

**Speaking Out**

**Needed: A Change in U.S. Policy in Southern Africa**

† NOT THE LEAST of the problems the Carter administration now faces is the conflict in southern Africa. Many Africans have expressed hopes for a dramatic change in U.S. policy. The appointment of Andrew Young as ambassador to the United Nations has strengthened that hope. The attitude of expectancy is not unlike that which accompanied the inauguration of John F. Kennedy. As one who has worked in the field of African affairs during four previous administrations, I am doubtful that the Carter administration will introduce sufficiently meaningful changes. This skepticism is accompanied by a sense of foreboding that unless policy is changed, the United States will be drawn into the southern Africa conflict, with unfortunate international repercussions.

I

Two questions must be asked. First, can the southern Africa issues be resolved without large-scale violence? An armed struggle has been a part of the liberation struggle for many years. It brought independence to Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau. It is already a significant element in Rhodesia and Namibia. The expansion of violence in the rest of southern Africa can be avoided only if there is a drastic shift in South Africa’s apartheid policy.

But even on the heels of the Soweto uprising, South Africa has been moving in the wrong direction. Official South African government statistics disclose that over 400 have been killed since the June protests. Unofficial statistics put this figure at well over 1,000. Similarly, government statistics acknowledge the arrest of more than 800 persons since June—persons held in detention without specific charges. Unofficial figures are much higher. Tough repressive actions have been taken against many “moderate” opponents of the regime, including church leaders, educators and journalists. South Africa is becoming a more repressive society.

A second and more serious question: Will the conflict become internationalized? Can the United States avoid being drawn into it? Can the U.S. avoid confrontation with the Soviet Union? The Angola example—there the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. backed opposing sides in the struggle for power and seemed headed toward a major confrontation—is still close enough to serve as a danger signal. South Africa is the key to dealing with two major conflicts of southern Africa—Rhodesia and Namibia. South Africa dominates the whole region. So U.S. policy toward that nation will ultimately determine the shape of our relationships throughout southern Africa. But unless there is change in U.S. policy and strategy, there will be growing violence and escalating U.S. involvement.

II

At least four points should be made:

1. The United States has close economic, political and strategic ties with the Vorster regime in South Africa. The most obvious of these, the economic link, involves corporate investment of over $1.5 billion, and loans to the South African government through U.S. banks estimated at about $2 billion. The American corporations and financial institutions involved are major ones on the American scene—General Motors, Ford and Chrysler, for example. The banks are Citibank, Chase Manhattan, Morgan Guaranty Trust and others. The U.S. has also extended its ties with South Africa through the sale of equipment which has a possible military use—small planes, locomotives, and material for the development of atomic energy. The trend toward increased ties with the South Africa regime must be reversed.

2. U.S. strategy toward South Africa seems to be based on the premise that peaceful change can come at least in part through the pressures of external economic involvement. This premise completely ignores the lessons of the past decade or more in South African history. There has been no relaxation of controls against the African majority by the white minority in South Africa as economic involvement from outside has grown. The regime has made more than clear its commitment to an apartheid structure which continues to deny members of the African majority any political rights, any involvement in decision-making in the country in which they live, any relaxation of the pass laws.

In an interview which President Jimmy Carter gave to the South African Financial Mail before election day here but which was published after the election, Carter expressed acceptance of the old assumption that outside economic investment could lead to change. Carter said that “economic development, investment commitment and the use of economic leverage . . . seem to me the only way to achieve racial justice.” He indicated that he would “free up” American investment through the Export-Import Bank and encourage an increase in private lending and corporate activity in South Africa as a means of effecting change. There is no historical ground for his assumption. Increased investment leads simply to greater support for and identifica-
tion with the South African regime. This situation must be changed if there is to be a new and different policy on the part of the U.S. government toward South Africa.

III

3. The United States does not now have and has never had good relations with the liberation movements of southern Africa. Historically the U.S. has been tied to the colonial regimes, as in the case of Portugal, and has "tilted" toward support of the white minority regimes, as advocated in Henry Kissinger's 1969 National Security Study Memorandum 39. Just as there was not a good relationship between our government and the liberation movements that formed the governments of Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, it has almost wholly neglected relations with the Zimbabwean, Namibian and South African movements. If this policy is continued, the U.S. will again be in a poor position when newly independent governments emerge in southern Africa.

4. Finally, U.S. policy has been based too much on an anticommunist strategy. In his Financial Mail interview Carter again reflected this approach when he said, "As long as the Soviet Union is willing to sponsor aggression and unrest there [in southern Africa], the threat to the U.S. is a serious one." A negative policy cannot lead to real friendship and understanding in Africa. The real key to the U.S. future in Africa lies in developing a policy of supporting the liberation struggle in southern Africa. A Tanzanian government paper, commenting on Kissinger's visit to Tanzania in September, said:

"The American government has said that the U.S.A. is on the side of freedom from racial domination and colonialism in southern Africa. It has said that it will support efforts of a peaceful transfer of power quickly — and Dr. Kissinger says that this is the purpose of his traveling and diplomacy. Why cannot the American government also say that if peaceful transfer of power is impossible because of the intransigence of the racists, then it will be on the side of those who fight for freedom?"

IV

Can confrontation with the Soviet Union be avoided? If present trends continue, it seems unlikely. The conditions for confrontation are present: a southern Africa area of great wealth and strategic location; the U.S. locked into support for the white South African regime through economic investments and loans; a Soviet Union giving aid to liberation movements which will take assistance from wherever they can get it; the U.S. estranged from these movements.

A drastic change in American policy must be achieved if there is to be a friendly relationship between the United States and Africa. Ties with South Africa must be ended. There must be a reversal of the trend to give increased financial assistance and economic aid to racist South Africa. There must be better relations established with the movements that will form the governments of independent countries in southern Africa. If the U.S. does not radically change its policy, it will gradually lose out in southern Africa. And this will not be because the continent has gone communist, but rather because the U.S. fails to reckon with the dynamics of African nationalism and the struggle for independence.

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