

A Report on the United Nations International Seminar on the Eradication of Apartheid  
and in Support of the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa

Havana, Cuba - May, 24-28

George M. Houser  
Raphael Gould

For more than 10 years the United Nations Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of South Africa has held such a seminar. Most frequently the seminars have been held in New York. Last year it was in Paris; this year in Havana, Cuba. We attended as delegates of the American Committee on Africa.

A word should be said about the decision to hold this year's seminar in Cuba. The events which took place in Angola during the latter part of 1975 and early 1976 had nothing to do with the decision. The Special Committee on Apartheid of the United Nations decided at a meeting in late summer 1975 that the seminar should take place in a Latin American country. By September the decision had been made that Cuba should be the site. This was before the internal conflict in Angola reached prominence or before there was any involvement of Cuban forces. Nevertheless it was realized during the course of the Seminar that there was symbolic significance to holding the meetings in Havana and due recognition was given to Cuba for the contribution it had made to the establishment of an MPLA government in Angola.

This Seminar is unique in that it has official delegations from governmental and non-governmental organizations. The governmental delegations come from the 18 member states of the United Nations Committee Against Apartheid. This Committee is not composed of major powers of the United Nations, but it is a very active committee and puts out much valuable information. The Chairperson of the Committee is the relatively new Ambassador from Nigeria, Leslie O. Harriman. The other African states represented are Algeria, Ghana, Guinea, Somalia, and Sudan; Asian countries include India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, and Philippines. European countries include the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, the Ukrainian SSR. The Syrian Arab Republic is the only Mid-East country on the Special Committee. Haiti, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago are the Latin American members. Other governmental participants and observers who were active in the proceedings were Canada, Mexico, New Zealand, Cuba, Angola, Lesotho, Zambia, etc.

Among the liberation movements present the most prominent were the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress coming from South Africa and the South West African Peoples Organization.

The representatives from national organizations and anti-apartheid groups came from a variety of countries including Australia and New Zealand, Belgium, Canada, France, both East and West Germany, Ghana, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Rumania, Switzerland, the Soviet Union.

Representatives from groups in the United States included the American Committee on Africa, the American Friends Service Committee, the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility of the National Council of Churches, the Liberation Support Movement, the American Baptist Churches, the National Conference of Black Churchmen, the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the National Anti-Imperialist Movement in Solidarity with African Liberation, and some more localized groups.

Altogether there were in the neighborhood of 200 or more delegates and observers.

The Seminar coincided with a week of solidarity with the African liberation struggle. The Cuban government had decided to cooperate fully with this observance.

During the afternoon of May 25, the Day of Solidarity, the Seminar was adjourned to allow representatives to participate in six rallies at various places throughout Havana. We attended the rally in solidarity with the people of Mozambique where George was one of three speakers to address an audience of about 400 workers (equally divided between men and women) at a cigar factory. The warm welcome and intense response was truly heartwarming. There were rallies in solidarity with Angola, South Africa, Namibia, southern Africa, and Africa as a whole, taking place at the university, the docks, and at other places of work. All of these rallies were given prominent attention by the press, radio and television. In addition Cuba gave special recognition to the seminar with posters appearing at various places in the Havana area welcoming the Seminar.

The proceedings at a seminar such as this tend to follow formal United Nations proceedings rather than the more free-wheeling pattern of a non-governmental conference. This means that there's not as much open give and take as we might prefer. There are many set speeches from the delegations of the governments involved. Nevertheless there is good opportunity for a cross discussion and a kind of consensus comes out of the meetings. The main work of the Seminar was accomplished in two commissions. One dealt with the problem of collaboration with South Africa; the other focused on support and solidarity for the liberation movements and the struggle against apartheid.

The main emphases of the Seminar would be predictable since it is composed of anti-apartheid movements and representatives of the Special Committee on Apartheid. Naturally the resolutions reflected the most critical current issues. The "final declaration" of the Seminar noted that the liberation of Mozambique and Angola "has created a new strategic and political situation in southern Africa." It was noted that "we are witnessing an unfolding war situation." "The liberation movements in southern Africa are obliged to resort to armed struggle in view of the intransigence and ruthlessness of the white minority regimes." Most prominent attention was given to the necessity of the implementation of the arms embargo against South Africa. A rather new formulation stated "any supply of arms to South Africa in any form of military collaboration with the apartheid regime is a hostile act not only against the people of South Africa and the Organization of African Unity, but also against the United Nations and the international community."

The Seminar noted with alarm the extent of Western nuclear collaboration with South Africa and especially the role of the Federal Republic of Germany "in providing the Pretoria regime with equipment and technology which has increased its nuclear capability." The recommendation was made that the arms embargo first voted in the Security Council in 1963 be made mandatory under Chapter 7 of the Charter.

The vast increases of investment by private foreign interests in South Africa was given prominent attention. The fact that these foreign investments now total nearly 11 billion dollars was a matter of great concern. In addition, investments in the Bantustans was underscored with particular attention directed at Seagram's plans to construct a plant in KwaZulu. The Seminar "condemns those countries and external economic interests which are planning to invest in the so-called tribal homelands."

It was noted with alarm that the General Electric Company was considering the proposed sale of two nuclear reactors to South Africa. After the Seminar had adjourned it was learned that South Africa's negotiations with GE had ended and that contracts were being signed with France. It was also pointed out that South Africa has become a major exporter of capital to a number of Latin American countries including Chili, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

In this year of the Olympic Games, special attention was given to the area of sports. It was noted that South Africa is privately setting up an information and hospitality center in Montreal with 50 representatives of their sporting bodies to be on hand in order to propagandize South Africa's cause. South Africa will again not be permitted to participate in the Games. The most controversial part of this discussion had to do with New Zealand. In June a Rugby team from New Zealand is to go to South Africa. This has been condemned by the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa and this African body has also asked African athletes in the Olympics not to participate in those events in which New Zealand competes. After some debate and some differences, this formulation was accepted by the Seminar.

