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Statement of the
Committee on Social
Development and
World Peace

**SOUTHERN
AFRICA:
PEACE OR WAR?**

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In 1967, Pope Paul VI wrote, in his encyclical letter on Africa:

The equality of all men is based, as is well known, on their common origin and density as members of the human family. . . . This equality demands an ever more explicit recognition in civil society of every human being's essential rights, even though this equality does not cancel but rather acknowledges and brings into harmony personal differences and the diversity of function in the community. Consequently, the aspirations of all men desiring to enjoy those rights which flow from their dignity as human persons are wholly legitimate.

Paul VI, *Ad Afros* par 19
Gremillion, p. 422-3

American awareness of the African continent has been heightened in the past two years by several events: the independence of Mozambique and Angola, and especially the internal struggle in the latter nation, and the participation of the U.S.A., Cuba, and the U.S.S.R. in that struggle; the recent and initial visit of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to Africa and his belated pronouncements of U.S. African policy.

Shortly before the Secretary's journey, Bishop James S. Rausch, General Secretary of the U.S. Catholic Conference, addressed an open letter to him in which several important suggestions were made regarding United States policy and actions in Africa. We fully endorse what Bishop Rausch said therein and make it our own.

In this statement we wish to speak especially about the Republic of South Africa (RSA), to

address some of the urgent moral issues raised there, and to comment on the responsibility of the American people and their government in dealing with that nation. We address ourselves particularly to the RSA not unmindful of the urgency of achieving majority rule in Rhodesia and the independence of Namibia. Nevertheless, South Africa is clearly the most developed, most influential nation in the southern part of the African continent, and is the object of economic, political, and military interest on the part of the United States. The United States should conduct its foreign policy toward the RSA, and influence business activity there to change its racial policies, both to establish justice within that nation, and to avoid international conflict. Even more effective leverage would be achieved if the United States, as the leader of the western nations, could develop a coordinated policy with them regarding the RSA.

For Black Africans, "South Africa is an obsession," said Bishop James D. Sangu, Chairman of the Tanzanian Catholic Bishops' Conference. He explained that assertion in these words:

Its crude racialism is a continuous insult to black Africans. It not only keeps the races apart, as it claims, but it shouts from the rooftops the superiority of the White Race and the inferiority of the Black Race. As long as this situation continues, there is really little chance that the Black Africans will ever live in brotherhood with White Europeans.

Secretary Kissinger himself described South Africa's apartheid system by which he said "racial discrimination has been institutionalized, enshrined in law, and made all-pervasive." But Bishop Sangu maintains:

Notwithstanding the half-hearted denunciation of racialism by the Western countries, South Africa feels strong because she is convinced of the backing she receives from the Western countries, and because of the strong economic ties she has with

these countries. As Christians we must fight for justice for the oppressed, not for financial gain and economic interests.

This analysis is borne out by the contrast between the Secretary's severe condemnation of Rhodesia and stern demands for internal reforms and, on the other hand, his relatively mild strictures against South Africa. He seemed even to weaken the former U.S. position on South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia. He did not call for majority rule in South Africa, as he did in Rhodesia, but for "a clear evolution toward equality of opportunity and basic human rights for all South Africans." The difference may seem to be merely a subtlety, but in light of Kissinger's former African policy, which included support for the white minority regimes, anything less than a forthright denunciation of apartheid and minority government is suspected of support and collusion.

Implicated here is not only the question of justice for black Rhodesians and South Africans; but world peace itself. The existence of the racist societies of the two nations (and Namibia, occupied and controlled by South Africa), since it is "an obsession" with black Africans, promises increased internal disorder, and activity of guerilla freedom-fighters. This, in turn, raises the possibility of external intervention by other African nations, by the superpowers, or others.

Such intervention would be translated either into racial terms—black against white—or ideological terms—communist against non-communist. Africa's black leaders of nations and liberation movements reject such a view. Many of them have benefitted from Christian education and are themselves Christians. Their vision is of multi-racial societies in which the human dignity of each person is respected. Their leaning toward the U.S.A. and the West, or toward the U.S.S.R. or China, is not so much an ideological stance as an expression of their need for assistance as they attempt to establish such societies, or to promote the development of the nations they represent.

South Africa, in contrast, plans to create bantustans, "independent nations" within its territory; all black persons will be assigned to one of these, on the basis of tribal ancestry, regardless of whether the person has even lived there. In South Africa, where most blacks must necessarily go to work, regardless of which bantustan he or she is technically a citizen, citizenship will be withdrawn, under the fiction that the individual is a citizen of the black nation. Racial segregation, in short, is so important that the nation will be dismembered to preserve it; economic superiority is so important that the territories assigned to blacks will comprise only 13% of the land, and are the least productive areas.

The only course of policy and action for Americans to take is one consistent with our national tradition of personal freedom and the Christian principle of universal love, directed especially to those who most need it. With such a policy, implemented by substantial and realistic action, the United States and the American people would win the admiration of the African people; considerations of economic and strategic interests would then fall into perspective, both for us and for them.

It is not enough to state such principles and policy; they must be translated into positive action. Hence, without attempting to draw up an exhaustive listing, we suggest the following:

1. that the U.S. raise for discussion in the U.N. Security Council the threat to world peace created by the Republic of South Africa by its internal policy of apartheid and its occupation of Namibia (South West Africa), with a view to imposing international economic sanctions against that nation until substantial changes have been made.

2. that the U.S. use every available means to restrict and discourage U.S. business and investment in the RSA, Namibia, and Rhodesia; particularly, that exceptions, licenses, or mitigations in favor of these nations not be granted.

3. that the U.S. recognize and enforce the decree of the U.N. Council for Namibia for the protection of the natural resources of Namibia

against exploitation by South Africa during its illegal occupation of that territory. According to that decree, approved by the U.N. General Assembly in 1974, "any animal, mineral, or other natural resource produced in or emanating from the Territory of Namibia," taken without license granted by the Council for Namibia, may be seized, along with the vehicle or ship carrying it, "forfeited to the benefit of the Council, and held in trust by them for the benefit of the people of Namibia."

4. that the U.S. Congress give substance to Secretary Kissinger's promises by assisting those frontier nations which may experience hardship because of their compliance with the U.N. sanctions against Rhodesia.

We suggest these actions not for political, economic, or strategic reasons, but because they would give assurance to the government of South Africa, to its black citizens, and to the rest of the world, that the United States still believes that liberty and equality are unalienable rights of every person; and that recognition of these rights in practice in southern Africa will be conducive to peace and prosperity in that part of the world.

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UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
1312 Massachusetts Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005