United Democratic Front Visits U.S.
Delegation Presses Bush for Comprehensive Economic Sanctions

The call for more political and economic pressure on the South African government has reached President George Bush directly. In late June, Mrs. Albertina Sisulu, one of three co-Presidents of the United Democratic Front, led a five person delegation that met with Bush at the White House.

Summing up the meeting, Mrs. Sisulu said it was significant, but the real test would be “whether the Bush administration goes further than making mere statements of condemnation of apartheid. What we want is concrete forms of pressure to end apartheid and to support those forces inside South Africa that are fighting for the realizations of a united, nonracial state.”

Joining “Mama” Sisulu on this historic visit were Sister Bernard Ncube, President of the Federation of Transvaal Women, Jesse Duarte, also an executive member of FEDTRW, Titus Mafolo, a UDF executive member, Curnick Ndlovu, the Front’s National Chairman and Azhar Cachalia the organization’s Treasurer.

ACOA staff members were with the delegation during most of their visit, helping to coordinate their program and arrange press coverage, meetings and logistics.

In addition to the meeting with President Bush, the Sisulu delegation met with House Speaker Tom Foley and other leaders in the House and was hosted at a dinner organized by Senator David Boren. ACOA also arranged meetings with Senator Kennedy, House Whip Bill Gray and Rep. Pat Schroeder.

In Atlanta the delegation held private meetings with former President Jimmy Carter, Coretta Scott King and Mayor Andrew Young.

Although they had very little time, wherever the delegation visited they made a special effort to reach out to local anti-apartheid activists, community groups and the South African exile community.

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Evaluating the visit just before he left, Titus Mafolo noted that the meetings with government officials were significant because “Western Countries are beginning to accept the centrality and leadership of the Mass Democratic Movement in the struggle against apartheid.”

Clear message for sanctions

One of the delegation’s goals was reaffirming the need for continued pressure coming from the United States. According to ACOA Executive Director Jennifer Davis, “the Delegation provided the United States with a clear message that sanctions worked, that they were an essential tool of the struggle against apartheid, and most importantly, that the people of South Africa, and the members of the democratic movement wanted them.”

Several members of the delegation were under some form of banning or restriction at the time of their visit, and their meetings with the U.S. President apparently provided scant protection (continued on page 2)
ACOA Viewpoint
“Paved with Good Intentions?”

There are strange ironies in much of the current debate about South Africa. Enthusiastically trumpeting positive changes in South Africa are forces which for decades obstinately opposed sanctions as a strategy to undermine apartheid. Yet these same forces are now claiming extravagant victories for the sanctions that were imposed.

Sanctions are working, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen told Congress in October. Indeed they were working so well that it would be counterproductive to impose any more!

U.S. press headlines following F.W. de Klerk's presidency and his subsequent release of eight prominent political prisoners reflected a similar theme. “Mr. de Klerk Earns an Indulgence” said the banner atop an October New York Times editorial.

It is important to come back to basics in this furor of optimism about change in South Africa. The change South Africa's Black majority population demands is the right to full and equal participation in the life of their country. “One person, one vote in a unified non-racial South Africa” in their shorthand.

The changes de Klerk proposes seek to preserve white privilege by establishing an intricate federal system of ethnic, cultural and geographical voting blocks. De Klerk's shorthand for such modernized apartheid is “power-sharing.”

The changes de Klerk has actually made do not even extend to lifting the State of Emergency or releasing all political prisoners.

What has changed is the white power structure’s sense of permanence and invulnerability. International economic pressures via sanctions and mass-based pressures internally have generated enormous stresses in the apartheid system. The economy is badly shaken — no growth, unemployment for whites, inflation.

But the struggle for democracy is far from won. It is an old South African ploy to stall for time. Previous presidents, Vorster and Botha, bought years of time for apartheid by knowing when to appear reasonable. Now, for de Klerk, extended talks about talks, or drawn out negotiations will be far more attractive prospects than handing over power to a government elected by the majority — a Black majority.

Late in October, in the face of de Klerks' various moves, church and labor leaders in South Africa reiterated their call for “effective and comprehensive sanctions.”

Forseeing a stampede away from sanctions if de Klerk initiates so-called reforms or negotiations, they went a significant step further, calling for intensified sanctions until certain goals have been achieved including “the drawing up and adopting of a new constitution by a democratically elected constituent assembly.”

For the U.S. anti-apartheid movement the challenge is clear. It is time to demand that Congress impose comprehensive sanctions on South Africa. Sanctions are aimed at ending apartheid and apartheid still lives in South Africa. There is serious work for us in the months ahead.

... UDF Visit (continued from p. 1)

for them when they returned.

