NATIONAL MOBILIZATION FOR AFRICAN LIBERATION, MARCH 21-APRIL 4

New York, NY, March 1982.......Anti-apartheid groups on over 50 campuses throughout the country and numerous community organizations are mobilizing for "Two Weeks of Action in Support of Southern African Liberation Movements". The American Committee on Africa initiated the call for the weeks of action at a national student conference in October 1981 and services a national network of campus activists supporting the struggle for African liberation. The general time-frame for actions is from March 21, the anniversary of the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre in which 69 unarmed blacks were killed protesting the South African pass-book system, through April 4, the anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

In New York City, a student coalition has formed that will coordinate events beginning with a city-wide forum on March 20 at John Jay College. Keynote speakers will be Mr. Hinyangerwa Asheke, the Deputy UN Representative of SWAPO--South West Africa People's Organization--the liberation movement of Namibia, as well as Reverend Herbert Daughtry, chairman of the National Black United Front, Dumisani Kumalo, projects director of the American Committee on Africa, Dennis Brutus noted South African poet, and Barbara Masekela of the African National Congress (South Africa). After this event programs will be held at the following colleges: Baruch, Brooklyn, Hostos, Hunter, Laguardia, Medgar Evers, Queens, York and New York University. These programs will build up to a city-wide demonstration on April 3 at Columbia University calling for an end to the Reagan Administration's support of the Pretoria regime and divestment of all Columbia University stock linked to South Africa.
Boston will also be the site of major actions opposing U.S. economic collaboration with South Africa. On March 25 a broad coalition of anti-apartheid, anti-nuclear, and labor groups will converge on the annual shareholder meeting of the First National Bank of Boston (FNBB) to protest its loans to South Africa. This bank action is being coordinated with groups in western Massachusetts where pickets will be organized at the Old Colony Bank, an FNBB subsidiary.

On March 4, in Cambridge, the Harvard South Africa Solidarity Committee (SASC) mobilized 400 students to an open meeting of the Harvard Investment Advisory Committee. Thirty groups, among them the Black Students Association, Hillel, and the African National Congress of South Africa, denounced a proposed change in Harvard University's investment policy which would weaken a previously-adopted ban on banks lending to the South African government. As part of continuing the campus momentum, Harvard activists will hold an event during the Weeks of Action featuring Dennis Brutus, South African poet and activist who is fighting deportation proceedings, and take part in the March 25 city-wide action at the First National Bank of Boston annual shareholder meeting.

Boston activists will also picket jewelers selling the Kruggerand (the South African gold coin). In addition, on March 31 lobbying will be organized for a bill before the Massachusetts legislature for divestment of pension fund money linked to South Africa, and on April 1 a city-wide forum will be held featuring the Deputy Representative of SWAPO.

A coalition in Springfield and Amherst, Massachusetts will host a SWAPO fundraiser which will initiate a month-long material aid drive for Namibian refugees. At the University of Massachusetts in Amherst the weeks of action will be linked to commemoration of Martin Luther King, Jr. and feature Johnstone Makatini, chief UN representative of the African National Congress (ANC) who will speak on April 6. A fundraising concert will also be held for the Dennis Brutus Defense Committee, featuring South African jazz artist Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand).

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At Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo (where 11 activists were arrested in a pro-divestment sit-in in 1979 following the last Week of Action) student pressure recently forced the divestment of $250,000 deposited in three banks lending to South Africa, including Continental Bank of Illinois. Students will continue their mobilization for divestment with a march to commemorate the Sharpeville Massacre on March 21. In addition the Southern Africa Solidarity Organization will stage a play about the life of Steve Biko and continue lobbying for a bill before the Michigan legislature to ban investment of state university funds in corporations and banks that do business with South Africa.

In five other midwest states the American Committee on Africa is coordinating a speaking tour of African National Congress representative David Ndaba that will go to: University of Kansas (Lawrenceville), University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana), Wabash College (Indiana), University of Indiana (Bloomington), University of Kentucky (Lexington and Louisville), Dayton and the College of Wooster in Ohio.

