about which we have grave reservations, we must weigh up seriously the merits of conscientious objection.

We associate ourselves with the stand taken by the SACC and call upon all students at affiliated centers to challenge their conscience on this matter.

SIGNED: NUSAS Executive

The Defense Further Amendment Act, No. 83 of 1974

A Defense Further Amendment Bill had been drafted before the SACC conference, modifying various aspects of the 1957 Defense Act. After the SACC resolution had been adopted, the Minister of Defense withdrew the draft bill and added a clause which can only be regarded as a direct retaliation to the SACC resolution. The new clause (section 121[c]) provided that it would be an offense:

to use any language or do any act or thing, calculated to encourage, aid, incite, instigate, suggest to, or otherwise cause any other person or any category of persons or persons in general, to refuse or fail to render any service to which such other person or a person of such category or persons in general is or are liable or may become liable in terms of the Act.

The maximum penalty for persons convicted of this offense was laid down as R10000 or ten years or both (finally passed as R5000 or six years or both).

In introducing the Bill in the Assembly at its Second Reading, the Minister of Defense stated that this new clause was aimed at those persons who, wrapped in a cloak of sanctimoniousness, are trying to prejudice the security of South Africa.

In response to the heated reaction to this new clause from a wide cross-section of the Church (and the Progressive Party), the government agreed to set up a select committee to discuss the Bill more fully and allow interested bodies to testify on the issue.

The Select Committee was composed of nine government and four opposition members of parliament. The committee returned the Bill to parliament with only one minor language alteration and the Bill was passed almost unanimously. Any further serious discussion around issues raised in the SACC resolution was thus rendered illegal.
The Churches' Response

The government's frantic reaction to the SACC resolution had a catalytic effect on the response of the church establishments. In the face of direct repression, the cautious stances of a number of bodies were transformed into a far stronger statement of support for the resolution. All of the following responses were made before the Bill was passed as law.

The EXECUTIVE COMMISSION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (having earlier dissociated itself from the SACC resolution, unofficially) while expressing regret that the resolution was passed “without adequate time and study,” called on the government to protect the rights of conscientious objectors and people giving counsel on this subject.18

Although it passed on resolutions directly reflecting on the SACC resolution, the ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTH AFRICA passed several other resolutions which indirectly touched on the issue. One of the adopted resolutions stated that:

This conference . . . (b) Affirms that the position of the conscientious objector has a legitimate place within the Christian tradition and that the right to discuss, question or advocate this position must be regarded as an integral part of the religious liberty fundamental to the health of our society. . . .19

The N. G. KERK SYNODE unanimously rejected the SACC resolution and:

recognised the right and privilege of every citizen to defend his people and fatherland and to protect the life and freedom of its citizens.20

Reacting to the Defense Further Amendment Bill the ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE announced that should the Bill become law, they will disobey it and expect clergy and people of their own church and other churches to disobey it as well.21

The DIOCESAN COUNCIL OF THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF JOHANNESBURG passed a resolution in support of the SACC resolution,22 as did the PROVINCIAL STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE CHURCH OF THE PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA.23

Eighty-one pastors of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, Transvaal Region (which has an almost entirely Black membership of 200,000), passed a resolution “strongly identifying” themselves with the SACC resolution.24

The ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA did likewise, stating that:

the Assembly affirms that if the Defense Further Amendment Bill ever becomes law in South Africa, it will invite defiance from those who believe that war and violence are not in accordance with the teaching of Christ. . . . The Assembly rejects all legislation which compels a person to do what he believes to be morally wrong because the state sees it as politically right.

On the same day the Assembly decided to discontinue appointing representatives to the United Board of Chaplains of the South African Defense Force.25
Statements of Resistance

The impact of the Defense Further Amendment Act and the precedents set by the churches in defiance of the state are best summed up in statements made by leading churchmen in South Africa.

