

TRANSAFRICA NEWS

The Black American Lobby
for
Africa and the Caribbean

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TransAfrica Maintains the Pressure in 1990

*"Victory must come our way,
victory is in sight,
so let us keep the pressure on."*
Nelson Mandela, 1990 U.S. Tour

The release of Nelson Mandela and his visit to the United States marked an auspicious beginning to a dynamic year for TransAfrica. Last year TransAfrica followed these events closely by monitoring the reforms instituted under President F.W. de Klerk and participating in the organization of Nelson Mandela's U.S. tour.

TransAfrica's Executive Director Randall Robinson and his former legislative director, Ibrahim Gassama, travelled to South Africa last May to brief Mandela on the status of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act and the potential for its eventual lifting. Robinson also met with members of the African National Congress to discuss the logistics of the U.S. visit.

While the Mandelas' trip in June served to buoy the spirits of anti-apartheid activists and Americans nationwide, the purpose of their tour was not lost amidst the celebration. In his public addresses across the country and in his speech before the Joint Session of Congress in Washington D.C., Mandela reaffirmed that sanctions should be maintained until true democracy is achieved in South Africa.

DeKlerk's Photo Opportunity

Following Mandela's trip by three months was South African President deKlerk's visit to the U.S. in September. President Bush justified his invitation to deKlerk as an attempt at evenhanded diplomacy. TransAfrica protested

deKlerk's visit and stressed that the two men, the jailed and the jailer, should not be accorded equal treatment in the White House. TransAfrica's opposition exposed the deKlerk visit as an effort to gain international credibility and legitimacy for what deKlerk termed a new South Africa but what activists consider to merely be a new face of apartheid.

TransAfrica maintains its skepticism of the deKlerk Administration and feels that the so-called irreversible reforms achieved to date do not signal an inevitable march toward full majority rule. Instead deKlerk's goals remain unclear and shrouded in euphemisms that spell out group rights to protect white minority power. TransAfrica led a protest in front of the White House to demonstrate the premature nature of President Bush's

overtures. As long as the township violence continues with the cooperation of the South African police, as long as blacks do not have the right to vote, and until the legal requirements in the sanctions law are satisfied, sanctions against South Africa should not be lifted.

Detentions in Kenya

TransAfrica displayed support for Kenya's movement toward multi-partyism during 1990. In July, Randall Robinson spoke at a rally sponsored by "Kenya's for Democracy" in front of the Kenyan Embassy. The protest called attention to the actions of Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi to silence calls for the creation of a multi-party state in his country.

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Board Chairman Richard Hatcher and Executive Director Randall Robinson protest DeKlerk's White House visit in September.
Courtesy Dwayne Freeman/Jalapa Ltd.

Moi's crackdown on opposition newspapers and outspoken critics has shocked many foreign policymakers who previously viewed Kenya as the political mainstay of Africa. Several of the detainees have since been released, but others remain in jail. As a result of these events, up to \$25 million in U.S. foreign assistance to Kenya was suspended in 1990 for fiscal year 1991.

The Angolan Civil War

Last year, Jonas Savimbi, leader of the UNITA rebels in Angola, increased his request for an additional tranche of covert U.S. aid for his guerrillas, who are fighting against the Angolan government.

In 1990, TransAfrica continued its resistance to Congressional funding of this fifteen year old civil war. War-related casualties combined with the impending famine is expected to affect millions of innocent Angolans. By spearheading the lobbying effort to eliminate the funneling of upwards of \$60

million to UNITA, TransAfrica coordinated a series of meetings with Secretary of State Baker, and House and Senate leadership. The combined results of these meetings, telephone calls and several sign-on letters from prominent African Americans aided the eventual passage of the Solarz amendment which placed conditions on continued covert funds for UNITA.

Unfortunately, President Bush vetoed the 1991 Intelligence Authorization bill immediately after the closing of the 101st Congress. Because the Solarz amendment was a part of this bill, Bush's veto nullified the moderate proposal that Congress had taken toward ending aid to UNITA.

