

AMERICA NEEDS A NEW SOUTH AFRICA POLICY

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For many years now, while serving in the trenches of the Civil Rights Movement, and through the days of my involvement in the new movements of electoral politics, public policy, and economic development, I have carried with me an abiding concern with the future of Africa and of South Africa in particular. In these various endeavors, I have been keenly aware of the fact that the national goals of most groups in America have seldom been realized within a domestic context alone.

It was the distinguished scholar, Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, who long ago said: "One ever feels his two-ness — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." In the continuing attempt to reconcile the heritage of Africa with that of America, generations of African and African-American leaders such as Paul Robeson, Roy Wilkins, Kwame Nkrumah, Martin Luther King, Jr., Julius Nyerere, and others have asserted the right and the obligation to become involved in the shaping of policy in their respective countries toward this end. These leaders allowed the blood and heritage of two continents to enable them to reconcile separate but related strivings and to help bridge the gap to make way for the lasting converging of interests of America and Africa. I stand firmly in the tradition of this legacy, as I discuss with you an African-American view of U.S. foreign policy toward the region of Southern Africa.

As an African-American, a minister of the Gospel, a social and political activist, and as an outraged American citizen, I have been a vigorous opponent of South African apartheid. I am also deeply concerned about the support the administration of President Reagan has provided to the South African regime through its policy of "constructive engagement."

I visited South Africa for 17 days in 1979. From Crossroads to Durban, Port Elizabeth to Johannesburg, and Soweto to Zulu country, I observed, learned, and shared. That is why, during my presidential campaign of 1984 I demanded (though to little avail) that the issue of apartheid become a central

focus of debate among all the candidates, so that the prospective president of this country might be sensitized to the misery and destruction of human life apartheid has caused. It was this concern that found me, even at the conclusion of my campaign, leading prayers in front of the South African embassy in October of 1984, and it is what subsequently led me to become involved in the outstanding work of the Free South Africa Campaign. The media forced candidates to discuss U.S. policy toward Western Europe and the Middle East, but expressed only a passing interest in Africa policy.

As I have watched and helped this issue grow in the American consciousness and watched the policymakers in the Congress and in the administration grapple with responses to their desire for action, I have become increasingly uneasy with the narrowness of that thrust toward only sanctions against or noninterference with South Africa.

My interest in developing a more effective response was heightened by my participation in the World Conference of Sanctions Against South Africa in Paris in June 1986. There I had the opportunity for a wide range of consultations with key individuals in the fight against apartheid, among them His Excellency Shridath Ramphal, the Commonwealth secretary general, who had just released an excellent set of recommendations. Most important, my meetings with the foreign ministers and other officials representing the frontline states of Southern Africa were highly instructive since they confirmed the difficulties of a one-dimensional policy of sanctions against South Africa.

Since then I have been to southern Africa twice; first in August 1986, on the invitation of the leaders of the frontline states, and then again for the funeral of Mozambican President Samora Machel, who died tragically and mysteriously in a plane crash inside South Africa.

Our tour of the eight frontline states of Southern Africa beginning on August 13, 1986 was sponsored by the Nigerian government, with President Ibrahim Babangida graciously facilitating the transportation of my 40-person delegation. Our "Rainbow Coalition Sojourn For Truth" delegation was composed of businessmen, farmers, journalists, academics, labor leaders, and others who were interested in discussion with their counterparts in each country. Our objective was to make a "citizen's assessment" of the impact of U.S. foreign policy in the region from the perspective of the leadership of the various countries we visited.

U.S. POLICY

From our own accumulated expertise and the briefing given us by the State Department's Africa Bureau before departing, we had concluded that American policy in Southern Africa was simplistic and inconsistent, thus incoherent. It was simplistic because many of the most basic decisions about our relations were made, not with an eye to relations between the United States and countries such as Mozambique and Angola, but based on whether or not

Cuban troops were present in the country, or whether or not its ideology was Marxist-Leninist.

What is most surprising about this policy is its paranoid tendency. It has been more than 25 years since most African countries became independent, and the American experience with African states, especially in the independence period, is that we can compete successfully with the Soviets. We can compete because the Soviet financial and technological base is not as strong as ours, and these are the resources needed by most countries for development assistance. African states have therefore had to get them from the West and from international financial institutions such as the World Bank. Chester Crocker himself said, before assuming his post, that "the African states are dependent on the Western world as markets for their exports and as a source of capital, manufacturers, skills, and . . . food."

