SOUTH AFRICA MOVES AGAINST BLACK OPPONENTS

SUPPORT GROWS FOR BANK CAMPAIGN

Union and church groups continue to lead the way in withdrawing money from 58 US banks which are targets of a campaign to end all bank loans to South Africa.

The United Radio, Electrical and Machine Workers Union withdrew a $4 million payroll account from Chase Manhattan Bank in mid-September, while the Sisters of Charity of New York removed its accounts from Citibank. The Fur, Leather and Machinery Workers (FLM Joint Board) also has withdrawn all of its accounts from New York banks with South African connections.

In another major development, the United Automobile Workers and District 31 of the United Steelworkers of America, the largest Steelworkers local in the country, both voted to withdraw all deposits in banks with South African connections.

The Committee to End Bank Loans to South Africa (COBLSA), whose formation was initiated by ACOA, now estimates that US bank loans to South Africa total about $3 billion, or one-third higher than previously believed.

The number of organizations participating in the campaign has grown to nearly 50. Among recent additions are several black organizations including the Black Theology Project, the Black Students Organization of Columbia University, and the Black Church Studies Program at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School.

As one indication of rising national interest, more than 100,000 fliers have been distributed by COBLSA to date.

THE DOMESTIC CONNECTION

In California, the issue of bank loans to South Africa has been linked with that of redlining, under which policy banks close off entire areas—generally poor and non-white—from loan consideration.

The California campaign has also received a boost in the form of growing interest in the creation of a state...

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STEVE BIKO

The American Committee on Africa notes with sorrow and anger the death in detention of Steve Biko, outstanding young South African leader and a prime mover in the organization of the black consciousness movement. A personal recollection of Biko by Tim Smith, a member of the ACOA executive board and executive director of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, may be found on page 2.

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A Personal Memory of Steve Biko

By Tim Smith

I first met Steve Biko in 1968 at a conference of the University Christian Movement in South Africa. At that time all student organizations that were multi-racial were white-dominated. The theme of Black Power was sweeping the US and the seeds of the black consciousness movement were growing in South Africa.

Steve Biko along with Barney Pityana, another leader in the black consciousness movement, led in the formation of a black caucus at the UCM meeting. Before an audience of slightly shocked white liberals, they argued that whites could not properly understand the issues that dominated the lives of the blacks present. Soon after, the South African Students' Organization was founded.

Steve Biko continued in the leadership of the black consciousness movement as its base and power grew. He and the movement's other leaders were acutely aware of the need to dismantle apartheid, and not simply to make cosmetic changes. He was also clearly conscious of the role that foreign investment and western governments played in butressing South Africa's racist status quo. Both the South African Students' Organization and the Black People's Convention specifically called on foreign investors to withdraw, arguing that their presence was not contributing to meaningful social change.

Many have spoken eloquently about him, but perhaps none more prophetically than white newspaper editor Donald Woods, just after Biko was detained last year:

"Make a note of the name Steve Biko and remember it well. One way or another it will be writ large in the South Africa of tomorrow.

"He is not the first potential prime minister to be detained without trial in this country—but I hope they treat him well, because he has a remarkable memory. And so have his friends."

South Africa (continued from page one)

Institute, which was among the organizations banned, said the government's action "can only hasten the end of the present regime." Naude, who was himself served with a five year banning order, added, "It is a sad and terrible day for South Africa."

Percy Qoboza, editor of the World, the banned black newspaper, was unable to comment because he was arrested and taken to prison shortly before a scheduled news conference at which he was to give his views on the closing of his paper. He is the first major South African editor to have been detained without trial. Under South African law, he could be held indefinitely.

South African Minister of Justice James T. Kruger justified the government's actions as necessary to "the maintenance of law and order."

Charging that the banned groups were part of "an attempt to cause the desired confrontation between black and white," he warned that further measures may be taken.

The Vorster regime's actions were widely interpreted as a reaction to black protests which began with the Soweto uprisings in 1976 and which accelerated with the death of Steve Biko. Despite South African government denials of responsibility, Biko's death sparked widespread international condemnation of the continuing brutality of the regime in dealing with its opponents.

The moves were also seen as part of an effort by the Nationalist Party to gain white conservative support in upcoming elections.