Less than a month after they landed back in South Africa, Curnick Ndlovu and Titus Mafolo were detained without charge. Research Director Adotei Akwei joined in organizing pressure for their release, generating telegrams of protest and urging the State Department to press for their freedom.

The two men were released in late September.

Walter Sisulu Released

ANC leader Walter Sisulu, husband of Albertina, was released in October after serving twenty-six years in prison. Executive Director Emeritus George Houser, who met Sisulu in South Africa in 1954, talked to him on the phone shortly after his release. Sisulu first thanked Houser for all the work ACOA has done in the last thirty years. “Tell our friends to keep up the pressure,” Sisulu told Houser. Sisulu was a leader of the original Defiance Campaign in South Africa in 1952. It was this campaign that sparked the founding of ACOA, which has worked with Sisulu and other ANC leaders since that time.

The Bush administration continues to provide military aid and support to rebels in Angola. In October Bush met with Savimbi, the leader of UNITA, and other members of Congress, African diplomats and anti-apartheid activists pictured here protesting Savimbi's New York
A Fortnight in South Africa

Following ACOA's help coordinating the visit of Albertina Sisulu and the UDF delegation to the U.S. this summer, we were invited to send a representative to South Africa to consult with members of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM).

ACOA Projects Director Rob Jones spent 17 days in late August inside South Africa. His impressions follow.

The big story of the trip is the Defiance Campaign. It was much more widespread than international press coverage indicated. While I was there, demonstrations happened literally every day, in three or four different cities throughout the country. The other untold story is the degree of organization, from the leadership level down to the grassroots, revealed by staging such a large-scale campaign.

The large demonstrations like the "Family Days" at the whites-only beaches in Capetown and Durban saw the participation of thousands of people from the Black townships outside the cities. Because these beaches are intentionally located far from Black communities, extensive planning had to be done: Speakers and marshals had to be found, dozens of busses had to be hired, pick-up spots organized, flyers printed and distributed. All this was done on short notice, at a time when many activists were in detention, and the State of Emergency was still in force.

Mass based campaign

This degree of ground level organization is not limited to large demonstrations. In Capetown at a rally to protest the "international" Rugby tour which had come to South Africa, we were alerted that the police had banned the meeting. Nonetheless, word spread that the meeting had been moved to a church across town.

When we got to the church it was already packed with at least 1200 people. The feeling in the hall was very powerful, but also tremendously disciplined. One minute people would be chanting and dancing so hard the floor and walls were shaking, and the next moment at a nonverbal cue, everything would stop and you could hear a pin drop.

As a message of support from the ANC was read, the front of the church was invaded by 20 fully armed policemen who immediately proceeded to clear out the TV journalists and photographers. Once the cameras were gone, they announced that the meeting had been banned (again) and that we had three minutes to disperse or be forcibly removed.

The feeling in the room was tense. After conferring, the leadership on the podium reminded us that the Defiance Campaign was organized in the spirit of non-violence and that while we could not control the violence of the police, we must be disciplined in ensuring that provocation did not come from our side. With those words, people began to file out and the event ended without incident. But this was not and will not always be the case.

The Defiance Campaign continues to be very successful, but we must also realize that it has carried a very serious cost. Day in and day out, peaceful demonstrations have been met with brute force. During the 24 hours leading up to the September 6th elections, more than 20 people were killed in violent confrontations with the security forces.

The MDM is unequivocal that peaceful change in South Africa hinges on continued pressure on the regime.
As you read it thousands of children, men and women are suffering in South African prison cells.

At the same time South Africa has launched an unprecedented campaign of murder and pillage in the neighboring countries of Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

The American Committee on Africa has been in the forefront of the struggle against apartheid for more than thirty years.

Now, more than ever, we need your help. Can we count on you?

Yes, I want to help put an end to the violence and brutality of apartheid.

Here is my contribution of $500

☐ $500  ☐ $100  ☐ $50  ☐ $25  ☐ $10

Name

Address

City State Zip

Grassroots Sanctions Continue

State and local governments around the country continued to press corporations to withdraw from South Africa in 1989. ACOA works closely with local anti-apartheid organizations and municipal officials, advising on strategy and on language for the policies adopted. Some recent initiatives include:

- Seattle, Washington: the Cities Employees' Retirement System adopted a strong divestment policy. Under the new policy some $45 million of stock in companies doing business in South Africa will be divested, including $250,000 worth of Boeing stock. Boeing, which is based in Seattle, recently agreed to sell South African Airways four 747 aircraft, despite protests from local groups, members of Congress and ACOA.
- Tallahassee, Florida: the city commission unanimously adopted a broad based anti-apartheid policy under which the city will not enter into contracts with, or grant tax concessions to any company doing business in South Africa.
- New York, New York: the New York City Employees' Retirement System divested $30 million in stock from eight corporations as part of its divestment policy. ACOA is also working closely with New York Mayor-elect David Dinkins to strengthen the City's selective purchase legislation.
- Westchester, New York: the Board of Legislators voted to withdraw $40 million in deposits from Citibank. The action followed Citibank's recent rescheduling of $660 million in loans to South Africa, extending repayment until 1997.
- Austin, Texas: adopted a policy restricting purchases from companies doing business in South Africa.