The net result of this reality is that in most Marxist African states, their internal economic policies — including their attitude toward the presence of private sector activity — have been decidedly liberal. This trend has been recently reinforced by the movement of the Africa Group at the United Nations Special Session of African Economic Development to favor further liberalization.

Why then is our policy so paranoid when so little in the actual American experience in Africa supports a rationale for it? We are looking at Africa through red-tinted glasses; thus, we can't see the genuineness of the blacks because of the red.

AMERICAN POLICY IS INCONSISTENT

America has developed over time an economic assistance relationship with all of the countries in the region. Then very recently, it cancelled economic assistance agreements with Zimbabwe in a fit of anger over an accurate, but from the American point of view, untimely, portrayal of U.S. policy toward South Africa in the presence of former President Jimmy Carter and other American embassy officials. This cancellation of aid was in itself inconsistent, since Zimbabwe is the second most developed state in the region, with a Western-oriented minerals sector of interest to the United States. America maintains trade relations with every other state in the region, regardless of political ideology. The best interest of the United States is not served by altering fundamental policy interests in a fit of temper.

The ultimate irony was to have a policy of sanctions against Zimbabwe over protocol and cut aid to Tanzania in the midst of a drought, while refusing to sanction South Africa over state-sponsored and -conducted terrorism. These were the basic elements of a policy that was incoherent and inconsistent, and largely remains so.

The United States maintains a policy of close relations with South Africa which, among other things, means that it continues to tolerate the regime's

military invasions, for example, into southern Angola, Mozambique, Botswana, and Zambia (despite the occasional cable of "strong disapproval" to the South African government). South African troops are inside Angola, occupying territory near the border, and they provide vital support to the rebel troops of Jonas Savimbi's UNITA.

South Africa also sponsors a similar terrorist group called the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (MNR, or RENAMO). MNR has carried out sabotage operations against the meager industrial infrastructure of the country, crippled its commerce, terrorized its people, and contributed to the decline in agricultural output.

There is a great deal of circumstantial evidence that South Africa is implicated in the death of President Machel, and at the very least is spurring the MNR to take advantage of the temporary confusion and instability created by the loss of such a vital force for justice and against apartheid in Mozambique and South Africa as a whole. Official American silence on these matters contributes significantly to South Africa's confidence in stepping up its aggression against the frontline states.

South Africa is conducting military operations in areas where the U.S. disapproves of the political complexion of the existing post-colonial government. However, even in Botswana and Zambia, countries that have had extremely friendly relations with the United States, South Africa has sponsored military incursions into urban centers with the ostensible aim of attacking the ANC.

But the Reagan administration's partnership with South Africa has had the primary effect of undercutting the United States' moral authority, while South Africa destroys and weakens the fiber of American economic and political relations in the region. This pernicious relationship with South Africa has not only bred a gross inconsistency in our policy, it has robbed that policy of its legitimacy in the eyes of the leaders and peoples of this region.

To the extent that the United States is now engaged, for example, in funding a totally immoral military operation in southern Angola in collaboration with UNITA and South Africa, it forfeits the protection of international law in other matters, and undermines the quest for international stability. It is using naked power to implement an abstract ideology, rather than engaging in a forthright, respectful, and realistic manner with the situation and the legitimate leadership of that country and the rest of the region.

OUR PROPOSALS

We proposed to utilize our "Sojourn for Truth" to test out certain hypotheses that might have the potential to change the focus of U.S. foreign policy and alter the outcome of the bloody struggle in southern Africa that has already

begun. So, at each stop we discussed with the leadership of the country the following principles:

Respect: We believe that one of the reasons that our government and others have attempted to impose their own formulas for solutions to problems in the region is that there is a basic lack of respect for the states in the region and for the views of their leaders. A policy of "constructive engagement" toward South Africa combined with negation of the interests of the other states and leaders in the region is race-conscious policy, as well as an ideologically blinded policy. It is also one which exploits the inherent weaknesses in these states that have only recently won their independence.

