Twice in the last four years hundreds of thousands of Black South Africans have joined in mass actions demanding an end to the apartheid system, which defines them as non-persons in their own country. Under apartheid Blacks are not citizens but labor units, controlled by the economy’s need for labor. When the white-owned mines, farms and factories run out of jobs, Blacks find themselves driven from the 87% of South Africa classified as white, back into tiny reservations, where they have no way to support themselves. No Blacks in South Africa can vote, choose a job freely, buy a house or be certain of living peacefully with husband, wife or children.

That is apartheid. It is not, say Blacks, a system that can be patched up or reformed into acceptability. They are determined to destroy it completely, replacing it with a society in which all men and women, irrespective of color, will be able to participate fully.

The courage Black South Africans have shown in pursuing their freedom in the face of police bullets, mass arrests, torture and constant harassment has won them new American allies in student, union, black, church and other communities. These Americans looked to see whether there were US structures buttressing the apartheid system. They found the US corporations. Several hundred such companies now supply critical capital, sophisticated technology and vital equipment to a system which, in turn, rewards them with profits much greater than they can earn at home.

By 1980, US investment and loans had grown to an estimated $5 billion. Opposition to such investment, both inside the country and among US activists has also grown. Some US businessmen now believe their plants may become the battlegrounds of the future. “Foreign companies are going to be the target,” Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co.’s South African managing director told a Business Week reporter this fall. Other executives dealing with South Africa talk openly about the mounting “hassle factor” they have to contend with as groups mobilize to get the corporations to stop supporting apartheid.

In spite of these dangers and pressures, US companies are not yet ready to retire from the field. Business Week reported, “Some US companies are finding that their South African holdings are among their more profitable — estimated payback for many companies is just five years...opportunities for expansion there are nearly irresistible.”

Rather than withdraw, US companies have launched an energetic public relations campaign to persuade their opponents that economic growth is producing reform, that apartheid is crumbling, and that the corporations are playing a vital role in the whole process.
The South African government encourages such talk of "reforms" as it tries to promote an image of itself as a flexible institution bent on change. But the limits of its flexibility are clearly delineated. Describing "my vision for the next ten years in South Africa", Prime Minister P.W. Botha recently told white students that "one man one vote in a unitarian state was out..." "Not now, not ever," he told a group of Black leaders.

Examined closely, the reforms turn out to be mechanisms for streamlining and modernizing the system of apartheid, making it more responsive to the needs of an economy which now requires skilled labor for its sophisticated production lines and fewer pick and shovel workers.

The reforms suggested by US corporations under the Sullivan banner fit neatly into this context. They avoid dealing with the overriding problem of white power and Black subservience, the real issue of apartheid, and confine themselves to proposals for "equal opportunity" type improvements inside the factory gates. Even at that level they are woefully inadequate and rely on the word of the corporation as to the progress being made. The whole procedure is somewhat akin to asking the fox to report on its behavior among the chickens.

But Black criticism of US involvement reaches far beyond the Sullivan principles and whether these are effectively implemented on the factory floor, to the fundamental issue of who really gains from this corporate presence in South Africa.

It is a crime called terrorism—punishable by a minimum five years in jail—to call for foreign companies to pull their investments out of South Africa. Yet despite such penalties Blacks have found powerful ways of voicing their views without breaking the law. A year ago, Bishop Tutu, a leading Black churchman and Secretary-General of the South African Council of Churches, commented on the issue to a reporter, "Some say that if we get out of South Africa, others will invest. I want to say very respectfully that the moral turpitude of that argument is breath-taking. It's like saying, 'Hey, your wife is going to be raped and if I don't, someone else is waiting.'"

Those are strong words for a Bishop. They reflect the passions generated among Blacks by the continuing presence of US and other foreign companies in South Africa. This presence is seen as providing economic, political and strategic support to the apartheid system in ways which can only raise enormously the cost in Black lives as the struggle to achieve liberation intensifies.

The following is a small sampling of the many voices now calling for an end to all US investment in South Africa.

**THE SOUTH AFRICANS:**

"I firmly believe if disinvestment could start it could bring a hastened end to apartheid. Perhaps an exodus of American companies from South Africa could bring about change."


"I appeal to South Africa's strongest allies, Britain and America. In the name of what we have come to believe Britain and America stand for, I appeal to those two powerful countries to take decisive action for full-scale action for sanctions that would precipitate the end of the hateful system of apartheid."


"The argument is often made that the loss of foreign investment would hurt Blacks the most. It would undoubtedly hurt Blacks in the short run, because many of them would stand to lose their jobs. But it should be understood in Europe and North America that foreign investment supports the present economic system of political injustice... If Washington is really interested in contributing to the development of a just society in South Africa, it would discourage investment in South Africa. We Blacks are perfectly willing to suffer the consequences! We are quite accustomed to suffering."