Beyond South Africa

Most of last year's ongoing activities centered on South Africa and Angola, but issues regarding other parts of the continent continued to demand TransAfrica's attention. Due in some

part to TransAfrica's lobbying efforts, Congress passed a new Foreign aid appropriation level for Africa that included an increase from roughly \$500 to \$800 million for the last fiscal year. TransAfrica will be more active in the coming year, as issues relating to developments in Liberia, Haiti, Somalia and Sudan require specific response.

Looking Ahead: TransAfrica's Policy Priorities for 1991

As the United States engages in war in the Persian Gulf, the grave concerns facing the people of Africa are being marginalized as President Bush pursues a new world order. While there is hope for peace in Liberia and Angola, encouraging elections in Haiti, and increased U.S. aid channelled into Africa - the burdens of political realignment, a growing humanitarian crisis and war in the Middle East still threaten the interests of Africa and the Caribbean.

Despite the end of the Cold War conflict in Africa and the move toward some reform in South Africa, the need for a coherent progressive U.S. foreign policy towards Africa and the Caribbean is more evident than ever. While U.S. policy continues to support several corrupt leaders in Africa, it works to condemn such leaders in other parts of the world. In the shadow of the Gulf War, the administration is preparing for a repeal of South African sanctions which would alleviate the pressure for true democracy in South Africa.

TransAfrica has outlined four policy priorities for 1991 which are critical for these regions: maintaining U.S. sanctions against South Africa, ending U.S. aid to UNITA, increasing U.S. foreign assistance to Africa, and providing Caribbean debt relief.

To achieve these objectives we will organize lobbying visits of African-American leaders on Capitol Hill, hold press conferences, meet with members of the Department of State, draft legislation, and mobilize grassroots support.

In 1991, TransAfrica will initiate two formal legislative priorities within Congress. We will call on the Congress to increase U.S. foreign assistance to sub-Saharan Africa from \$800 million in 1990 to \$1 billion in 1991. This bill will also redirect U.S. funds to countries

Stronger Liberia Policy Needed

The people of Liberia may now have a chance for peace after a year-long civil war has ravaged their nation. At a December meeting in Banjul, Gambia, the warring parties agreed to a temporary ceasefire and established a deadline for an All-Liberia Conference to negotiate a peace settlement and to establish an interim government.

While these are encouraging steps, the initial plans for this important conference--which should occur by February 21, 1991--have not been made. In fact there is some indication that disagreements among the parties may postpone the conference indefinitely. Nonetheless, Charles Taylor, Prince Johnson, and the remaining AFL (Armed Forces of Liberia) forces have agreed to allow the peacekeeping forces of the Economic Community of West African States to control the ports and roads and enforce a separation of the warring parties into different regions of Monrovia.

While the ceasefire has relieved some tensions in Liberia, the humanitarian needs of Liberian refugees have not received an adequate response from the international community. Catholic Relief Services, Medicines Sans Frontiers - Belgium, and the U.S. Office of Disaster Relief Assistance are the only providers of international food, medicine, water and electricity relief. TransAfrica will continue to urge the United States to garner support from other nations and international aid organizations for relief assistance.

U.S. foreign policy towards Liberia has contributed to the growth of this current conflict. After Samuel Doe took control of Liberia in a 1980 coup, the U.S. continued to provide him with military and financial aid, thus fortifying his government, despite his record of human rights abuses. The U.S. supported Doe's fraudulent re-election in 1985 and continued economic support until Congress ended that policy in 1990. The U.S. has a responsibility to correct this disastrous policy and must, therefore, take a strong role in assisting Liberians as they struggle to establish permanent peace, reconstruction, and relief for their people.

demonstrating substantial political freedoms and a respect for human rights. Furthermore, the legislation will monitor the expenditure of these funds and follow socio-political developments within the recipient nations to ensure progress towards democratization.