A coalition of groups at the University of Indiana is holding events from March 29-April 11. In addition to hosting the ANC representative, the coalition will show a film on the life of Nelson Mandela and initiate a material aid drive for SWAPO. Activists at Wooster College will hold the ANC event as part of efforts to build a campaign for campus stock divestment. Already a petition for divestment has been supported by over half the student body, and activists recently staged a demonstration at a trustee sponsored event on South Africa.

In the Washington, DC area a coalition based on 11 campuses, Black Students for a Free Southern Africa, will hold a series of solidarity events. The coalition is preparing articles on southern Africa for DC-area college newspapers and will also organize a radio show with each coalition-member campus. George Washington University will hold Southern Africa workshops with the assistance of the Washington Office on Africa and TransAfrica, while Howard University will host a South African film series. The University of Maryland will be holding a South Africa Awareness day in March sponsored by the Black, African, and Caribbean Student Unions. At American University, from March 20-27, there will be a performance by an African dance troupe, showings of "Generations of Resistance", a film about South Africa, and a forum at the School of International Service on efforts by black southern African states to break their economic dependence on South Africa.
The concluding event at American will be a Reggae music night to raise funds for Namibian refugees.

Community-based groups in Washington DC will also be active during the spring mobilization. The Southern Africa Working Group, a coalition of 90 religious and human rights organizations, is sponsoring a joint ANC-SWAPO solidarity event. The Southern Africa Support Project will hold a two-week long series of fundraisers for Namibian refugees including a talk by Theo Ben Gurirab, the SWAPO UN Representative.

Berea College in Kentucky, site of a January 1982 southern regional conference of 75 anti-apartheid organizers, will hold an action week in March that will feature teach-ins on divestment and material aid work. Activists from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, will hold programs relating commemoration of Martin Luther King, Jr. with support of southern African liberation movements. In addition to these programs, activists will show films on South Africa and leaflet for divestment of university funds linked to South Africa. In New Orleans, students at Xavier and Tulane universities will show films on South Africa throughout the weeks of action.

In southern California a coalition of community and campus organizers from the University of California at Los Angeles and the University of Southern California will host a series of events featuring Lucia Hamutenya, SWAPO Legal Secretary. Two major programs will be held on Sharpeville Day, March 21 where Ms. Hamutenya will keynote a conference on ”Racism, War and Oppression”. From March 22-24 Richard Lapchick, an organizer of the protests against the South African rugby tour, will speak in the Los Angeles area including an appearance at Los Angeles City College. These events will help build a March 26 demonstration at the Federal Building in Los Angeles calling for the closing of the South African consulate. An umbrella of 40 groups, known as the Coalition to Stop the Racist South African Consulate is calling the demonstration.
At Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania a demonstration of 200 students recently marched into a Board of Managers meeting, to demand divestment of stocks linked to South Africa. During the Weeks of Action films and forums will be held to continue the mobilization for divestment which was backed by 80% of the student body in a February referendum.

On March 26-27 activists at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia will organize a conference on "Student Organizing Strategies for the 80s". A major purpose of this event is to solidify the multiracial coalition that has developed around divestment and anti-racist work on campus. During the Weeks of Action, the divestment coalition will also be lobbying for a Philadelphia City Council ordinance to divest city employee pension funds from corporations and banks doing business with South Africa.

At Washington State University in Pullman, Washington student organizers will host a film and discussion dealing with the struggle in Namibia. The Committee For South African Freedom will then hold a Free Southern Africa Day on March 30 that will feature a rally for divestment and against the Reagan Administration's policy in southern Africa.

In Minneapolis, Minnesota the Twin Cities Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa will continue its material aid drive which to date has collected $80,000 worth of medical supplies for Namibian refugees. Campus and community solidarity groups will also be picketing the headquarters of Control Data Corporation to protest its computer sales to South Africa.