

International Freedom Mobilization

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News

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"APARTHEID - AN AFRICAN VIEW"

COMPLETE TEXT OF ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY:

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SECRETARY-GENERAL, ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES, NAIROBI

AT THE SUMMIT CONFERENCE OF BLACK RELIGIOUS LEADERS ON APARTHEID

Sponsored by the International Freedom Mobilization

1:30 P.M. - TUESDAY, APRIL 17, 1979

at the United Nations Church Center,
777 United Nations Plaza, New York City, N.Y.

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Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like, first of all, to congratulate the organizers of this "International Freedom Mobilization" and particularly my good friend Rev. Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker and his staff. The response by so many of you to come here today and over these next two days to grapple with the urgent crisis in Southern Africa is encouraging and timely.

Here in New York, we are exactly seven hours behind Central and Southern Africa time. This means that at this very moment, the returns of the first day's farcical elections in Southern Rhodesia are being collected and counted. This singular coincidence lends special significance to our gathering. As all of you are aware, for over one year the pro-Apartheid lobby in the U.S. has been mobilized to promote the pseudo-majority rule settlements in Zimbabwe and Namibia. We are one year too late. We are twelve months past the hour of midnight.

We must determine our response in the light of two critical considerations: First, that we are on the verge of a second Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Zimbabwe, this time with African accomplices. It does not require any special revelation from on high or elsewhere to see that the developments in Zimbabwe will, as of this moment, have direct and rapid repercussions in Namibia. The signs of this are already in the wind.

Considering what these developments could do to the posture of the United Nations, and beyond that to the entire international situation at the present time, we have before us a very urgent and demanding responsibility.

The current international economic situation, the open tensions besetting nations throughout the Third World, and the deepening cynicism which nurtures reactionary and racist prejudices throughout the industrialized world, cause me grave alarm.

This trend towards conservatism in the United States and in Western Europe is the second issue that requires our critical consideration. One has only to assess just how far removed we are today from the lofty optimism that marked the first weeks and months of the Carter Administration. But now, Administration spokespersons tell us that "there is no public support in the U.S. for an enlightened policy towards Africa." As a result there is a regression which pretends to be a stalemate.

Let us probe this issue a little in order to try and understand it. All of you can remember just how much we had dared to hope, even if cautiously that the events set in motion by the U.S. becoming an "active partner," with Britain, in the search for a negotiated solution to the problems in Zimbabwe and Namibia would represent a meaningful departure from the hated policies of the Nixon-Kissinger years. But alas, our hopes were tragically misplaced, and in the meantime we have lost precious time. It is now obvious that, parallel to the public posture which our esteemed Ambassador Young was saddled with advancing, there has been a covert policy to strengthen the Southern Rhodesian defense forces and particularly its air force. Let me illustrate: In 1974-75, Southern Rhodesia's total military expenditure stood at \$65-million. By 1977-78 this figure had risen to an alarming \$530-million. Expenditure on the air force rose from \$9.7 million in 1972-73 to over \$60-million in 1977-78. Since it costs so little to increase the manpower establishment of an air force, the major proportion of this increase has certainly gone into aircraft and equipment.

Reliable revelations point to the transfer of major weapons of western manufacture to the Smith regime over the last two years. These include four types of military aircraft: August-Bell 205 helicopters, Cessna-Reims FT337 observation-strike aircraft, Britten-Norman Islander transports and the highly sophisticated Rockwell OV-10 ground attack aircraft. The rebel regime's arsenal has been increased by 12 August-Bell helicopters, at least 20 Cessna-Reims, 4 Rockwell OV-10's and 12 Britten-Norman Islanders.

The versatility and demonstrated effectiveness of each of these types of aircraft have meant a decided change in the "balance of forces" in Zimbabwe. One has only to remember that Mr. Smith was brow-beaten into radically altering his "never in my lifetime" attitude towards majority rule when Henry Kissinger allegedly presented him with U.S. intelligence reports which showed that he could not hope to win the war against the Patriotic Front. But between 1975-76 and 1977-78, all that changed dramatically and quickly, and not without purpose. The increased arms sale to the rebel regime was intended to give Mr. Smith much needed time to set in process his "internal settlement" and prepare the current elections by which to legitimize his "internal settlement" in the eyes of Western public opinion. While his friends in this country and in Europe worked on re-making his image -- from a rebel to a democrat committed to Black "majority rule" -- an image contrasted with that of the leaders of the Patriotic Front as "terrorist," "Communists," "murderers" and such grotesque manipulations, Mr. Smith has been able, not only to produce a military stalemate, but to go on the offensive militarily. If the commando strike, in the heart of Lusaka, clearly designed to murder Mr. Nkomo, last week demonstrated just how secure Mr. Smith is in having the military offensive, I put it to you that the "elections" now under way in the rebel territory will put Mr. Smith on the political offensive.

