

Statement  
on  
THE  
UNITED NATIONS  
AND THE  
REPUBLIC OF  
SOUTH AFRICA

BISHOP JAMES S. RAUSCH  
General Secretary  
United States  
Catholic Conference

October 9, 1975

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For more than a decade, the conduct of the government of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) has been the subject of controversy among nations, and especially in the United Nations Organization. Furthermore, the RSA's conduct is a source of embarrassment and consternation to supporters of the principle of universality of membership in the United Nations.

Two principal issues place the UN-RSA relations in jeopardy:

1. RSA's policy of separate development (apartheid) violates many of the basic human rights of the majority of its citizens who are black. Among these violations are infringement on the right to travel within their own country, search and seizure at will of police, imprisonment under cover of a myriad of laws restricting black people, labor contracts which separate working men from their families for extended periods of time and force them to live in inhuman barrack conditions. In addition, in its efforts to resolve its racial problem, RSA is carrying out its plan to confine its black population to Bantustans—areas amounting to 13 per-

cent of the land, but which would, when fully developed, contain about 80 percent of the total population of the Republic.

2. The most specific charge against RSA is its position on Namibia (South West Africa). In October 1966, the U.N. General Assembly terminated South Africa's mandate over Namibia and placed the territory under the direct responsibility of the United Nations. In 1969, the U.N. Security Council adopted a resolution calling on South Africa to withdraw immediately from Namibia. In the interim, the RSA has resisted the jurisdiction of the United Nations (jurisdiction confirmed by the International Court of Justice four years ago) in the latter's efforts to establish an independent, majority-rule government in Namibia, which was clearly the intention of the U.N. resolutions. RSA has, on the contrary, refused to withdraw from the territory and has gone forward in planning elections under its own supervision in anticipation of installing its Bantustan system in Namibia. Such elections are not likely to give assurance to the world that the genuine desires of the majority of Namibian people will be respected.

In view of these flagrant violations of both the spirit and the mandate of the U.N. Charter, the U.N. General Assembly repeatedly has condemned RSA's apartheid as a "crime against humanity," and has described it as "abhorrent to the conscience of mankind."

Despite serious differences among member states about the appropriate international actions to deal with South Africa's violations, the Security Council in 1963 passed a resolution calling upon all member states to cease the sale and shipment of military arms and equipment to South Africa. This arms embargo was later extended to include equipment and materials for the

manufacture and maintenance of arms and ammunition.

South Africa's continued pursuit of apartheid, its constant build-up of military power and its insistence upon ignoring the U.N. resolutions finally prompted the Security Council in June 1975, to consider whether, under the provisions of Article VII of the U.N. Charter, RSA is a potential threat to international peace.

In view of the intransigence of the RSA relative to the U.N. resolutions, the General Assembly has taken the position that the Security Council enforcement action, under Article VII, is essential, to effect an appropriate change, and that "universally applied mandatory economic sanctions are the only means of achieving a peaceful solution." 'To date, however, the Security Council has not taken such enforcement action against RSA.

Adherence to the principle of the universality of a membership in the United Nations cannot obscure certain practices of a nation whose very conduct erodes the strength and vitality of the United Nations itself. The history of RSA's relations with the United Nations presents ample evidence to question RSA's status as a member in full standing in the United Nations.

Last year the General Assembly refused to seat the RSA's delegation; it may do the same this year. While expulsion from U.N. membership is the prerogative of the U.N. Security Council, such drastic action should be undertaken only after all other efforts have failed and reasons clearly exist meriting such a measure.

Expulsion at this time would merely isolate RSA from the potential ameliorative influence of the full assembly of member nations, and the words of its critics would be heard only remotely. Furthermore, the possibility of negotiating a settlement of the Namibia dispute might be postponed until, perhaps, after a bloody guerilla war.

However, mere exhortation against the conduct of RSA and voluntary prohibition by member nations appears to be ineffective. The conduct of the Republic of South Africa has continually placed severe strains on the U.N.'s delicate apparatus. Certainly the peace and tranquility in Southern Africa has not been fostered by the Republic's apartheid policies and practices. Repeated efforts by the U.N. Assembly to change the Republic's racist policies and its position on Namibia appear to have been minimal at best.

The time indeed may come when the Security Council is compelled to expel RSA from U.N. membership. The Security Council will have to weigh carefully the real effects of such an action—beyond the rhetoric—against the always-to-be-desired course of dialogue, negotiation, and peaceful settlement. Article 41 of the Charter provides a number of options, including mandatory sanctions, within the framework of the United Nations, to attempt to effect more universally acceptable conduct by a member nation.

In the case of RSA, its conduct warrants serious consideration for the U.N. Security Council to invoke mandatory sanctions. Of course such action, to be faithful to the intention of the Charter and to achieve a significant measure of effectiveness, requires sincere commitment and genuine efforts to enforce the mandate by all the nations.

In an interdependent world, the future of all nations and peoples is tied to the fate of each. The bonds of material interdependence we share range from economic ties through our ecological heritage to nuclear danger. The task of the age is to move from material interdependence to moral interdependence. It is time for all nations, especially the more powerful ones, to realize that their participation in oppression and the denial of human freedom to citizens of other lands is ultimately destructive of peace. It is time for all nations, especially our own, to give to hu-

man dignity priority over political, military, and economic interests.

Pope Paul stated the issue well at his meeting with the U.N. Special Committee on Apartheid in 1974:

As long as the rights of all the peoples, among them the right to self-determination and independence, are not duly recognized and honored, there cannot be true and lasting peace, even though the abusive power of arms may for a time prevail over the reactions of those opposed. For as long as, within the individual national communities, those in power do not nobly respect the rights and legitimate freedoms of the citizens, tranquillity and order (even though they can be maintained by force) remain nothing but a deceptive and insecure sham, no longer worthy of a society of civilized beings. Therefore, from our vantage point we earnestly call upon all men of goodwill to recognize this and to give heed to the just yearnings of individuals and peoples.

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