**Rev. Douglas Bax**

Tragically this Bill proves all the more that ours is a dangerously oppressive society. It also makes it even more difficult to justify the defence of our society in its present state on valid theological and moral grounds. It attacks the very right of free speech in an extreme totalitarian way.

Tragically, also, by attempting to close another avenue of peaceful, non-violent change, the Government is supplying yet more ammunition to our opponents, who maintain that violence is the only way to bring about change in South Africa.

The Bill's effect must be to drag us all one step nearer to catastrophe.26

**Rev. Peter Storey** (Editor of the Methodist journal, **Dimension**)

The Bill calls not for patriotism but a blind subservience which, in my view, can be more dangerous to the health of our nation than dissent.27

**Very Rev. Bill Burnett** (Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town)

I am not dismayed by the SACC resolution on conscientious objection because it faces us with things as they are. It makes us aware of a crisis which is also an opportunity to see things in a new light and respond to the situation in faith and love. We need to grasp the significance of the fact that some Black South Africans, many of whom are Christians, are outside our country seeking to change our power structure by force.28

**Dr. Theo Kotze** (Cape Director of the Christian Institute)

The implications of the Bill are terribly serious for the whole church. . . . This Bill restricts our pastoral duty, it inhibits the counselling of ministers and others. We cannot under any circumstances surrender our duty to be pastors to the flock of Christ and we must make this known.

We dare not surrender the right to encourage young people to face moral issues and there are serious moral issues at stake. The enormous penalties the Bill prescribes do not cancel the imperative of obedience to our Lord.29

**Archbishop Denis Hurley** (Catholic Archbishop of Durban)

The unjust situation in South Africa makes it justifiable for young South Africans to refuse to fight on the borders. It is our duty to discourage people from getting involved in this military conflict because of the realities of the South African situation—a situation of oppression.30

**Rev. Brian Brown** (Administrative Director of the Christian Institute)

The State, through its creation of an apartheid society, the defence of which is questionable for many Christians, has created a growing crisis of conscience.

Having brought about this moral conflict, the State now seeks to legislate as to what guidance the Church may give its followers.

But the Church dare not be silenced on matters as profound as the taking of another's life.31

**Rev. Beyers Naude** (Director of the Christian Institute)

The drastic penalties proposed in the new Defence Further Amendment Bill,
if passed, will certainly act as a deterrent to individuals who have basic objections to military service to express their true feelings on the matter of conscientious objection.

But it does in no way resolve the crisis of conscience facing many young people who are utterly opposed to the unjust society which is ours, and who are called upon to defend this system by force of arms.32

The Defense Further Amendment Act, once it became law, effectively put an end to such strong statements against the State. With the South African Defense Force’s escalated involvement in Namibia, Angola and the urban areas, the issue of conscientious objection clearly did not die. It was relegated to private conversation and carefully worded statements that would not run afoul of the Minister of Defense.

The issue surfaced publicly on a number of occasions and in understanding the context in which it arose, it should be remembered that any statement questioning in any small way the authority of the SADF walks a tight rope between legal immunity and a “traitorous felony.”

The South African Council of Churches — Post-1974

At the 1975 National Conference at Hammanskraal, Rev. Douglas Bax again proposed a motion relating to conscientious objection and a strategy for the churches in the future of South Africa. John Rees, the General Secretary, voiced (in absentia) strong opposition to the motion and it was agreed to refer the motion to the executive for consideration. Rev. Bax argued against this referral, describing it as a “copout.”

On a motion of Rt. Rev. Phillip Russell, Anglican Bishop of Natal, the conference resolved that the motion be confidential and dealt with by various divisions of the Council for consideration.33

At the half-yearly meeting of the Justice and Reconciliation Committee of the SACC in September 1975, Rev. J. Wing, Secretary of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, read a paper dealing with conscientious objection. He argued that conscientious objection should be taken further than military service and should be seen broadly as a form of protest against the violation of human rights.