TransAfrica's second legislative objective will be to develop a debt relief package for the Caribbean Community and Common Market Member (CARICOM) countries of the Caribbean. Numerous plans have been developed for Latin American debt relief, but few have targeted the Caribbean islands or been appropriate for their needs. The legislation will address commercial, multi-lateral, and bi-lateral aid and will focus on debt relief proposals that will free funds for development and drug-trafficking programs.

While these are the main policy objectives for 1991, TransAfrica will also continue to monitor other countries and concerns (such as Haiti, Liberia, Somalia, famine and environmental issues) by working in conjunction with other organizations and by briefing Congressional members.

* * * *

Chapter Updates

Cleveland: Grace Jones, President of the Cleveland Chapter, reports that the chapter organized a seven bus caravan to Detroit to see Mandela during his June visit. The event raised \$3500 for the Mandela Freedom Fund. The Cleveland Chapter also hosted a Town Meeting on South Africa in February.

Detroit: The City of Detroit recently passed a selective-buying ordinance aimed at limiting business with South Africa. TransAfrica's Detroit Chapter had been instrumental from the ordinance's inception; members of the chapter helped draft the legislation, testified in front of the City Council, and pushed a contract freeze through in early July.

Washington, D.C.: The Washington Chapter began its year with a membership drive. They have had a number of speakers address their members on last summer's crisis in Trinidad; recent events in Angola, Kenya, and Liberia; and the debt and aid crisis in Africa. The chapter has also initiated

a newsletter this winter and is now preparing for the Annual D.C. Chapter Luncheon on Saturday, March 16, 1991. The speaker for this event will be Lindiwe Mabuzza, ANC Representative to the United States. For more information, call K. Allen at (301) 552-8782.

Cincinnati: The Cincinnati chapter expects to sponsor a second Mickey Leland Radiothon this March. Negotiations are still underway but the fundraiser may occur in conjunction with a local TV station this year, according to President Denise Crews.

Buffalo: Last fall the Buffalo chapter hosted a reception to introduce TransAfrica to the community and to help boost the chapter's membership. The Black and African Student Unions at SUNY/Buffalo sponsored the event which featured Caribbean and African music and food prepared by chapter members. President Muhammad Kenyatta reports that the reception was quite successful with over one hundred people in attendance.

Chicago: The Chicago Chapter served as hosts for TransAfrica's bi-annual chapter meeting last October. President Melvin Johnson reports that chapter members participated in an anti-apartheid conference with other local organizations in January. The Chicago Chapter will also participate in a forum on Angola in February and is planning a lobby visit to Representatives and Senators in Washington this spring.

Boston: The Boston Chapter has hosted forums on several issues this winter.

1991 Robeson Scholarship

Each year TransAfrica sponsors The Paul Robeson Scholarship Competition which provides a \$1000 college scholarship to the high school senior writing the best essay on a question provided by TransAfrica. While the scholarship is open to students nationwide, all applications must be received by a TransAfrica chapter. For more information, please contact Kristin Wells in the National office at (202) 547-2550.

Chapter Board Member Patrick Seyon discussed the political and humanitarian situation in his native home, Liberia. The chapter has actively lobbied on a new U.S. policy toward the Liberia crisis.

The Boston Chapter has also created an educational curriculum task force which will work with the Boston Public Schools to develop resources on Africa and the Caribbean for the classroom.

New Chapters: TransAfrica will be forming a new chapter in Los Angeles with the help of Board Member Donna Guillaume and Marcia Thomas, Director of USA for Africa. TransAfrica also hopes to start a chapter in Rhode Island or Atlanta by year's end.

BOARD ELECTIONS

Watch your mail for Board of Directors ballots in May. Please participate in the 1991 election by returning your ballots to us! Thank you.

