October 1981

Dear Friend,

In late August, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Chester Crocker, made a major address elaborating the Reagan administration's policy on Africa, in which he proclaimed U.S. neutrality regarding development in South Africa. "...It is not our task to choose between black and white," he said. "We will not lend our voice to support those dedicated to seizing and holding power through violence..."

A review of recent events in South Africa reveals the increased repression of the apartheid regime and the growing determination of the majority black population to achieve justice and liberation. The new U.S. policy needs to be examined in light of these developments.

SQUATTERS EVICTED

There is a camp with no name outside Cape Town where squatters had settled in crude shelters to escape the rain and cold of winter. Some were long time residents of the area, others more recent arrivals from two black reservations, the Transkei and Ciskei. All were in the area because of economic necessity. It is impossible for most people in the rural reserves to avoid starvation unless they have at least one family member working in the Cape or in a Transvaal mine. Wives and children come to live with their husbands and fathers to avoid the isolation, hunger, and unemployment of the reserves. But in apartheid South Africa, most blacks are breaking some law by coming to town, so many of the squatters are "illegal" in official eyes.
The government has had a running battle with the squatters, knocking down their homes with bulldozers. The people rebuilt, using plastic sheets, and the police burned the plastic hovels to the ground. Finally at dawn on August 19, the police moved in, arresting more than 2,000 men, women, and children, deporting them to the areas in the bush that cannot support them. Many will return to the city, and the brutal process will begin all over again.

Commenting on the removals, Minister of Cooperation and Development Pieter Koornhof said the problems had arisen because of concessions he had made in the past to illegal migrants. "I am too human," he said. "That is the problem."

DEATH FOR FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Three men were recently sentenced to death in South Africa. All were members of the outlawed black political organization, the African National Congress, and all are alleged to have been involved in acts of sabotage. No one died from their alleged actions as property, not people, was the target. The men were sentenced to die nonetheless for they dared to take action against the inhuman system imposed on them and their fellow black South Africans.

Johannes Shabangu, David Moise, and Anthony Tsotsoabe had been held under the Terrorism Act which permits the state to detain suspects indefinitely without charge and without access to lawyers or relatives.

All three were convicted on the basis of "confessions" extracted under torture. Johannes Shabangu was hung head down by his leg irons from a tree during his interrogation. Anthony Tsotsoabe was stripped, and a wet sack was pulled tightly over his head making breathing extremely difficult, while he was beaten with a hosepipe.

Reflecting the same kind of courage which prevented the squatters from surrendering to bulldozers, dogs, and policemen, each day of their lengthy trial, including the day of their sentencing, the men entered the court singing freedom songs.

SOUTH AFRICAN AGGRESSION

In July, the South African defence budget for 1981-82, of $2.7 billion, was announced, representing a 40% increase in military spending.

In August, that military might was used in a major invasion of Angola. The attack was made in an attempt to destroy SWAPO (Southwest African Peoples' Organization), and to punish Angola for its continuing support for
the Namibian liberation struggles. SWAPO, fighting for Namibian independence from South Africa, enjoys full international recognition as the authentic representative of the Namibian people. Because South Africa knows that SWAPO would win a free election in Namibia, it is determined that those elections not take place, and has continually put obstacles in the way of a proposed UN settlement.

The South African invasion penetrated 120 miles into Angola, occupied six Angolan towns, bombed villages to smithereens, and left more than 1,000 people dead.

**U.S. NEUTRALITY**

When the United Nations Security Council voted to condemn the South African invasion into Angola, the U.S., acting alone, vetoed the resolution. When its European Allies tried to organize a condemnation of the squatter evictions outside Cape Town, the U.S. refused to cooperate. Neutrality in relation to South Africa condones the brutal acts of the apartheid government. The declared U.S. policy of not supporting those who “seize and hold power through violence” actually upholds the apartheid government which has seized and continues to hold power in Namibia and South Africa through violence.

Typical reservation or "bantustan" to which squatters are sent.
South Africa's powerful propaganda seems to have worked on U.S. government officials. The South African government is expanding its efforts in the U.S., opening a number of new consulates throughout the country that will propagate the racist line. The Africa Fund has taken on the responsibility of presenting the facts which cut through that propaganda. Daily, staff members give out information on the phone, in letters and articles, and people come in regularly to use the Fund's extensive files. In the past few weeks for example, we answered questions about racial discrimination in South African sport for journalists covering the South African rugby tour. We assisted trade unionists concerned about the investment of their pension funds with facts about the support given to South Africa by U.S. bank loans. We also helped a staff member of the National Council of Churches Human Rights Office with material for their newsletter. With your continued support we will be able to carry on our work, work which has an added urgency because of events in the U.S. as well as in South Africa.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Davis
Executive Secretary