“Conscientious objection as a positive power of passive resistance had not yet been practised on a wide enough scale for its full impact to be felt,” he said.34

At the 1976 National Conference of the SACC, the issue received only passing mention when it was suggested that the Council “look in depth at methods of non-violent opposition.”35

In May 1977, Rev. James Moulder read a paper to a study group of the Justice and Reconciliation Division entitled “In defence of conscientious non-combatants.” In July that year the Division compiled a list of Ten Transgressions of Religious Freedom by the South African Government. Number six read:

The ruling of the Defence Further Amendment Act which prevents a Christian from offering full pastoral care in regard to matters of involvement in the Defence Force, especially with reference to conscientious objection.36

In other words, extremely repressive legislation has effectively squashed the initiatives and guidance that the churches might have given in this area.
The Role of Chaplains

The debate on the role of Chaplains in the SADF, opened in the 1974 SACC resolution, was taken up again in January 1976, when Colin Winter, Anglican Bishop-in-exile of Namibia, forbade the Dean of Windhoek and the Archdeacon of Walvis Bay from acting as honorary chaplains to the SADF. The Archbishop of Cape Town, Bill Burnett, disagreed with this position, but added that the Church should minister to all, including those fighting on the other side of the borders.37

In May 1976, at a consultation prior to the SACC National Conference, the following statement was issued:

*Black Christians call on all Churches in South Africa to withdraw recognition of Chaplains appointed and paid by the SADF, and to make their own independent arrangements for pastoral care of all persons involved in armed struggle on both sides of the border.*38

At the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church of South Africa in October 1976, Rev. Peter Storey moved a motion calling on the church, in conjunction with other churches, to renegotiate with the SADF on the status of Chaplains.

There was a concerted effort, led by Rev. Ernest Baartman, for the Methodist Church to withdraw its Chaplains unless they could also serve men “on the other side of the border.” Rev. Baartman argued that every country must have a defense force, but the SADF was not viewed by Blacks as necessarily protecting their interests. An ex-SADF Chaplain, Rev. Arthur Attwell, told the conference that he had left the SADF because he could no longer identify with “the system.”39

Rev. Brian Brown, at about the same time, wrote an open letter to Methodist Chaplains raising a number of issues:

Dear Brethren,

As pastor engaged in preparing young men for participation in the SADF, I would value your answers to the questions which follow. Your responses will help me, and possibly other clergy, to determine to what degree one can encourage potential combatants to discuss these vital matters with their Methodist chaplains.

I have personally presented the questions to one of our senior chaplains and expressed my desire to publicise the answers so as to create as much awareness as possible.

1. Does the Methodist Church of South Africa and/or its Military chaplains believe that its members may participate in any war or only in a just war?

2. Did the Angolan war, and, more specifically, the participation of the SADF in it meet the conditions of a just war?

3. Did the Methodist chaplains inform the men under their pastoral care that the then-relevant section 95 (1)(a) of the Defence Act of 1957 allowed them to refuse to serve in Angola? If not, why not?

4. Do our Methodist chaplains consider it essential to point out to the men under their care any differences between a war waged within our borders and a war on foreign soil?

5. Do the Methodist chaplains include the following topics in their pastoral teaching or in their preaching:
   (a) the Church’s teaching about a just war?
   (b) the four Geneva Conventions of 1949?
   (c) the International Committee of the Red Cross Draft Rules for the Limitations of the Dangers Incurred by the Civilian Population in Time of War?

Not surprisingly, the Superintendent of the SADF Circuit responded:

In regard to the questions posed by Mr. Brown, we have no intention of permitting ourselves to be drawn into a public
debate on them.\textsuperscript{40}

The controversy moved tactically to the issue of chaplains serving part-time or at least not in uniform. Proponents of these suggestions suffered a setback in March 1978 when a meeting of twenty-two permanent force chaplains representing all the major churches unanimously decided that "the uniformed chaplain performs the more effective ministry," and strongly recommended "that the status quo be maintained."\textsuperscript{41}

The debate continues.