Africa NewsBriefs

Chad

After launching a military campaign through the Northern parts of Chad, General Idriss Deby's Patriotic Salvation Movement brought the eight year reign of President Hisssein Habre' to an end. Deby declared himself president of Chad in December, thus ending the repressive rule of Habre with promises of creating Chad's first multiparty democracy.

This coup is expected to improve Chad's political relations with Libya.

Rwanda

Major General Fred Rwigyema, a Rwandan refugee serving as an officer in the Ugandan army, led a group of refugees across the Uganda-Rwanda border last October in an attempt to overthrow the government. Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana quickly imposed a curfew in order to suppress the rebellion. Following the insurrection, the Government reportedly arrested or executed the insurgents.

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The conflict dates from the 16th century when ethnic animosity between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes was rife. The Tutsis, who comprise 15% of the population, controlled the region until 1959 when the majority Hutu's took power and forced many Tutsis to flee the country into Uganda.

Although the Hutu government has successfully held off the attempted coup, isolated insurgencies continue in various parts of the countryside.

Sudan

Sudan is threatened with widespread famine that could far exceed the Ethiopian famine of 1984 in which six million were at risk of starving to death. An estimated eight million Sudanese are now at risk of starvation due to drought and civil war. Sudan has been involved in a civil war since 1983 leaving its citizens in a war-torn country in which basic resources are scarce. The war is between the Arab government in the north and the southern Christian rebels led by the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army.

Somalia

Rebel groups have reportedly seized the Somali capital city of Mogadishu. The United Somali Congress controls the capital as well as the central region of the country. The Somali National Congress controls the northern portion of the country.

The fighting is the latest development in the attenuation of President Mohammed Siad Barre who took control of the country in 1970. He initially received support from the Soviet Union until 1978 when the United States began providing military and economic assistance to Somalia in order to fight Ethiopia in the Ogaden War.

After two years of civil war, the rebels ousted President Barre from the capital, thus bringing his repressive regime to an end. As a result of this revolution, widespread famine now threatens 1.5 million people in Northern Somalia.

Ethiopia

The Red Sea port of Massawa is set to reopen to international relief agencies based on plans of the United Nations World Food Program. Massawa is currently controlled by the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF). The EPLF will allow relief agencies to deliver food and supplies throughout Eritrea, particularly to its capital city of Asmara, where the need is reportedly the greatest in the region.

The EPLF contends that the Ethiopian government, led by President Mengistu Haile Mariam, has prevented relief agencies from delivering food to starving Ethiopians, especially in Wollo and Tigre Provinces. The Government contends that the EPLF has been delivering military supplies disguised as food to the rebels in the north.

TransAfrica and the TransAfrica Forum would like to thank all of our interns from 1990. Your work has been invaluable to us and we wish you the best of luck in 1991!

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TRANSAFRICA NEWS

TransAfrica is the Black American lobby for Africa and the Caribbean with national offices in Washington, D.C., local chapters and 15,000 members across the United States.

Join It!

In 1979

When Jimmy Carter was under relentless conservative pressure to relax sanctions against Ian Smith's Rhodesia, TransAfrica helped persuade the President to hold the line until power was equitably transferred to the democratically elected leaders of the new Zimbabwe.

In 1984

As South Africans intensified their struggle against the apartheid regime, TransAfrica coordinated the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM) which conducted daily protests in front of the South African Embassy for over one year.

In 1985

FSAM expanded nationwide. TransAfrica helped to build support for comprehensive sanctions against South Africa. President Reagan was forced into instituting limited economic sanctions against South Africa.

In 1986

FSAM joined the private-sector international anti-apartheid campaign by calling for a boycott of Royal Dutch/Shell products.

Persistent lobbying for stringent comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa resulted in House passage of the Dellums bill. Compromise legislation was passed by both houses of Congress. Presidential veto of the bill was overridden with TransAfrica's support.

All TransAfrica members receive the TransAfrica newsletter and legislative updates.

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