

By Gregory Goldin

LOS ANGELES

**A** PARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA IS EVERY bit as repressive today as it was in 1984 when Bishop Desmond Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Pretoria appears more determined than ever to hold on to power no matter what the cost. Under the state of emergency, township youths continue to fill the jails and, with nightmarish clockwork, the graveyards. Demonstrations, spontaneous or otherwise, are strictly *verboden*. Political leaders, such as recently released African National Congress (ANC) official Govan Mbeki—who was imprisoned on a life sentence for treason 25 years ago along with ANC leader Nelson Mandela—are banned from public life and relegated to an internal exile of silence and poverty. Press censorship keeps a tight lid on the dissemination of news, inside and out.

War with the frontline states—Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia and Botswana—provides South Africa with a lever of destabilization, helping apartheid to maintain the illusion that decolonized Africa is intent on toppling a pro-Western government. Anchored by granite intransigence, the ruling Afrikaners face the certain future of black rule dressed in full riot gear. The lessons of Zimbabwe (formerly white-ruled Rhodesia), where the head of state, Robert Mugabe, made a successful transition to black rule, have escaped Pretoria.

In such a situation truth is always the first casualty. Who speaks for the disenfranchised majority of South Africa?

Allan Boesak, 41, is a founder of the United Democratic Front (UDF), the umbrella grouping of South African opposition organizations. He is one leader to emerge in the decade that has passed since the murder of Steven Biko. Boesak is a black minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, the denomination that has provided Afrikaners with the spiritual and practical underpinning of apartheid. As UDF head he has been jailed for subversion because he planned a march to Pollsmoor Prison near Cape Town to demand the release of Nelson Mandela. Boesak



Rev. Allan Boesak

is also president of the World Alliance of Reform Churches, which has condemned apartheid as "heresy" and a "sin toward mankind." In a land where every political leader is imprisoned or exiled, banned or underground, Boesak, like Desmond Tutu, has used the pulpit as a soapbox.

In *These Times* interviewed Boesak while he was in Los Angeles to deliver a Christmas Eve sermon on the plight of the more than 1,000 children held in South African prisons. **Does South African President P.W. Botha's government have any choice but to let Nelson Mandela out of prison?** In the end, no. They're postponing the inevitable.



Woman at UDF rally the night after the lifting of the state of emergency in 1986.

## Boesak on the South African tempest

**What will his release mean? He's been in prison for 25 years, and one has to ask if he is still a political leader.**

I have no doubt about that. They first thought they could do what they did with [South-West Africa People's Organization official] Toivo ya Toivo in Namibia. When they let him out [after 17 years] nothing happened. But when Mandela comes out there will not be a void like there was in Namibia. The UDF has prepared a stage for Mandela. Everybody knows him. The younger kids, the genera-

tions that were born after the man had been sent to prison, they know Mandela. There is no doubt that Mandela will be the political leader. And there is no doubt that the people will make very clear that they would rather have him as president of South Africa than P.W. Botha.

**White South Africans say that if the ANC and Mandela come to power, they'll repeat what has happened in every de-colonized black African nation: tribal warfare, bloody coups and so forth.**

They're lying. White people in South Africa are not afraid that we will emulate the Mau Mau (Kenya's violent black uprising in the '50s). They are afraid that we will imitate [South Africa's ruling] National Party. They are afraid that we will do exactly the same to them that they have done to us.

**Isn't that possible? After all, the ANC is committed, if necessary, to the violent overthrow of apartheid.**

If you talk about a real revolutionary move-

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### Branching out: new strategies for the Free South Africa Movement

CHICAGO—On January 15 a small group of marchers demonstrated outside of the South African consulate here, linking the birthdate—and thus the legacy—of Dr. Martin Luther King to protests against South Africa's apartheid government. The demonstration was further testimony to the perseverance of Free South Africa Movement's (FSAM) members, many of whom have conducted weekly demonstrations outside the consulate for more than two years.

But the group's small size was evidence of the South African government's success in lowering its profile by censoring news coming out of the country. According to protest organizers, South Africa's stringent press censorship is largely responsible for the U.S. public's dwindling interest in that country's racist repression of its black majority.

"There's no doubt that South Africa's news blackout is dampening protests all over the country," said Robert Starks, chairman of the Chicago-area FSAM. "But there are other factors as well. The Reagan-sponsored myth that the sanctions we struggled for have not worked is confusing a lot of people who abhor apartheid but don't know how to fight it."

Conversely, there's a perception that because of the sanctions imposed on South Africa and the exodus of several U.S. companies from that troubled land, anti-apartheid protests were successful. "We were somewhat successful in forcing those minimum changes," Starks said, "but things

in South Africa have gotten worse" (see story on page 12).