Not since the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 has South Africa demonstrated such fear of its black population. That incident, which marked the first major confrontation between blacks and whites, led to the banning of the leading black political movements of that time, the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress.

Back at Work

George Houser, executive director of ACOA, is back at work after undergoing successful surgery in September. His illness brought expressions of concern from throughout the US and overseas, including delegates at the Lagos anti-apartheid conference, which he had been scheduled to attend."
Poet Braves South African Ire

Molefe Pheto, poet, musician, and co-founder of South Africa’s Mihloti Black Theater, will return to South Africa shortly after a three-month visit to the United States. Mr. Pheto, who has been an outspoken critic of South Africa’s apartheid regime and who has refused to appear before white audiences in South Africa, was detained in March 1975 and spent 281 days in prison, 271 of them in solitary confinement.

Displaying remarkable courage during his American visit, Mr. Pheto read his poetry at numerous public gatherings, including an appearance at the United Nations on Oct. 11, the UN Day of Solidarity with South Africa’s Political Prisoners. He also read, through a bullhorn, at a demonstration against South African participation in the US Tennis Open held at Forest Hills on September 12.

ACOA arranged several readings by Mr. Pheto in New York and at Yale University as well as an interview on the National Black Network.

Mr. Pheto also read from his work at a September 25 memorial service for Steve Biko which was organized by members of the black South African community. The following poem, which he read at the Harlem service, is reprinted with Mr. Pheto’s permission.

WHEN THEY COME

To Malebane, who “jumped” to his death from the tenth floor during “interrogation.”

When they come for me
I wonder many times
who the victor is.

Blasts of bangs
on dead doors
in the middle of the night
unconcentrated torch lights
of fear
from those who have
come for me
nights without sleep
are now ended for me
because at last
they have come
and I with victory
know my fate.

Brave talk of fears
emanates from hoarse throats
as the house-search progresses
papers, any sort, strewn around
I watch, they watch

we watch
but who’s scared.

Composure from peace
like a quiet morning...
inner strength strengthens
a weak me
I stand tall
a proud Black man
for even as I might die
It’s with them that
my memory remains
for they alone know
how they committed me
to my death,
me stone cold
strong strengthened
because I am right.

At interrogation I know
I looked the man
straight in the eyes
But who BLUSHED

who blushed I ask
for I know it was not me.

Out in the long black
hollow distance
my face and beard brightened
in a richness
as
Nigerian oil.

I am winning
they are winning
I am incarcerated
in a victory
of ideas.

Calabar was years ago
there’s now a new dawn
for me
because they took me
but forgot the mask.

March 3, 1977

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BRIEFS

Survival, a play written and acted by four black South Africans, opened Oct. 9 at New York’s Astor Place Theater after touring the West Coast. The play was hailed by the Los Angeles Times as “a highly sophisticated, involving, and powerful piece of theater.”

Professor Tilden LeMelle, head of the Black Studies Department at Hunter College and a member of the ACOA executive board, was among speakers who addressed the UN on Oct. 11, the UN Day of Solidarity with South Africa’s Political Prisoners.

The ACOA staff held a two-day retreat Oct. 13-14 to discuss ongoing projects and to consider long-range plans. One result was a decision to pursue the idea of a broad-based national conference aimed at coordinating a major US campaign against white minority rule in southern Africa. Also discussed were the possibility of a second anti-apartheid poster campaign and the advisability of establishing some sort of ACOA regional affiliates which could provide more effective assistance to areas outside the East Coast.

ACOA has sent 600 copies of a history text to Zambia. One hundred are for use by students at the Namibia Institute in Lusaka; the other 500 are intended for a Patriotic Front secondary school in Zambia.

Jennifer Davis, ACOA research director, was invited to address the African Studies Association conference in Houston on the subject of US corporate and banking ties with South Africa. In early October, she ran a workshop on the role of US business interests in South Africa at a conference at Yale University.
Booth Attends Anti-Apartheid Conference

William Booth, president of ACOA, represented the organization at the World-Wide Conference for Action Against Apartheid held in Lagos, Nigeria, August 22-26. Among those in attendance were high-level representatives of 112 governments and leaders of the liberation movements. The US government delegation was led by Andrew Young, US Ambassador to the UN.

