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POLICIES OF APARTHEID OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

Letter dated 8 November 1974 from the Chairman of the Special Committee on
Apartheid to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement made by the Chairman of the Special Committee on Apartheid at the 295th meeting of the Special Committee, on 8 November 1974, on the recent developments concerning apartheid in South Africa.

Pursuant to a decision of the Special Committee, I have the honour to request that the statement be issued as a document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Edwin O. OGBU
Chairman
of the Special Committee on Apartheid

ANNEX

Statement by the Chairman of the Special Committee on Apartheid
on "manoeuvres" of South Africa

In our last report to the General Assembly, we stressed that the international efforts to eradicate apartheid have reached a new stage. The developments in the Territories under Portuguese administration have radically changed the situation in southern Africa. The South African régime has become more isolated than ever and the international campaign against apartheid has gained momentum, partly because of the activity of this Committee.

This new situation represents, in my opinion, a challenge to the international community and to the South African people, not least of all to the white minority in South Africa.

In the last two months, there has been dramatic evidence of the isolation of the South African régime in the overwhelming votes in the General Assembly on the question of its credentials and in the debates in the Security Council. It now remains in the United Nations, thanks only to the votes of the three Western Powers, who wield the veto. Many of the smaller Western countries, which have had traditional relations with the South African régime, have recognized that it has no right to be a Member of the United Nations.

Faced with this isolation, the South African régime is trying to make the world believe that it is embarking on some major shifts in its policies. Members might have seen the report on Mr. Vorster's statement two or three days ago, appealing for a few months' time to implement some changes, and the statement of their Foreign Minister yesterday.

If these statements represent a genuine desire for a peaceful solution, in accordance with the principles of the Charter, we would, of course, be delighted. The United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the liberation movements themselves have pressed for years for a peaceful solution, because of the awareness that the alternative is a bloody racial conflict, which would have grave consequences in and beyond South Africa. The sufferers would be not only the black people, but also the white community in South Africa.

A few weeks ago, the Chief of State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, General Yakubu Gowon, received parliamentarians from the opposition Progressive Party in South Africa. He took the opportunity to tell South Africa that the African States and the African peoples were not against the whites, but against the policies of apartheid and against the advocates and apostles of apartheid. He called on the South African whites to take a cue from Portugal and to change their attitude towards the black people in South Africa.

He said: "If such a change is made and there is a move by the South African Government or by white South Africans against apartheid, the effects of such a change are bound to be felt beyond South Africa."

After the recent statements by Mr. Vorster in the white Parliament, the President of the Republic of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, declared in a speech at the University of Zambia on 26 October that, if the South African régime is prepared to seek a peaceful and just solution, Africa stands ready to help create conditions for peaceful change, in accordance with the Manifesto on Southern Africa. a/

I have heard his statement quoted out of context in some cases to suit South African propaganda.

I have studied the statement of Mr. Botha in the Security Council b/ and I have followed the recent reports from South Africa in the hope that the white community and its leaders may have at last given up their dreams of eternal domination over the Africans and may be prepared to seek peace.

There is certainly some evidence that they are beginning to realize that their past course has become untenable.

But it seems to me that their thinking is still far removed from reality and that they are not yet ready to accept the minimum prerequisites for a peaceful and lasting solution. They seem to be thinking in terms of "humanizing" apartheid or "reforming" apartheid - not of eliminating apartheid.

They promise to end some of the so-called "petty apartheid". This "petty apartheid" is not petty at all, in my opinion. It has caused enormous suffering and tension. Under the petty apartheid laws - such as the pass laws - about a million Africans are gaoled every year. Certainly the world would welcome elimination of this so-called "petty apartheid".

They offer increases in the wages of African workers, who are now paid below starvation levels. Certainly the world would welcome an improvement in the wages of the black workers.

They are planning greater investment in the overcrowded African reserves, where the people have been forced to live under miserable conditions. Certainly the world would welcome any improvement in the living conditions in these reserves.

They are considering some concessions to the people of Indian origin and the Coloured people, who have also been subjected to racial discrimination. Certainly, we would not object to any alleviation of the conditions of these communities in South Africa.

a/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-fourth Session, Annexes, agenda item 106, document A/7754.

b/ See S/PV.1800, pp. 27-56.