\section*{Alternative National Service}

At the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference in February 1976, the Conference asked the Administrative Board to institute an investigation into the accepted attitude to conscientious objection in the South African armed forces and to explore the possibility of establishing an ecumenical agency to help safeguard the position of conscientious objectors.\textsuperscript{42}

The Anglican Diocesan Synod in Natal passed a resolution in September 1976 calling on the government to investigate and establish "additional alternatives to military service" in the form of community service which would benefit all South Africans. The resolution went on to encourage all people to make a moral choice on the use of violence for maintaining or changing the status quo. It recognized the right of each individual to follow the dictates of his or her Christian conscience as well as the Church's responsibility to these people.\textsuperscript{43}

At the 1977 Catholic Bishops' Conference, a major statement was issued on the role of conscientious objectors. The content of this statement was subsequently endorsed by the Church of the Province of South Africa (April 1977),\textsuperscript{44} the Methodist Conference (October 1977),\textsuperscript{45} and the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (October 1977).

The UCCSA added:

``The voice of conscience must not be silenced by the compulsion of government edict or the clamour of popular demand."\textsuperscript{46}

\section*{Catholic Bishops' Statement on Conscientious Objection}

In the armed struggle that is developing on our borders and could easily spread internally a grievous situation arises for all who are concerned about the use of violence. On the one side the conviction grows in a significant sector of the oppressed majority that only violence will bring liberation. On the other, the minority in power sees itself threatened by the indiscriminate violence supported by international Communism.

In these agonising circumstances we can only promise with God's help to give leadership in an ongoing Christian examination of this tragic situation. We intend to publish reflections from time to time as incentives to Christian prayer, thought and commitment and we hope to be able to do this with the representatives of other Christian churches and organisations. In the meantime we have resolved to say something about conscientious objection.

According to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, "it seems just that laws should make humane provision for the case of conscientious objectors who refuse to carry arms, provided they accept some other form of community service" (Constitution: "The Church in the modern world" (No. 79)).

In order to understand the issue of conscientious objection, a careful distinction should be made between universal conscientious objection (the pacifist) and selective conscientious objection (e.g., on the grounds that a particular war is unjust); between combatant military service (e.g., in the
medical corps) and rational service (which could include services to the community, like social welfare, education, housing).

In South Africa the Defence Force Act (Section 67[3])

- makes no provision for any conscientious objectors (universal or selective) to do non-military national service;
- provides for universal objectors (those who belong to pacifist denominations) to do non-combatant military service;
- makes no provision for selective conscientious objectors even to do non-combatant military service.

Such provisions are made in some way or another by almost every other non-combatant country in the world which has conscription.

It should also be noted that objectors are sometimes accommodated, despite the lack of legal provision for it, by being given non-combatant tasks but never by being given non-military national service.

Consequently in South Africa the selective objector and the universal objector refusing to do non-combatant military service are liable to a fine and/or imprisonment (Section 126, 127[c]).

In this matter of conscientious objection we defend the right of every individual to follow his own conscience, the right therefore to conscientious objection both on the grounds of universal pacifism and on the grounds that he sincerely believes the war to be unjust. In this, as in every other matter, the individual is obliged to make a moral judgement in terms of the facts at his disposal after trying to ascertain these facts to the best of his ability. While we recognise that the conscientious objector will have to suffer the consequences of his own decision and the penalties imposed by the State, we uphold his right to do this and we urge the State to make provision for alternative forms of non-military national service as is done in other countries in the world.

SOUTHERN AFRICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE
PLENARY SESSION — February 1977.

Into the Future — Caution and Determination

The debate of 1974 reached a climax at a point of confrontation between Church and State. The two extreme alternatives open to the Church at that stage were either disobedience of the Defense Act or submission to silence. The path chosen by those not prepared to submit was through the middle, pushing their actions as far as legally possible and more than likely going a lot further in private. Committed members of the Church have continued to bring the debate out in public wherever it has been pragmatically possible.