... Rob Jones

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are committed to maintain the organized pressure inside the country. Again and again activists stressed to me that we must not be lulled by the regime's "good intentions" into relaxing the fight for sanctions. The next six to nine months will see a number of exciting developments in South Africa, but until there is one person, one vote in a unified, nonracial South Africa, the need for serious pressure on the regime continues.
Namibia
Liberating Africa's Last Colony

When more than 70,000 Namibians gathered for the largest rally in northern Namibia in more than half a century, only one American was introduced. George M. Houser, Executive Director Emeritus of ACOA, was recognized as the man who helped SWAPO President Nujoma when he first came to the United States in 1960.

In addition to sending Houser to Namibia, ACOA continues to build and expand networks in this country to fight for free and fair elections in Namibia.

In the last months before the November elections, South Africa did everything in its power to undermine SWAPO and deny the Movement the two-thirds majority in the November election it needs to write an independence constitution.

We have received hundreds of reports of detentions, torture and murder of Namibians who displayed SWAPO colors or sang movement songs.

In response, the Religious Action Network organized a special campaign to press the U.S. government to speak out more forcefully against South Africa's violations of the Namibia peace plan.

ACOA's associated organization The Africa Fund continues to publish the newsletter Dateline Namibia as an ecumenical publication distributed to more than 40,000 pastors and others by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Women's Division and the National Council of Churches.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church has found the newsletter so useful that they have already agreed to continue distributing it through 1990.

The Africa Fund has organized a Namibia Elections Watch committee, including former U.S. Solicitor Erwin Griswold, the Presiding Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church to focus attention on this issue.

More Work Needed

The elections in Namibia will not bring immediate independence, but are just the beginning of a process that will lead to independence in 1990. Thus Namibians have asked us to continue to mobilize Americans to support their efforts.

Religious Action Network Update

Congregations Target South Africa

Local congregations in Detroit, San Francisco, Virginia and New York protested continuing detentions in South Africa on Soweto Sunday, June 12, as part of the ongoing Religious Action Network (RAN). Choirs from four churches in New York City sang at a children's service at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Harlem, and in other cities congregations signed covenants pledging continued work against apartheid.

The June Soweto commemorations were tied into nationwide protests organized by the National Council of Churches Pentecost to Soweto Campaign.

Network actions in August focused on Namibia, and in October Religious Action Network congregations started a drive to educate their members about changes taking place in South Africa. Coordinator Dumisani Kumalo sent out a “RAN BACKGROUNDER” that challenged recent press reports of reform in South Africa and noted that the structures of apartheid remain strong inside South Africa.

Still to come are RAN events planned for this winter:
- December 7, the first of RAN's regional conferences will be held in New York. Both Rev. William Jones of Bethany Baptist Church, Brooklyn, and Rev. Charles Adams of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, Detroit will preach at the conference.
- Also in December, RAN will run an advertisement in South African newspapers publicly declaring members' support for the churches and organizations working for a democratic South Africa.
- In January 1990 RAN has been invited to organize workshops in Savannah, GA, which will be part of the Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend there, the 13th-15th.

The network got a boost in September when a new RAN intern, Rev. Orlando Wilson, joined the staff. Rev. Wilson is a student at Union Theological Seminary, and Pastor of New Antioch Baptist Church in Baltimore, MD.
The successful Hunger Strike Campaign conducted by South African detainees earlier this year forced Pretoria to release nearly 800 hundred people. But with this victory came the news that at least 90% of those released went into varying forms of strict house arrest, remaining virtual prisoners in their own homes.

Research Director Adotei Akwei spent much of the summer and fall working with South Africa's Human Rights Commission to expose the truth about the releases and alert Americans that detentions continue: Nearly 1500 people were detained in the month of August alone.

The restriction orders, which force activists to remain in their homes from 6pm to 6am, ban them from meeting with more than 6 people at a time and force them to report to the police station twice a day, make them easy targets for political assassinations. Christi Ntuli, a former hunger striker was hacked to death on his way to report to the police station. Two weeks later anti-apartheid activist David Webster was gunned down outside his home.

The Africa Fund Action Alert about political assassinations launched a campaign focusing on government sponsored vigilante violence and prompted the apartheid government to ban our Action Alert.

With the inauguration of F.W. de Klerk some hopes have been expressed that a new era of reform is at hand. Activists within South Africa have urged the Africa Fund to expose the fact the repression continues, albeit with a new face.