It is important that we appreciate the fullest dimensions that the

current scenarios in Southern Africa pretend. There are three aspects that I have been able to distinguish. The first, and most widely popularized, is of course the bi-polar "anti-communist" context of U.S. and its western allies' foreign policy. Here the language is that of "linkage" between detente and foreign intervention, meaning Soviet involvement, directly or by proxy, especially in Southern Africa. From this perspective, we can expect to face an even more difficult and hostile public opinion in the West as a result of the "linkage" between the upcoming SALT talks, ratification debate in the U.S. Senate, and the quiet but very firm pressures from the U.S. to give the "popularly elected government" in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe time to live. Horse-trading of votes between supporters of SALT and those who will favour U.S. recognition and lifting of sanctions against Rhodesia-Zimbabwe will be a prominent feature of the political and diplomatic maneuvering in the coming weeks. The situation will become more difficult if, as expected, the Tories win in the British elections two weeks from now, and go on to recognize the Rhodesia-Zimbabwe regime.

The second aspect of what is involved in the current crisis is the doctrine of "regional influentials," popularly associated with Mr. Brezinski's geo-political strategy. In fact, the notion goes back to Mr. Nixon's Goum speech in July 1968, when he proposed the strategy of shifting the responsibility and burden of maintaining stability and pro-Western spheres of interest in the Third World onto middle ranking, deputy hegemonic powers. It was in keeping with this strategy that the options included in the NSSM39 were drawn up and vetted. Following the collapse of a NATO ally, Portugal, in Southern Africa Mr. Kissinger embarked on a policy of co-opting South Africa's Vorster directly into the role of deputy peacekeeper in Southern Africa. The success he achieved in bringing pressure to bear on Mr. Smith and his measured openness in the Namibia negotiations bear testimony of a sort to the strength of his conviction that the "alternative was too ghastly to contemplate."

However, as soon as it became apparent that the resurgent anti-Soviet sentiment was reaching groundswell proportions in the U.S., Mr. Vorster staged his own coup d'etat. He stepped up into the presidency of South Africa and was replaced by Mr. Botha, who had consistently been the most hostile and implacable opponent of a policy of compromise and negotiations over any of the Southern African questions. Today, the propaganda lobby that is pro-South Africa in this country would have us see Mr. Botha as a "liberal" who, even in expelling the diplomatic representatives of the most powerful nation on earth, is "under pressure from the right wing."

As a theologian myself, and especially who has as one of his specialties the analysis of the ideological significance of Dutch Reformed Church Theology on the role which "Civil Religion" in South Africa plays in the Nationalist policy of Apartheid, I am in no doubt that the current leader of the Nationalist Party in the Transvaal, Dr. Truenicht, himself a theologian, who has written substantially on this issue, is an extremist beyond polite description. But so is Mr. Botha. And I interpret the current diplomatic ruffle in U.S.-South African relations as nothing more than a way by which South Africa chooses to remind the U.S. that "we both are on the same side, and if there are things we think you should know, ask us and we will tell you." Beyond that, the intended effect has been adequately demonstrated by William Safire's article on the Op-Ed page of the New York Times yesterday, Monday, April 16.

It is the third aspect of this situation that is the most important. The U.S. and its Western allies are in pursuit of what one must grant is their legitimate self-interest. Military-strategic considerations are part of the wider concern to protect Western capital in Southern Africa and beyond. South Africa's importance to the U.S. and its Western allies lies in its trade, communications, and transport links by means of which the economies of the entire sub-continent are linked to the global capitalist system through multi-

national corporations. Hence the generous support South Africa has received for her policies of dialogue and detente with the rest of Africa; policies which were designed to further extend South African trade links. As part of the campaign to underscore this aspect of South Africa value to domestic and international capitalism, John Burns in a front page New York Times article two weeks ago gave prominence to the alleged extensive outreach of South Africa's commercial, and even "aid" relations with Black African states.