But all these reforms are in the context of stabilizing and strengthening the system of apartheid. They seem also to be intended to divide the black people. While talking about these reforms, the régime is increasing its repression against the leaders of the black organizations, who are totally opposed to apartheid and refuse to be associated with any apartheid institutions.

What the régime is trying to do is to make some concessions to the so-called leaders of the black people, whom it likes, in return for acceptance for apartheid. We have a name for such people.

We cannot but reject these manoeuvres and we have no doubt that they will not succeed.

As we have often emphasized, the basic problem in South Africa is not the humanitarian problem, but the political problem. There can be no solution in South Africa so long as the leaders of the liberation movements are in gaol and in the absence of negotiations with the liberation movements. This is the first lesson of the developments in the Portuguese Territories.

In the United Nations and in the Organization of African Unity, we have not tried to lay down the constitution of a free South Africa. We have recognized and proclaimed that the future of South Africa is for the people of South Africa to decide on the basis of equality of all men and women.

We have only demanded that the leaders of the liberation movement be released from prison, that the liberation movements be allowed to carry on their legitimate struggle for freedom and that there be consultations among the genuine and legitimate representatives of all the people of South Africa to decide the destiny of the country.

After the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, and in defiance of the Security Council, the South African régime chose the path of conflict and war by banning the African National Congress of South Africa and Pan Africanist Congress of Azania and resorting to repression against the leaders of the people. If the whites of South Africa now seek peace, they must retrace their path.

In his statement before the Security Council, the representative of the South African régime emphasized that his people live and belong to Africa and that their destiny lies in Africa. We would welcome this statement if this meant that they no longer claim to be an appendage of Europe in Africa. We have already declared that no one is against the whites in South Africa so long as they accept that they are Africans and so long as they do not claim a right to oppress the black Africans.

The representative of the South African régime also said that the white people are not better than the black people. He claimed that his régime does not condone discrimination purely on the grounds of race or colour. We know very well that this is utterly untrue, that his régime came to power in 1948 by arousing white fears of a "black peril" and that it has greatly intensified racial discrimination

and oppression. But we have confidence that there can be a peaceful solution if the South African régime is prepared, even now, to negotiate on the basis that there should be no discrimination on the grounds of race or colour.

The South African representative also claimed that his people - the Afrikaners - had struggled against colonial rule and that they accept the right to self-determination. I do not wish to comment on the war between the British and the Boer Republics in 1899, except to note that it was a struggle in which the rights of the great majority of the people of South Africa were ignored. The parliamentary politics of South Africa in the ensuing decades consisted of deals between the Afrikaners and the British at the expense of the black Africans. That time is now past. The interests of the black people, who constitute the great majority of the people, must now be paramount.

I would also like to recall that the struggle of the Boers in 1899 was an armed struggle in which tens of thousands of people died. It was a struggle in which many freedom-loving people from outside South Africa went to fight with the Afrikaners. If the Afrikaners really respect their own struggle for freedom, they should equally respect the right of the African people to struggle by all means for their freedom. They should respect the leaders of the African National Congress of South Africa and the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, who have risked their lives and their freedom in the struggle for liberation.

They should honour leaders like Robert Sobukwe and Nelson Mandela as South African patriots and discuss with them the future of their common homeland.

When they are prepared to follow this course, they will have the goodwill of the whole of Africa and the whole world.

A few days ago, Alan Paton was reported to have said that the three vetoes in the Security Council meant a "stay of execution" for the South African whites. I believe that the expression was not quite appropriate. No one is trying to execute the whites of South Africa. In my own statement in the Security Council, I said that it was no pleasure to propose the expulsion of South Africa. c/ I appealed again to South Africa to follow the path of a peaceful settlement, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The white community, under its present leadership and by its present policies, has been marching towards suicide, while the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity have been trying to save them from disaster.

So long as the white community and its leaders pursue their present course, the international community has no choice but to take collective action to eradicate apartheid. We must first of all redouble our efforts to implement the arms embargo in order to minimize the danger of violence. We must exert economic and other pressures to make the white community realize that it cannot continue on its present collision course. We must give full support to the liberation movements in their struggle for freedom by all means of their choice, including armed struggle.

The test to any Government or any organization which claims to oppose apartheid is its attitude towards such collective measures.