STUDENT ACTIVISTS FACE DEATH THREATS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

At the University of Texas in Austin the Steve Biko Committee has been spearheading a strong movement for divestment and in support of the liberation struggle in southern Africa. This effort has been led by students from the Black Student Alliance who have been stressing the importance of linking the struggle to racism in this country. In response a well organized, anonymous racist group has been waging what one organizer termed "a constant, detailed psychological warfare against black students, particularly Randy Bowman, head of the Black Student Alliance." This warfare has taken the form of break-ins and physical assaults by thugs wearing Ronald Reagan masks. In the latest incident two such thugs broke into Randy Bowman's room and attempted to push him out his window, from the 8th floor. Earlier a pitcher of lemonade in his refrigerator had been poisoned. As Derrick Eugene of the Steve Biko Committee put it: "The Administration response to this intimidation campaign has been minimal. There have been no public statements abhorring this racist violence. We need all the support we can get."

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BERKELEY STUDENTS PREVENT UNLOADING OF SOUTH AFRICAN CARGO

At 5:30am on March 10, 200 Berkeley campus activists began a blockade of a dock in San Francisco harbor where South African goods were due to be unloaded. Despite police efforts the protesters held their ground and were able to prevent any cargo from being unloaded that day. This was an important act of solidarity with anti-apartheid longshoremen who had refused to unload South African cargo for 11 days last year, but now are enjoined from picketing at the San Francisco docks. The longshoremen respected the blockade which had been organized by the UC Berkeley Campaign Against Apartheid. The blockaders returned next morning, but 300 policemen surrounded them and arrested 60 in the course of clearing the dock. By preventing the cargo from being unloaded for a whole day, the protesters cost the shipper a considerable amount of money. Beyond that the action set a precedent for future blockades of South African cargo, and has given momentum for City Council initiatives to bar unloading of South African cargo in San Francisco. Escalated protest is planned at the Berkeley campus for the National Anti-Apartheid Weeks of Action, March 21-April 6.

For information call: (415) 653-8251, or (415) 849-9190.

TOTAL DIVESTMENT VICTORIES CONTINUE

Responding to growing student pressure, Seattle University trustees voted on February 28 to sell all holdings in firms that do business in South Africa. The stocks, valued at $2.5 million, will be divested within one year. "I am really happy," said 23-year-old James Gore, a black student who helped lead the campaign to rid the school of the investments. "This shows that students can get together and really do something." On the day of the Trustee vote 200 students rallied for divestment.

At Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, students recently won the battle for total divestment on February 21 when the Trustees voted to sell $5 million in South Africa linked stock. Before the vote over 100 students had braved a rainstorm and held a mock funeral procession and rally outside the Trustees' meeting. This year the University of Minnesota Foundation ($5,000,000) and Roosevelt University have also adopted total divestment policies, making it 27 schools that have moved to total divestment since April 1985 - with over $191 million being affected.
CHARGES DROPPED AGAINST PROTESTERS

School administrations appear cautious about pressing legal and disciplinary charges against students who have engaged in civil disobedience action. Despite the increased use of threats and bulldozing of shantytowns, actual punishment of anti-apartheid students seems to be bad public relations. For example, at Cornell University, where over 1200 students have been arrested, all legal and disciplinary charges have been dropped against protesters. Similarly, at UC Berkeley, site of militant sit-ins and 400 arrests, legal and disciplinary action has also halted this year. This stands in contrast to the treatment of four State University of New York students who were jailed for a week last Fall - a key development in the successful struggle for total divestment at SUNY.

CAMPUS ACTION UPDATES

On February 25 200 students at Smith College (Northampton, Mass) began a blockade and sit-in at College Hall, the main administration building, demanding total divestment. The blockade lasted five days, and ended when protesters got an agreement for a moratorium of classes on March 6 and reconsideration of policy by the Smith trustees. In the course of the action and its aftermath 20 students engaged in a nine-day divestment fast. According to activist Allyson Cole: "This political activity at Smith was a victory itself." Students at Smith College are convinced that such direct action protests directly help discourage U.S. investment in South Africa - whether the trustees vote for divestment or not.

At Brown University, following a day-long sit-in for divestment on February 25, four students began a fast that lasted nine days and helped set the stage for escalated activity. Students reported that the Administration attempted to intimidate private physicians into not monitoring the fasters' health. In addition, a final year medical student was ordered to "cease and desist" assisting the monitoring effort. These actions were significant because the Administration threatened to remove the fasters from school on health grounds. On March 7 several hundred Brown students held an all-day divestment rally criticising the administration in which the American Committee on Africa, New England Student Coalition and the American Friends Service Committee participated. The fasters ended their fast the next day and began preparing for further escalation.

