

In Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), Namibia (South-West Africa) and South Africa, people are struggling for goals with which we in the American Friends Service Committee unite. These include the ending of white minority rule, the elimination of exploitation and discrimination against black Africans, and the construction of just, non-racist societies. As a Friends organization, the AFSC desires to see these goals achieved in a just and nonviolent manner.

In view of the escalating armed struggle in the region, it is important to recall that for a great many years the blacks of South Africa, under the Nobel Peace Prize winner, Chief Albert Luthuli, undertook a heroic nonviolent effort to achieve freedom and racial equality. The final response of the government of South Africa to the "Defiance Campaigns" was the brutal and bloody Sharpeville massacre of 1960. This indiscriminate slaughter of defenseless people moved their grieving leaders to the conviction that they must henceforth respond to violence with violence. That violent interaction has persisted to the present.

We see the present governments of Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa as defenders of minority rule and white privilege, resorting to police brutality and imprisonment of their opposition, and ready to use armed violence to maintain the status quo. Such policies and practices are an abomination by any moral or democratic standard.

We take note that for years the U.S. government paid relatively little attention to the plight of black Africans in southern Africa, and in fact maintained a record of official government backing for the white supremacy governments and support of the corporate and financial interests of those countries, from which black Africans draw little benefit. Now, with considerable public attention given to its actions, the U.S. government is stressing the seriousness of the crises in southern Africa and undertaking diplomatic initiatives.

We welcome official declarations of opposition to racist oppression and minority rule. Such declarations are consistent with the high moral and democratic principles which should be the basis of U.S. policy throughout the world. There is no escaping the fact, however, that our government's actions are significantly motivated by a desire to sustain political equilibrium in the area, to assist Western economic and political interests, to forestall Soviet or other socialist nations' involvement in the area, and to eliminate indigenous radical movements.

That U.S. investment continues to grow in the region; that there is competition among the major powers for political alliances and strategic advantages in that region, as in others; that the U.S. and Western powers have supplied arms to these governments and have established other military and intelligence links: all are reasons to believe that a main purpose of the recently announced policies is to protect U.S. national, financial and corporate interests in southern Africa.

In light of the U.S. record of strong relationships with South Africa, it is necessary to ask: will the U.S. government now match its practice to its recent expressions of concern for human freedom and majority rule? Will it throw its weight into supporting a nonviolent process for the majority populations to achieve self-government, civil rights, human dignity and a full share in the wealth and power of the country? In the balance is the question of whether the current U.S. policies express the genuine commitment of our government or are essentially hypocritical.

South Africa's government itself has vigorously sought to involve the United States and the West in its strategies for self-preservation and to win world acceptance.

For some years we have called upon our government to dissociate itself from the repressive racism of Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa, as well as to eliminate it in our own society. The need becomes ever more urgent. So long as U.S. corporate and governmental policies help undergird institutionalized racism in southern Africa, the prospects for violence of catastrophic dimensions in the region grow stronger, while the prospects for nonviolent change diminish.

As steps to enhance the prospects for nonviolent change in southern Africa, we urge:

1. That the United States appeal to the white governments of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa to accede to and cooperate with a program for transition to majority government in Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa, in the course of which the present governments will resign.

2. That the United States notify the present governments in these countries that it will send no U.S. troops or military aid to southern Africa in support of either governments or liberation movements, will refrain from U.S. arms sales either overtly or by intermediary countries or through institutions like NATO, and will work vigorously to achieve an international arms embargo of Rhodesia and South Africa.

3. That the United States refrain from all covert actions in the area or in association with South African intelligence agencies.

4. That it be the policy of U.S. economic institutions, as long as there is white minority rule in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, to withdraw totally from economic involvement in these countries and, failing such voluntary withdrawal that Congress enact legislation to bring it about.

We recognize that in themselves these steps will not guarantee a nonviolent transition to freedom, self-determination and majority rule in southern Africa. Therefore, we express the fervent hope that the people leading the white regimes in southern Africa will honorably and peacefully accept what the rest of the world views as desirable and inevitable: the emergence of majority governments in these countries. But, even if we cannot be certain of such action by the present rulers of these countries, we believe it to be right for the United States to cease henceforth all government and private activity which prolongs the existence of an unacceptable state of affairs in southern Africa.

The AFSC's interest in and concern for the people of southern Africa are of long standing. Our representatives were based in that area from 1957 to 1967, with community service projects in Zambia from 1964 to the present affirming AFSC concern for the future of that troubled region. Since 1974 Bill Sutherland has served as a special Southern Africa Representative, devoting one half his time to supporting and listening to people as they struggle for justice and freedom in Africa, and the other half to interpreting the issues and kindling active interest among Americans.

Earlier this year the AFSC decided to expand its educational efforts in this

country. With the addition of full-time staff in the national office a heightened awareness of the grim and unjust situation in southern Africa is being generated through our forty regional, area, and field offices. We hope that those who agree with our position feel moved to take appropriate action directed toward government, corporate, and financial institutions.

One small but concrete indication of our earnestness is that in August 1976 we sold all of the Mobil Oil Company stock we held. This was done pending investigations of press reports and the report of the Center for Social Action of the United Church of Christ that Mobil had through its affiliates in southern Africa sold petroleum products to Rhodesia -- a transaction which, if it took place as charged, contravened both United Nations sanctions and U.S. law.

Approved by  
AFSC Board of Directors:  
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