"If I said that the only way to bring change would be total economic sanctions, I would be liable to go to jail. So let's just be cagey. Let's just say that I support 'pressures,' and leave it at that."


"What we in the ANC want to see is what the people of South Africa want to see—our people are not only ready and willing to accept the consequences of action against the regime on the economic front, but they have themselves demanded the total political, economic, cultural and military isolation of the racist regime. We demand total isolation of the racist regime—no investment and withdrawal of existing investment."


"...disengagement might not itself deal lusty economic blows against a very wealthy country such as South Africa, but it will deal a firm psychological blow against the structure and the system of apartheid. The white government in South Africa is terribly conscious of world opinion—it affects not to be, but it is extremely conscious of it..."

* Donald Woods, South African editor, in remarks at Yale University reported in the Yale Graduate Professional, February 3, 1978.

"Advocates of continued investment claim that if foreign investors withdraw this would result in large scale unemployment of Blacks. Withdrawal can only mean the downfall of the Vorster regime... Black people in general are prepared to suffer any consequences if this means ultimate Black freedom...

Foreign investors claim their presence in this country contributes toward the development of the Black community. This claim is disputed by the reality of the Black experience in this country. We resolve therefore...

To call upon foreign investors to disengage themselves from this white-controlled exploitative system."

"Governmental insistence on enforcing apartheid and its rejection of normal negotiation with freely chosen Black leaders, have produced a situation in which there are few ways of preventing the escalation of violence and bloodshed into a major confrontation. One of the few remaining methods of working peacefully is through economic pressure, which could help to motivate the changes needed to bring justice and peace in South Africa. The Christian Institute therefore supports the call for no further investment in South Africa because:

1. Strong economic pressure is of vital importance in bringing about as peaceful a solution as possible.
2. Investment in South Africa is investment in apartheid, and this is immoral, unjust and exploitative.
3. Attempts to change the situation through pressure by investors have proved inadequate.
4. The argument that economic growth can produce fundamental change has proven false. Many Black organizations have opposed foreign investment in South Africa, and this would be the opinion of the majority of South African Blacks if their voices could be heard."


**Note:** The African National Congress was banned in 1960, Steve Biko was killed while in police custody in September 1977. The Black People's Convention and the Christian Institute were among many organizations and individuals banned by the South African government in October, 1977. Dr. Nthato Moltana was detained at that time. He was released in March 1978. Donald Woods was banned at that time and now lives in exile. Tozamile Botha, detained and banned in 1980, escaped into exile.

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**U.S. Churches:**

"Resolved, That the American Lutheran Church again express its unequivocal rejection of apartheid and all other forms of racial discrimination in our own society as well as in other nations, and declare apartheid to be a matter of 'status confessionis'; and be it further

Resolved, That the ALC again declare its strong commitment to work for the elimination of these abhorrent evils and to support those who suffer under such oppression through unremitting prayer and deliberate action; and be it further

Resolved, That the ALC declare its judgement that at this moment in history in South Africa, divestiture is the most legitimate strategy in opposing apartheid and the most effective consequence of a declaration of 'status confessionis.'"

*Resolution adopted by American Lutheran Church in convention, October 4, 1980.*

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**Black Americans:**

"The United States should take measures to sever all economic, diplomatic, political and cultural relations with South Africa. These measures should include a ban on new investment by United States companies, a program of tax penalties designed to require withdrawal of current investments, a ban on new bank loans to South African borrowers, and termination of all exportation to and importation from South Africa."

*The National Black Agenda for the '80's. Adopted March 2, 1980, in Richmond, Va., by more than 1,000 Black leaders representing over 300 organizations.*
"The NAACP should call upon US corporations to withdraw their investments in South Africa... The conduct of American firms to date... has failed to make a significant impact on the elimination of the total concept of apartheid... The NAACP should maintain its call for economic sanctions against South Africa until all vestiges of apartheid are eliminated."

* NAACP policy proposal adopted by the Board of Directors January 16, 1980.

"We believe, without qualification, that the United States should unilaterally totally disinvest its corporate money and break all connection with South Africa."


"This policy of 'friendly persuasion' is a myth. The United States has used that argument for years to justify its refusal to support United Nations sanctions against South Africa. I think they have to be isolated in the world. I think that there are 35 million Black people in this country who support that and their view ought to stand for something in US foreign policy."


U.S. Trade Unions:

"Since the AFL-CIO has repeatedly called for an end to the system of apartheid practiced by the government of South Africa, it is deplorable that the subjugation and repression of the non-white citizens of South Africa by a white minority government has escalated... US corporations should immediately divest themselves of South African affiliates, and sever all ties with South African corporations."


