

PUBLIC ACTION AGAINST APARTHEID¹

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I appreciate greatly this opportunity to make a few initial remarks on public action against apartheid.

I believe that my own principal contribution in the United Nations, as the official in charge of action against apartheid from 1963 to 1984, was in encouraging, promoting and assisting, in appropriate ways, the actions of anti-apartheid movements and other nongovernmental organisations, as well as individuals, in campaigns and actions against apartheid and in support of the struggle for liberation in south Africa.

The actions we took with respect to apartheid set precedents which were followed by other United Nations bodies on major issues on which public understanding and support was essential for the effectiveness of the United Nations.

The United Nations began dissemination of information on apartheid in 1963, expanded it in 1965, decided on an active "international campaign against apartheid" in 1966 and called for an "international mobilisation against apartheid" in 1977. The programmes of action against apartheid, endorsed by the General Assembly in 1976 and 1983, gave special attention to public action and the relevant proposals were largely formulated by anti-apartheid movements themselves.

The effort to reach the public, especially in the Western countries, became crucial in 1965 when, after the voluntary arms embargoes by the United States and the United Kingdom, the major Western Powers began to resist any meaningful action against the apartheid regime. The Security Council was paralysed by vetoes or threats of vetoes - and did not even discuss the report submitted by its own Expert Committee in 1965 on sanctions against South Africa - and the smaller Western countries were unwilling to impose any sanctions against the South African regime in the absence of a binding decision by the Security Council.

Our only recourse was to approach public opinion and public organizations in the Western countries.

Already apartheid had outraged, and the freedom struggle in South Africa had inspired, many people in Western countries; trade unions, churches, student and

¹ Speech in Commission 6 of the Swedish People's Parliament against Apartheid, February 22, 1986. The Commission dealt with the theme "No collaboration with apartheid - creating public opinion, culture and sport."

youth groups and other organizations had been pressing for national and international action; the Defence and Aid Fund had been established in Britain and the American Committee on Africa in the United States during the Defiance Campaign in South Africa in 1952; and the boycott movement, launched in Britain in 1959, spread widely after the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, leading to the establishment of anti-apartheid movements in Britain, Ireland and the Nordic countries.

It was largely due to the efforts of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and all its friends that the Labour Party Government in Britain imposed an arms embargo against South Africa in 1964. It was also due to the efforts of the anti-apartheid movements and committed governments that South Africa was forced to withdraw from the Commonwealth in 1961 and excluded from the Olympic Games from 1963.

The United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid which was established in 1963 and its Secretariat arm - which later became the Centre against Apartheid - maintained close contact with the anti-apartheid movements and other committed organizations with the encouragement of the liberation movement. The representatives of these non-governmental organizations were not treated as mere petitioners but as partners in action. Many resolutions in the United Nations resulted from their suggestions and requests. A series of conferences and seminars - which brought together representatives of United Nations bodies, governments, liberation movements, and anti-apartheid groups - led to co-ordinated actions.

Anti-apartheid movements were soon established in practically all Western countries. They were often small opposition groups at inception, and benefited greatly from the moral support of the United Nations. Apartheid became a national issue in several countries.

We felt at first that the main contribution of anti-apartheid movements was to build up national public opinion in order to persuade their governments to co-operate with the United Nations in action against apartheid. But experience has shown that their role and significance is much wider.

They organised boycotts and sanctions against apartheid by the public. They promoted action by major public organizations and institutions, by Parliamentarians and by local authorities. The recent surge of action by hundreds of cities and other local authorities in Western countries is unprecedented on any international issue.

The most effective pressure against the apartheid regime last year - the suspension of loans to South Africa by major Western banks - was essentially the result of actions by students, churches, trade unions and local authorities over the years.

The anti-apartheid groups have provided, through public collections, substantial

assistance to the victims of apartheid and the liberation movements. They have been able to send the assistance inside South Africa despite bans and harassment by the regime and to respond to the needs of liberation movements not covered by governmental assistance.

When governments took limited actions, they helped sustain the actions and prepare the ground for stronger actions.

The vigilance and support of the anti-apartheid movements has been very important for the implementation of United Nations decisions - as in the case of sanctions against Southern Rhodesia and the arms embargo against South Africa.

They have organised international campaigns on many aspects of apartheid. The Mandela campaign, for instance, is of tremendous scope and significance.