As the "lynchpin" of U.S. and Western geo-political and capitalist strategy in South Africa, the U.S. and its allies are determined that the Apartheid regime be sheltered from the threat of progressive, socialist-oriented governments on her immediate borders. Hence the covert support for so-called "moderate" neo-colonialist regimes in Zimbabwe and Namibia that will remain sympathetic to the interest of international capital in the region.

This is the crux of the issue we face, and no matter how much we say to disguise it by proposing Codes of Conduct or "Principles" which side-step the central issues of Apartheid, as long as South Africa's claim to be a defender of "white, Christian civilization" in Africa, "the last outpost of the white man's mission to civilize the heathen and remain pure"; as long as these claims are buttressed by investments and bank loans from the U.S. and other Western countries, we shall continue to be tricked into false hopes and illusions.

Fortunately, there is a growing tide of protest against continued U.S. corporate involvement in South Africa. The movement for divestiture is gaining force and broad coalitions are being formed in every section of the country as well as in Europe. The cosmetic gestures contrived to obscure the ugliness of Apartheid are every day exposed. Black Americans don't need to be reminded that the talk of increasing Black wages and "equal pay for equal work," improved housing and recreational facilities, all the claims about abolishing "petty Apartheid" are irrelevant when considered in relation to the "Grand Apartheid"

symbolized in the plethora of laws that make Blacks into "temporary sojourners" and "superfluous appendages" in white South Africa. It is desperately essential that we examine the claims by multinational corporations, that they are working to improve the conditions of Blacks in South Africa, against the background of the South African economy as a whole. We will then see that in truth Blacks are excluded from the process of capital accumulation and the economic decision-making that goes with it. The results are that increase in Black wages means the recycling of Black spending into the white economy in the same way it does in the "inner city" in the U.S.; except that in South Africa, laws restricting Black entrepreneurship to the Bantustans, leave open no really viable alternative. Taking this into account, it is legitimate to pose the question whether the MNCs and banks are innovators in social responsibility and measures to undermine Apartheid, or whether they are indeed instruments of government policies for redirecting domestic savings towards the public sector, thereby providing support for projects that are of strategic significance for the survival of white supremacy.

Even if the investment and trade of U.S. corporations and banks are less than 2 per cent of their total U.S. or worldwide involvement, their significance for the South African economy has to be measured in terms of the extent to which their expertise, prestige and power-position facilitate and inspire the confidence South Africa needs to finance her massive investments in military production and self-sufficient industrialization. It should be clear to everyone that if the white population of South Africa were required to make the sacrifices demanded to finance the imports of capital industry and expertise needed to buttress white supremacy, the government would long ago have been compelled to respond positively to Black demands for political participation and the dismantling of the structures of Apartheid. Instead, the burden of financing Apartheid and carrying it through the crises subsequent to Soweto,

to mention the most recent movement of desperation and moment of vulnerability, has been carried by Western corporations and banks, including the International Monetary Fund. The most obscene evidence of what I am talking about appeared in a glossy booklet prepared and distributed by Standard Bank in London. It was entitled, South Africa: Land of Sunshine and Opportunity, and was "designed for those who are thinking of making South Africa their home and in so doing improving their living standards and increasing their share of the pleasures of life."

The movement for divestment demands that U.S. companies and banks, U.S. churches, universities, etc. should repudiate this obscenity. If whites in South Africa, Rhodesia or anywhere else want to "increase their share in the pleasures of life" they and they alone must be required to make the sacrifices, that their ambitions demand.

What is required of us in this meeting. The key word is mobilization. First, we need to build a coalition, beginning with Black organizations, including, perhaps even especially including, the churches. We have to find a way of mobilizing the full 28 - 30 million Black Americans on these issues. Secondly, we have to explore coalitions with other groups, particularly progressive Jewish groups which have in the past been supportive of Black causes. The objective here is to break up the collaboration between South Africa and Israel; a collaboration which many suspect, enables South Africa to have access to some highly sophisticated U.S. military and strategic technology. Thirdly, we need to begin planning a March on Washington. To achieve this, we will need to mobilize a broadly-based coalition around the anti-nuclear activity, Bakke, bussing, Weber -- issues which have a direct bearing on the tentacles of oppression prevailing in Black America and Africa.

Finally, we will have to mobilize concrete support for the liberation movements. No "internal settlement," no "Namibian UDI," no strengthening and

propping up of Apartheid will diminish the struggle that the liberation movements have waged in Southern Africa, even before the Great October Revolution. The struggle continues and will continue until the final vestiges of colonialism, as the handmaid of capitalism, are eliminated.

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