"We have no illusions that the relatively small holdings our trusts have in those corporations are going to cause a major turnabout in their activities in South Africa. We do think, however, that it is incumbent upon our union and other organizations sharing our point of view to keep the pressure on.

Most important, our members have every right to insist that pension money negotiated by the union and held in trust on their behalf be used wisely, morally and in ways that are socially useful and reflect their interests."


"We of the CBTU... Call upon the American trade union movement to withdraw their bank accounts including pension funds from banks that make loans to South Africa and also from banks that loan money to companies that invest in South Africa."


"Apartheid provides a powerful incentive for US companies to make South Africa a haven for runaway plants. It is the interest and obligation of American unionists to fight the corporations' immoral support for the racist South African regime."

* United Radio, Electrical and Machine Workers Union, resolution adopted by 1977 national convention. The union withdrew a $4 million payroll account from Chase Manhattan Bank, a major lender to South Africa.

"Loans and investments from the United States that prop up South Africa's repressive regime are an insult to all Americans who believe in justice and fair play."

* Leon Davis, President, District 1199, National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, RWDSU/AFL-CIO, January 29, 1978, after the adoption of a resolution mandating that "no pension funds should be invested in any manner that would financially assist or aid or support the present government or economy of South Africa."

City and State:

"The Legislature of the State of Nebraska declares that investment of Nebraska state funds in institutions which support the apartheid system of South Africa is contrary to Nebraska's principles of human rights and social equality and calls on the Nebraska Investment Council to remove from the approved list for investment of Nebraska trust funds corporations and banks that invest in South Africa."

* Nebraska State Legislature, adopted March 31, 1980.

"The people of Berkeley, California declare that public monies should be removed from banks and other financial institutions doing business in or with South Africa and reinvested according to a policy that takes ethical, social and economic considerations into full account."

* Referendum passed in Berkeley, California, April 17, 1979.
"RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES (The Senate concurring) That the Michigan Legislature urge the Congress of the United States and the President of the United States to impose immediate sanctions against the South African government in response to that country’s disregard for human rights and dignity."


Other Voices:

"Although we realize that one agency cannot materially affect socio-economic change in South Africa, numerous other agencies and institutions are also taking similar affirmative action. As our collective voice grows stronger, we hope that our influence will be felt and that the path to freedom and equality will be made a little easier for those suffering under the yoke of apartheid."

- Joyce Phillips Austin, Executive Vice President, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, following that organization’s decision to divest its portfolio of all stocks in corporations doing business in South Africa, March 4, 1980.

"After a two-week stay in South Africa I concluded that to invest in this country is to boost the confidence of the Whites, to secure perhaps decades of further humiliation for Blacks and, in effect, to support ideals that run completely counter to the democracy of which Americans are rightly so proud. To suggest, I concluded, that by investing in South Africa one is helping to bring about change and the improvement of the condition of Blacks is to seek an excuse for supporting racists because it is financially profitable."


"US policy... cannot cling to the naive notion that international economic forces are, or can be expected to be, agents of change. At most such forces will bring a certain number of Africans into the existing system, perpetuating thereby a degree of Western control that cannot help but result in continued internal and potentially international conflict."

- George Houser, executive director, American Committee on Africa, Christianity and Crisis, September 9, 1977.

"In my judgement, financial support of apartheid should no longer be tolerated. The current policy of the United States Government should be changed from one of neither encouraging nor discouraging foreign investment in South Africa to one of active discouragement."


"Everyone who invests in South Africa is voluntarily involving himself in organized theft. Everyone who buys South African apples, or wine, or gold or any other goods, is benefiting from the brutality and exploitation suffered by the non-whites of South Africa under the present system."

- Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania, in an address to the Paasikivi Society of Finland, quoted in Christianity and Crisis, March 13, 1978.

International Organizations:

"The General Assembly... calls on all Governments concerned
a) To sever diplomatic, military, nuclear, economic and other relations with the racist regime of South Africa;
b) To take measures to prevent transnational corporations, banks and other institutions under their jurisdiction from collaborating with the apartheid regime;
c) To take all necessary action to terminate credits by the International Monetary Fund and other bodies to South Africa;
d) To prohibit the sale of krugerrands;
e) To deny any facilities to airlines or ships traveling to and from South Africa;
f) To terminate all government promotion of, or assistance to, trade with or investment in South Africa;
g) To support effective international sanctions against the racist regime of South Africa."


"The Council... finds that the measures adopted by the Apartheid regime in the wake of the United Nations mandatory arms embargo renders foreign companies operating in South Africa to being integrated into the Apartheid regime’s military programme. Already such western corporations provide South Africa with virtually all of its petroleum, computer, automotive, and high technology supplies. Hence any action short of total western corporate withdrawal would be inadequate."