The sports boycott has involved millions of people - sportspersons, fans and others - around the world. The cultural boycott is assuming similar scope, especially as musicians, artists and writers not only boycott South Africa but devote their talents to reach millions of people in the rest of the world with their message.

People hesitate to refer to the achievements of anti-apartheid campaigns since the oppression in South Africa continued to worsen - but we need to recognise and assess the results of the work in order to go forward.

In 1963, not a single Western government supported sanctions against South Africa. Now the majority of Western governments not only favour sanctions but have taken significant, though limited, measures. Even the major Powers which oppose sanctions have been obliged to take some action.

The British Government was obliged to terminate the only military agreement to which South Africa was a party and the only mandatory arms embargo by the United Nations is against South Africa.

The apartheid regime is increasingly isolated in many fields.

Above all, I think that anti-apartheid groups have helped develop public understanding of the liberation struggle in South Africa so that the propaganda by the apartheid regime that the liberation movement is terrorist, that the violence is due to fratricidal warfare among blacks and so on has not had the effect that **it** hoped for.

People of varied racial origins and ideological persuasions have participated in the anti-apartheid movement and rebuffed those who have tried to perpetuate apartheid by fanning racial prejudice and utilising the "cold war." This movement reaffirms our faith in humanity and reinforces the faith of the South African

people in a truly non-racial society. It has also had a very healthy impact on the climate of opinion in Western countries.

I must pay tribute to the leaders, members and supporters of the anti-apartheid movement for the enormous sacrifices they have made in the long struggle.

Hundreds of people went to jail in Australia in 1971 in the demonstrations against the South African rugby tour and two thousand were arrested in New Zealand in 1981. Three thousand people courted imprisonment in the Free South Africa movement in the United States since November 1984, and many thousands in the British anti-apartheid campaigns. Hundreds, if not thousands, were injured in demonstrations or sacrificed their careers. Many sportspersons and musicians have rejected fabulous offers of money - in some cases, millions of dollars - from apartheid because of their convictions.

I have devoted my remarks mainly to the past and will be very brief as regards action in the future since participants will no doubt have valuable suggestions.

The purpose of anti-apartheid activity is no more a mere dissociation from evil or condemnation of injustice or even an expression of human solidarity. It is to assist the liberation movement, by all appropriate means, in this crucial phase of the struggle to destroy apartheid and build a non-racial society. Our programmes will need to be determined in the light of the assessments and requests by the liberation movement.

It is now clear that apartheid is doomed and is dying. Efforts are being made, however, to enable racist domination somehow to survive into the twenty-first century and even to assist the apartheid regime to dominate the whole of southern Africa. The moves to sow divisions among the oppressed people in South Africa and to resurrect UNITA to act as a crutch for apartheid are dangerous, even though all efforts to keep apartheid alive through artificial respiration are doomed to failure. There is a grave danger of continued killing of the people in South Africa and escalation of aggression against neighbouring African States.

The need for decisive action to destroy apartheid is more urgent than ever.

It is useless to try to persuade the apartheid regime to reform and any changes it initiates are at best irrelevant. Action must be focussed on the few major Powers which are following a disastrous policy.

At the same time, there must be continued and increasing effort to see that all other States impose sanctions against apartheid and support the liberation movement. Many of them have not even implemented the very limited measures announced by the European Communities and the Commonwealth last September and October.

There must be a greater effort to reach the masses of people. The musicians and

artists have begun to help in this respect. Prominent sportsmen, writers and others should also be encouraged to participate actively in the anti-apartheid campaigns.

There must be greater consultation among anti-apartheid organizations to internationalise the campaigns which are now confined to the national level. I have in mind particularly the campaign for people's sanctions against apartheid which is most timely and crucial.

I would also like to emphasise that in all campaigns, the issue of Namibian independence should always be linked with the liberation of South Africa.

I was happy that the Nordic Governments decided last October not only to take certain actions but to encourage action by local authorities in their countries and by other governments. The government of Canada announced that it would encourage action by local authorities, non-governmental organizations and individuals.

I hope it will be possible to strengthen cooperation of anti-apartheid movements and other committed organizations with the United Nations system, the Non-aligned Movement and the Organisation of African Unity, as well as many individual governments in all regions, so as to ensure that the level of solidarity action matches the present stage of the struggle in South Africa and Namibia and secures the liberation of those nations without further delay.