In January 1978 an outspoken Presbyterian minister, Rev. Rob Robertson, urged his parish to pray for their fellow parishioner, Anton Eberhard, who was serving a sentence in military detention barracks in Pretoria for having refused a three-month military call-up on moral grounds.

Anglican bishops and other church leaders met at Hammanskraal in April 1978 and put out the Resolutions of the Provincial Standing Committee on the Church’s Response to the State of the Nation.

Resolution eight (1) read:
That PSC requests Dr. James Moulder, together with the Diocese of Natal’s “Resolution 7” group, to prepare simple material as soon as possible, that can be put into the hands of persons who may be involved in military action, or parishes who wish to make a study of the issues involved, to enable them to see some of the ethical dimensions and to make a more considered Christian decision as to their own response.

During October 1978 the METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA decided to minister to freedom fighters as well as the South African Defense Force. In its editorial comment on the decision, the Johannesburg daily, The Citizen, said: “The freedom fighters are terrorists seeking to achieve their aims by means of ghastly violence.” The paper went on to say, “It might be the Christian thing to minister to murderers, but why the Methodist Church should do so to gunmen whose victims include priests, nuns and other missionaries is beyond us.” “Surely these men are beyond the Christian pale,” it said.

The struggle continues.
Footnotes

1. South Africa Yearbook 1974, p. 368
2. Ecunews Bulletin, 5.8.74
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Die Burger, 6.8.74
6. Comment and Opinion, 9.8.74
7. Ecunews, 5.8.74
8. London Times, 5.8.74
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Hoofstad, 1.8.74
12. Oggenblad, 2.8.74
13. The Star, 3.8.74
14. Ecunews, 5.8.74
15. Ibid.
17. Survey of Race Relations (SAIRR), 1974, p. 59
18. Ecunews, 25.9.74
19. Ecunews, 30.10.74
20. Ibid.
21. Ecunews, 11.9.74
22. Ibid.
23. Ecunews, 13.11.74
24. Ecunews, 2.10.74
25. Ibid.
26. Rand Daily Mail, 15.8.74
27. Ibid.
28. Ecunews, 21.8.74
29. Times of Zambia, 19.9.74
30. Ecunews, 11.9.74
31. Rand Daily Mail, 15.8.74
32. Ibid.
33. Ecunews, 23.7.75
34. Ecunews, 25.9.75
35. Ecunews, 4.8.76
36. Ecunews, 22.7.77
37. Ecunews, 21.1.76
38. Ecunews, 26.5.76
39. Ecunews, 29.10.76
40. Pro Veritate, October 1976
41. Ecunews, 31.3.78
42. Ecunews, 18.2.76
43. Ecunews, 10.9.76
44. Ecunews, 22.4.77
45. Ecunews, 28.10.77
46. Ecunews, 28.10.77
47. S. A. Catholic Bishops' Statements (CIIR publication)
48. Ecunews, 13.1.78
49. Ecunews, 24.5.78

Appendix I

South Africa's Military Expenditure in Millions of Rand

1 Rand = $1.40

The Right to Say No 17
Appendix II

SAMRAF

Aims and Program

1. To generate support within the USA for asylum for South African Defense Force deserters and conscientious objectors.

2. To co-ordinate a campaign to establish the legal precedent in the USA for asylum.

3. To assist in getting refugees from South Africa or elsewhere to the USA.

4. To provide legal counsel and material aid to help refugees establish themselves in exile.

5. To prepare material and educate the public about the plight of South African military dissenters.

6. To launch publicity campaigns about soldiers who have left the military by organizing speaking tours for them, etc.

7. To do research on the South African military and prepare educational material about the root causes of refugees fleeing from their home country.