On the cultural boycott two actions proposed by the American Committee on Africa were received favorably: to expand the "We Say No To Apartheid" campaign inviting national anti-apartheid movements in different countries to join the campaign where people in the arts and sports support the statement that they refuse to perform or appear in South Africa; and a proposal for national anti-apartheid poster competitions for professional artists and students.

The Seminar called for all necessary economic and other assistance to the "front line countries." These countries, Zambia, Botswana, Angola and Mozambique border on the not yet free countries of Namibia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The Seminar declared that "any attack on the countries which assist liberation movements constitutes an attack against the international community. These countries have a right to seek and receive all necessary international support against racial aggression."

The Seminar coming so recently after the visit of Prime Minister Vorster of South Africa to Israel, could be expected to give some prominence to the agreement which apparently came out of this visit. However there was no resolution discussed or formulated on Zionism. Israel was treated as any other state which had developed economic and military ties with South Africa and therefore was to be condemned for its collaboration. It should also be noted that several speakers called upon the Arab states to stop buying arms from countries which were supplying arms to South Africa. Further, Arab states were called upon to support the oil embargo against South Africa.

There was really no undercurrent of ideological conflict at the Seminar. There was no obvious effort to control positions. The discussion and the resolutions reflected fairly the anti-apartheid positions which the various organizations represented there have taken and that have been backed by the United Nations and its Special Committee on Apartheid. The value of this Seminar is the contacts which representatives of various national movements make with one another, the opportunity to talk with officials from the United Nations and member states of the U.N., and to highlight issues which are most important and current at the moment. These purposes were well accomplished at this year's Seminar.

Note: Alan Paton statement on other side.

# Alan Paton: South Africa

JOHANNESBURG — South Africa: Where are you going? This question is not original. It was first used, if I remember rightly, by Prof. B. B. Keet of the Stellenbosch Seminary, more than 20 years ago.

The flood of racial legislation of the new Nationalist Party Government appalled him, and he wrote it all down.

The laws were to him a denial of the Christian religion, which he took seriously. This did not make him popular, but he did not write for popularity. He wrote for justice and righteousness, and he wrote for us too, us, all the people of South Africa.

I am not writing for all the people of South Africa. I am writing for its white people. White people cannot write for black people any more. Yet in a way, I too am writing for us all.

What do we, the white people of South Africa, after that week of desolation, do first?

The first thing we do is to repent of our wickedness, or our arrogance, of our complacency, of our blindness.

There has been much evil in Soweto. The killing of Dr. Melville Edelstein, friend and servant of Soweto, was evil; the killing of Hector Peterson, 13-year-old schoolboy, was evil. The burning of schools, creches [nurseries], clinics, shops, universities was evil. The hatred, for whatever cause, was evil.

And behind all this evil stand we, the white people of South Africa. The isotsis [thugs who looted] are evil, but we made them. They are the outcasts of our affluent society. And unless we can understand our guilt, we shall never understand anything at all.

The compulsory teaching through the medium of Afrikaans [the language of the white descendants of Dutch settlers] is the immediate cause. But the deeper cause is the whole pattern of discriminatory laws.

Who are the agitators? They are the discriminatory laws.

Who are the polarizing forces? They are the discriminatory laws.

It is fantastic that a minister should accuse anonymous polarizing forces. They are not anonymous, they can all be given names.

They are the Group Areas Act, the separate universities, the Mixed Marriages Act, the abolition of parliamentary representation for African and colored people and a dozen other laws.

That there are human agitators as well, no one can doubt. But their weapons are the discriminatory laws, the laws of apartheid.

Do you think that our immutable

doctrine of the separation of the races has brought peace and concord to South Africa?

Do you as Christians believe that the poor should pay for the poor, that you should spend between 400 rands and 500 rands a year on the education of each white child, and between 30 rands and 40 rands on each black child? [Editor's note: One rand is worth \$1.15.]

Do you as Christians believe that white industry should be maintained at the cost of the integrity of black family life?

Do you believe that your separate universities have encouraged the growth of wholesome national identities, cooperating gladly with others in a multinational country?

Do you believe that you can move away from racial discrimination until you repeal discriminatory laws?

There are other questions, but these are enough.

The blame does not lie wholly with the Nationalist Government. It lies with us all. The English-speaking people are also responsible.

But the greater portion of the blame, and the greater portion of the responsibility, lies with the Nationalist Party. They have the power. They are the ones who have exalted law and order above justice. And by law and order they mean that kind of law and order which keeps them in power.

I am not going to suggest what our rulers should do now. They are intelligent enough to know, even if they are at the moment psychologically incapacitated. I shall ask one question instead.

Right Honorable the Prime Minister, a great responsibility lies on you. But if you regard yourself as first and last an Afrikaner, you will not save our country. You will not even save Afrikanerdom.

You must be able to transcend your racial origins in a time of crisis, such as this undoubtedly is. Instead of declaring that you are determined to maintain law and order, could you not assure us that you are determined to find out—without prejudice—why law and order have broken down, and to put the wrong things right?

After repentance comes amendment of life.

---

*Alan Paton, South African novelist, has long been a critic of his country's racial policies. This article, which appeared in The Johannesburg Star, was made available by The Associated Press.*

NYT - 6/24/76