In late January right-wing students attacked the Dartmouth College shanties after they had stood for two months on the campus green. The Administration then ordered them dismantled on the grounds of their "divisive" effect on the campus. In response, activists moved one shanty from the main green to the front of President McLaughlin's office and left the other in place. In mid-February the Administration moved in on the shanties and, in the course of seeking to prevent their removal, 18 students were arrested. The charges have since been dropped. To kick off the Weeks of Action on March 21, the Dartmouth Coalition will cosponsor a rally with the United Steel Workers at which a shanty structure will be placed in front of Phelps Dodge headquarters in downtown New York. The protesters will demand that Phelps Dodge chairman George Munroe resign from the Dartmouth College Trustee board because of his company's South African operations and hardline anti-unionism in this country.

Following their 15-day sit-in, students at the University of Pennsylvania engaged in daily disruptions at administrative offices this month, and plan further escalation for the Weeks of Action. At Brandeis University students had maintained a shanty for over five weeks before the school tore it down in early March. In response students blockaded the main administration building for several hours.

REGIONAL STUDENT CONFERENCES HELD IN THE SOUTH, MIDWEST AND NORTHEAST

Beginning February 26 a historic Southern Regional Student Conference was held at Atlanta University. Atlanta Students Against Apartheid and Racism organized the event which brought together 30 activists from over 10 southern states. The conference established an ongoing anti-apartheid network and campaign against Coca-Cola. A January Northeast Regional Conference attracted 175 participants to Trinity College in Hartford and focused on racism and coordinated spring action. On February 8 a Midwest Material Aid Conference was held at the University of Michigan, and on April 19-20 there will be a Midwest Conference on Namibia at Purdue University. For information write: PAN PURDUE, UNIVERSITY CHURCH, 320 NORTH STR, W. LAFAYETTE IND 47906.

PROTESTS AGAINST US AID TO UNITA IN ANGOLA

In late January Jonas Savimbi, head of the South African sponsored UNITA grouping in Angola, came to the United States to drum up US support. Many students joined protest demonstrations to greet him in New York City and Washington DC. Further demonstrations against US aid to UNITA ($15 million has been sent) will occur between March 20-23 to kick off the Weeks of Action in Washington DC, New York City, Austin, Atlanta, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Honolulu.
ADMINISTRATION STRATEGIES AGAINST STUDENT ANTI-APARTHEID ORGANIZING

In response to intensified student protest, campus administrators and Trustees have been developing more sophisticated approaches to undercutting the student movement. These policies have been developed with the support of US corporations and the US State Department and parallel their efforts to prevent an end to corporate economic dominance in a post-apartheid South Africa.

There have been two basic components to the administration counterstrategy:
1) Scholarship programs for Black South Africans and 2) Conditional "total" divestment.

1) Scholarship Programs

Across the country school administrations have been actively promoting scholarship programs for Black South Africans to study in South African or American universities. The Rand Corporation helped organize a Fall 1985 conference to launch the concept of such "positive" action and in January 1986 the Johnson Foundation attempted to enlist student and further Administration support through another conference. While invited students denounced the effort, the New England Board of Higher Education has taken it up as have schools across the country.

What could possibly be wrong with what appears to be a well-intentioned effort?

First of all, these "positive" programs are often explicitly promoted as an alternative to "negative" divestment demands. State Department representatives have been publicly stressing this view, and corporate investors in South Africa have pointed to their scholarship contributions as evidence of their positive role in "ending apartheid". Secondly, the effort is geared to developing a small Black elite which will be sympathetic to American and general corporate interests. It does not begin to address the overall question of ending apartheid and the deliberate denial of education to millions of Black South Africans.

For example, the chances of a white South African attending college are about 100 times greater than those of a Black. Although Africans account for 71% of the population they represented a mere 11% of the university student population in 1982. Whites, who constitute 16% of the population had 76% representation at the university level. Access to higher education is hampered by the deliberately inferior elementary and secondary education for Blacks in South Africa. Behind the inferior curriculum, buildings, equipment and teacher training are low Government expenditure rates on Black education — on the average ten times less than on white education. This general disadvantage reflects itself in the progressively declining success rates of Black students at the twelfth grade level. Scholarship programs affecting a tiny percentage of Black students do nothing to end the structural inequality of education at all levels under apartheid. Their irrelevance is underscored by the fact that American universities have offered twice as many scholarships as there are Black South African students available for placement.