Booth, who was one of only two US delegates who were guests of the Nigerian government, described the Conference as providing "a unique chance for all interested parties to meet personally and appreciate each other" in a report to the ACOA executive board.

The Declaration adopted by the Conference, while silent or vague on several crucial points including recognition of the legitimacy of the liberation movements and of armed struggle, represented a significant advance over previous formulations acceptable to the Western powers.

Positions Adopted

Among the positions adopted were:

- the recognition of the "inalienable right to self-determination" of all the people of South Africa, and the acceptance of the principle of majority rule;
- recognition of "the inalienable right of the oppressed South African people and their national liberation movement to resort to all available and appropriate means of their choice to secure their freedom;"
- a call to all governments, organizations and individuals to provide all appropriate assistance" to the oppressed people of South Africa and their national liberation movement;
- an unconditional rejection of the "bantustans;"
- a call on the UN Security Council to take all necessary measures to ensure full implementation of the arms embargo against South Africa.

Other Proposals

In addition to the Declaration, the conference was to have adopted a set of proposals for further action developed by a Commission of the whole. However, owing to a combination of political and technical problems, the Commission remained a limited body whose meetings were attended mainly by those governments and groups most sympathetic to the liberation struggle. Its report, which supported the legitimacy of armed struggle and called for assistance, including military assistance, to the liberation movements, was not formally presented to the Conference. Instead, it was to be annexed to the final report of the Conference and was referred to the UN Committee Against Apartheid, which has already endorsed it and is expected to include its recommendations in the Committee's annual report to the General Assembly.

Booth's presence at the Conference generated two developments that will support ACOA action programs in the immediate future. The Nigerian government indicated to him its support of the campaign against US bank loans to South Africa sponsored by groups including ACOA, and he secured the consent of Patriotic Front leader Robert Mugabe to a fund-raising tour of the US.

Publications

The Africa Fund, associated with ACOA, regularly publishes analyses and research papers on events of major importance in Southern Africa, copies of which are available at low cost to individuals and groups for use in educational and other activities.

* Arms for Apartheid by Sean Gervasi, AF 1977, 4pp. 10c. Over ten, 8¢ each. An edited version of testimony before the House Subcommittee on Africa which so alarmed the South African government that it requested no mention of it in domestic newspapers. Gervasi details massive direct and indirect arms sales to South Africa by the US, Britain, Italy and France since passage of a UN arms embargo in 1963.

* Sanctions Breakers: Selling Oil to Rhodesia by Bernard Rivers, AF 1977, 4pp. 10c. Over ten, 8¢ each. An adaptation of testimony presented to the Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council. Outlines the way in which Western oil companies continue to supply oil to Rhodesia through their South African subsidiaries in violation of UN sanctions. Earlier work by Rivers and others drew major attention in the US and Britain and resulted in an inconclusive investigation of Mobil Corporation by the US government.

* A Fine Face for Apartheid: South Africa’s US Image Makers by Shelly Pitterman, AF 1977, 4pp. 10c. Over ten, 8¢ each. An examination of South Africa’s public relations and lobbying effort in the US, which in the past few years has grown into a multimillion dollar business. Contains details on subsidized congressional and journalistic trips to South Africa, a description of the US firms working on contract for the South African government, and a rundown on the various South African operations in the US.

* The Krugerrand: Facts About South Africa’s Gold Coin by Karen Rothmyer and Shelly Pitterman, AF 1977, 4pp. 10c. Over ten, 8¢ each. A simply written backgrounder containing facts and figures on Krugerrand production, distribution and sales. Outlines the role of gold in South Africa’s economy and the reasons behind the Krugerrand sales campaign. Also contains a brief resume of anti-Krugerrand activities in the US.

* US Policy in Southern Africa: Preaching Freedom, Investing in Oppression by George M. Houser, AF 1977, 4pp. 10c. Over ten, 8¢ each. A detailed analysis of US policies in southern Africa under the Carter administration, including a country-by-country review, which concludes that while certain alterations have been made, long-held positive attitudes toward investment preclude any prospects for substantial change.

* Fact Sheet on South Africa by Karen Rothmyer, AF 1977, 4pp. 10c. Over ten, 8¢ each. An up-to-date compilation of statistics on health, education, investment, living conditions, etc. Invaluable as a general resource.


* Africa Fund Literature List, free, available on request.