America has respected Europe, because the United States itself is largely an extension of European civilization, that benefited from the colonial heritage of Europe but ultimately rejected its oppressive and paternalistic bonds. America has yet to suppress its own colonial attitude in dealing with African states. The need to rebuild Europe after World War II was projected into public opinion as a natural extension of U.S. interests. It stimulated the development of the Marshall Plan that eventually amounted to 11 percent of our GNP. But such support is not seen as "natural" when it comes to aiding black African states who are the frontline victims of the settler-colonial brand of fascism.

The most flagrant indication of this is that the views of leaders in the region and in the continent are often not considered in the forging of U.S. foreign policy. A summit meeting with the African leaders in southern Africa, where views can be shared and a mutually respectful and beneficial relationship can be established, is the first step toward respect. To close the door on them is a major step toward contempt and disrespect. A summit is an indicator of interest in a constructive and respectful relationship.

Adequate Aid For Development: U.S. interests in the region are substantial, and on July 22, 1986, in a special address on South Africa, President Reagan proved that he had a regional policy for southern Africa. His policy, however, underscored U.S. external dependence on strategic minerals and highlighted the primacy of the South African economy and its dominance of the area's economic infrastructure and human labor, affecting all the countries right up to southern Zaire.

The basis of the president's support for South Africa appears to be the importance of its economy and the maintenance of its control of the regional infrastructure above a genuine independence and self-determination of the states in the region. Mineral rights over human rights is immoral and short-sighted foreign policy. Our policy of economic exploitation, military alliance, and racial affinity has misread the African scene from Nkrumah's Ghana to Mugabe's Zimbabwe.

Thus, the United States has not provided the kind of economic assistance, political vision, or moral leadership which would be meaningful in helping

southern African states break away from the domination of apartheid in South Africa. Despite the fact that in five years U.S. economic aid to all the states in the region amounted to \$1 billion, most of this aid was bilateral. The drought and the generally poor state of their economies consumed most of this aid for immediate needs rather than long-term industrial and commercial development projects.

Our visits with then President Samora Machel and Robert Mugabe convinced us that such projects as the Beira corridor transport improvement scheme would benefit tremendously from significant increases in economic assistance from all donors. This would help give some of these landlocked countries an outlet to the seaports not controlled by South Africa, lessening their dependence on its facilities, and increasing American and other countries' trade with the region.

Trade: The United States trades with virtually all of the countries in the region. However, trade in strategic minerals, for example, from many of the frontline states could be increased in a way that would lessen U.S. dependence on apartheid South Africa. South Africa undoubtedly recognizes the potential of many of its neighbors to rival or replace it economically. This explains much of its policy of economic and political destabilization in the region. This is why U.S. relations with Angola need to be normalized, and diplomatic recognition established so that the 100 U.S. companies that have now invested there can increase their activities. Quite aside from the mutually beneficial economic relations that will result, this would also be a significant step toward making amends for having supported the Portuguese colonialists, with U.S. arms and financial aid, during the Angolan war of independence in the 1960s and 1970s.

Defense: We believe that America should develop a security policy in line with its long-term vital interests in the region, which means preventing the apartheid regime from destroying the fruits of U.S. trade and aid in the region, through its destabilization campaign. Restraining South Africa in the region both economically and militarily, and assisting the frontline states with the necessary resources for them to become self-sufficient, should be the number-one priority in helping these developing countries to become truly viable entities and valuable allies.

It is senseless for the administration to propose to give \$500 million in additional economic assistance to southern Africa without also attempting to help assure that the projects will not in turn be destroyed by South Africa or its proxies in Angola and Mozambique. The aid should indeed be supported and more emphasis should be given to the problem of protecting it.

We must systematically cut the legs from the octopus: Negotiate diplomatic ties with Angola — that is, a sanction against apartheid. Actively support freedom and self-determination for the people of Namibia — another sanction.

Aid, trade, development, and a defense assistance plan for the frontline states — more sanctions. Economic cooperation. International agreement to secure freedom from foreign attack, support of the Southern Africa Development Coordinating Conference (SSADCC), and comprehensive sanctions against South Africa. These should be the foundation of our nation's southern Africa policy.