In light of this, these programs have not been supported or initiated by the main progressive Black student organizations: the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) (the high school level organization), AZASO and AZASUM (the university level groups), or NUSAS, the principal white university student organization. Such scholarship programs foster false solutions to the problems confronting Black South African students. For example, COSAS is a banned organization and its priority is on ending the repression in the schools and townships generally. For COSAS members university scholarships are irrelevant not only till the organization is unbanned, but till the conditions necessitating student protest activity are abolished. If COSAS members and other activists refuse to participate, who but the most "moderate" students would be selected for scholarships? In addition, such programs will not be administered by progressive student groups themselves, but in South Africa by largely white school administrations. Corporations are particularly interested in these efforts, given the vocational stress of the programs.

Recognizing the inadequacy of these academic/corporate plans, students are developing alternative approaches. Sending aid to educational projects administered by the African National Congress and sponsored by the United Nations is one alternative to the scholarship approach.

In terms of specific projects, there is the ANC's Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania and in Angola SWAPO education projects for thousands of young Namibian refugees.

Student groups have found that asking universities to fund liberation movement projects maintains political initiative since it challenges their paternalistic approach to change in southern Africa. This paternalism is also expressed through the argument that corporations can be a force for change in South Africa. Apart from challenging the universities' political approach, even the partial achievement of this demand can raise significant amounts of money desperately needed for these progressive educational projects.
2) Conditional "total" Divestment

Numerous schools have been following a similar strategy in countering demands for total divestment of South Africa linked stock. The general approach has been to:

a) Make a firm commitment to divest of companies not in the two highest categories of Sullivan Code signatories;

b) To state a general commitment to divest the remaining companies, contingent on developments in South Africa (in some cases by a given date).

Such an approach poses a challenge to organizers, since at first it might seem that total divestment has been achieved. Students are responding firmly to these policies:

i) First of all, there is ample evidence that partial divestment based on Sullivan Code compliance is ineffective. The companies rated in the top two Sullivan Code categories are the most strategic supporters of apartheid, including IBM, General Motors, Ford, Mobil, Fluor, Control Data and Citibank. The logical place to start a phased divestment plan is with these companies, not with non-compliers to a public relations code that hasn't stopped the sale to the regime of a single computer, truck, or drop of oil.

ii) There are differences in the policies of schools which have made a conditional commitment to total divestment. Regardless of these differences students have taken the position that they want an unconditional commitment to total divestment to be implemented in a specified time frame (at most three years). The problem with a policy contingent on developments in South Africa, is that it is always subject to interpretation. Such a policy can put a check on student organizing, while still leaving the critical decision of divestment in Trustee hands.

For example, at Vassar College the trustees agreed to immediately divest of companies not achieving high ratings under the Sullivan Code. Divestment would occur of the remaining stocks (the most strategic investors in South Africa) in three years in the absence of "significant change". This formulation leaves undefined what is meant by "significant change" and seems designed to cool student protest for several years.

At Swarthmore College the Trustees at their March 1 meeting enunciated support for total divestment but only if it can be accomplished prudently and if apartheid has not been ended. There was a commitment to set a timetable at their May meeting. First of all, the trustees did not define what it means to "end apartheid" and will only set a timetable after classes have ended. In addition, the Swarthmore President was quite upset over press reports that implied an unconditional divestment and has since been stressing its conditional character. While some students initially felt that divestment had been won, the mood has changed and Swarthmore activists are gearing up for more protest.

At Bryn Mawr the Trustees unequivocally committed the school to divest poor performers under the Sullivan Code, while continuing to hold onto the most strategic investors who, it is claimed, are "actively opposing apartheid". Students responded by blockading the trustees into their February 25 meeting, forcing them to exit through the windows. The students were unsatisfied with a commitment to divest remaining holdings beginning December 1986 if "the Board finds no evidence that apartheid is being dismantled". In making this determination the Board is to examine whether these "active" companies are being effective in dismantling the "pillars" of apartheid: influx control, the group areas act, and the denial of universal franchise.

There are more specifics here than at Swarthmore, but there is still ample room for interpretation, especially since one might find some evidence of "dismantling" and Blacks would still not have full political rights. In addition, students question the seriousness of a divestment policy that not only leaves the most strategic investors untouched for a year, but claims that they actively oppose apartheid. But there is a more fundamental political reason why any conditional divestment is unacceptable:

Above all, divestment is not an end in itself but simply a means to help force corporate withdrawal from South Africa. Student protests, irrespective of Trustee decisions, have directly helped force a 10% drop in US corporate investment over the past year, and the announced withdrawal by 28 US companies. That is why student protests are likely to escalate unless the Trustee commitment is to unconditional total divestment, with implementation to be completed within a fixed time.