Advisory Council

George Houser (Executive Director, American Committee on Africa)
Ted Lockwood (Executive Director, Washington Office on Africa)
Rev. Randolph Nugent (Assistant General Secretary, Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church)
Sheila Collins (feminist theologian and author)
Ramsey Clark (former U.S. Attorney General)
Yvonne Golden (educator and Black activist)
Dave Cortright (Executive Director, SANE, and author of Soldiers in Revolt)
Lucius Walker (Executive Director, IFCO)
George McClain (Executive Secretary, Methodist Federation for Social Action)
Larold Schulz (United Church of Christ)
John Collins (attorney, Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility)
Ted Landen (anti-war activist)

(organizations listed for identification only)
Basic Facts About South Africa

South Africa has been divided into white and black land areas — one-seventh of the land for the 19 million blacks and six-sevenths for the 4 million whites. Every major city and town in the country is reserved for white ownership and control.

The apartheid political system decrees that blacks have no rights except in the reservations set aside for them by the white government. These areas, known as “Bantustans,” comprise but 13% of the land. Africans are defined as “temporary sojourners” in the “white” urban areas. Thus, by definition, they are deprived of all political and economic rights in 87% of their country.

The effects of domination and exploitation are clear:
- White per capita income is about fourteen times that of the African — $133 a month for every white man, woman and child; $9.50 a month for every African.
- Over 80% of all Africans live below the poverty line.
- Three out of every five children born in the Bantustans die before reaching the age of five. The death rate is 25 times that of white children; tuberculosis, a frequent aftermath of malnutrition, is 10 times as common among Africans as whites.
- Whites have one doctor for every 455 people, one of the highest doctor-patient ratios in the world; the black doctor-patient ratio is one to 18,000 in urban areas, one to 200,000 in rural areas.
- 93% of whites of high school age go to school; for blacks, the figure is 8.9%.

Prosperity for South African whites has been achieved through the systematic denial of political rights and the economic exploitation of its black majority. Whites, who comprise only 17% of the population, take home over 76% of the wealth. Why does such a large disparity exist?
- Whites may apply for any job; blacks are restricted to certain jobs no matter what their skills.
- Whites organize trade unions and may strike for higher pay; blacks go to jail for striking while their trade unions receive no legal recognition.
- The state spends approximately $340 a year for educating each white child, only $30 for a black child. Education is free and compulsory for whites; it costs the average black parents from one third to one half of their income to put their children through school.

Here are some statistics on South Africa for the year 1978, not an extreme year for repression by South African standards:
- 149 people were shot dead and 403 were wounded by police gunfire in pursuit of their duties.
- 261 people were detained under the security laws; 134 of them are still under detention.
- There were 76 political trials.
- 39 people were sentenced to life imprisonment.
- One person died under security detention.
- More than 100 prisoners died in police custody while awaiting trial.
- 50 people were banned.
- 45,000 white children and only 7,000 black children graduated from high school.
- 1,600,000,000 rands were spent on defense (one rand equals $1.10 U.S.).
- More than 500,000 black workers were reported unemployed; the actual figure is four times higher.
- There were 23 reported strikes by black workers; many more went unreported.

South Africa has banned 1,246 publications; every issue of 41 periodicals has been declared undesirable. Every two and a half minutes someone is arrested under the pass laws. On an average day, 100,000 people languish in jail; every fourth day, on the average, someone is executed by hanging.

South Africa is a police state denying basic human rights and freedoms to most of its people. African men and women must carry passes; they may live or work only where the stamp in their passbooks — put there by a white official — decrees. In fact, 640,000 people are arrested and jailed each year for infringement of the pass regulations. There are about one million migratory laborers in South Africa, men who are forced to leave their families behind in the Bantustans to live in prison-like, single-sex compounds, often 16 to a room. Whites vote and make laws in Parliament; blacks cannot.

Those accused of participating in “illegal political activities” are detained without trial and, often, tortured.