In recent months FSAM has shifted its emphasis from a one-dimensional focus on South Africa to a broader concern with the regional problems of southern Africa. Movement leaders contend the U.S. and South Africa are combining forces to destabilize the so-called front line states. In Angola and Mozambique, South Africa is flagrantly sponsoring proxy armies, while in the U.S. congressional conservatives are mounting campaigns to fund the insurgent groups by using the appeal of anti-communism.

"We believe that there is a system of governmental misconduct in this country's southern Africa policy that is much worse than that revealed in the Iran-contra scandal," Starks said. FSAM has tried to convince media sources to follow the trail, partially revealed in congressional testimony during the Iran-contra hearings, of covert activity in southern Africa. But according to movement leaders, there is little interest in exposing U.S. links to terrorism in that region.

In attempts to remedy that situation, Proxy Nesbitt, formerly an articulate leader of the Chicago-area anti-apartheid movement, has been hired as a congressional lobbyist for the government of Mozambique. Nesbitt said he will try to pierce the anti-communist hysteria that passes for geopolitical analysis and present the case of Mozambicans who have been ravaged by South African-sponsored terrorism for

more than a decade. Already Nesbitt has revealed RENAMO's role in halting Red Cross emergency food airlifts to drought-stricken communities in Mozambique.

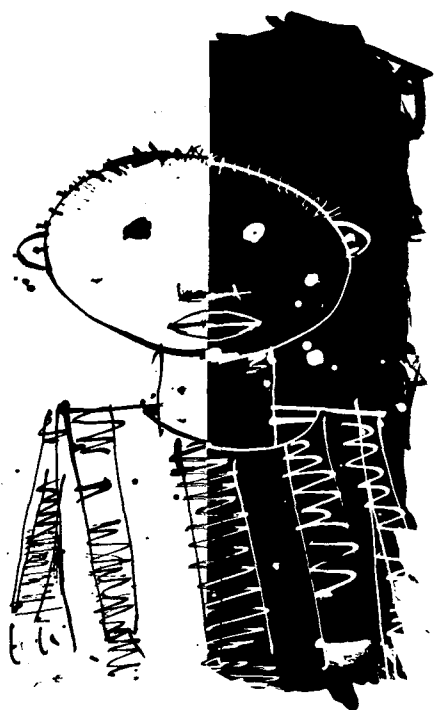
The U.S. is aiding South Africa and UNITA, its ally, in destabilizing Angola. The pattern of terror within the two countries is disturbingly similar. U.S.-made Stinger missiles are suspected in the 1987 crash of a Red Cross plane bringing food and medicine to the more than 100,000 refugees of the U.S.- and South African-sponsored civil war in Angola. The Red Cross has since suspended its efforts.

Another shift noted by Starks was a broadening of concerns to include other victims of occupation and state terrorism. "We also marched on the Israeli embassy on Dr. King's birthday," he explained, adding that he believed Israel's brutal occupation of the Palestinian homeland is on a par with South Africa's policies. "And Israel remains the major violator of the U.S. embargo on arms to South Africa."

By finding common cause with Palestinians protesting Israel's stormtrooper tactics in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip, FSAM leaders realize it risks alienating backers who may deplore apartheid but support Zionism. In fact, it was that fear, along with the notion that a broadened focus would dilute the power of anti-apartheid sentiments, that caused FSAM leaders to resist those links in the past. But now they are willing to forge stronger bonds with Palestinian protestors.

—Salim Muwakkil





By Matt Witt

**M**ULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS THAT want to continue to profit under South Africa's apartheid system have developed a new public-relations strategy after a year in which their old one, based on the so-called "Sullivan Principles," collapsed. Among the architects of the new corporate PR offensive is Royal Dutch/Shell, which must counteract an international boycott aimed at forcing the giant oil company to stop supplying South Africa with crucial petroleum products.

For the past decade, multinationals involved in South Africa have defended themselves against charges that they prop up the apartheid regime by supplying it with oil, computers, technology and investment capital. If the corporations would disinvest and cut off all economic ties, their critics say, the apartheid system could not survive.

Until recently, the corporate defense was based on guidelines developed during the mid-'70s in cooperation with General Motors board member Leon Sullivan, a black minister from Philadelphia. In theory, the Sullivan Principles required such reforms as integrated factory lunchrooms, but even those minor changes were complied with only sporadically.

Meanwhile, companies could continue to profit from cheap labor under a system in which 85 percent of the population cannot

# New corporate strategy on South Africa

exercise the freedom to organize or speak freely, own property (except in isolated reservations), or work or live where they choose. "We're abiding by the Sullivan Principles," the corporations would say, and many legislators and editorial writers would not probe further.

In recent years, however, the movement demanding corporate disinvestment from South Africa has organized widespread public support and has effectively discredited the Sullivan defense. Then last June Rev. Sullivan himself officially withdrew support from his own principles, saying they had not and would not bring fundamental change.

To fill the resulting void, the corporations apparently plan to change their emphasis from how they supposedly make life under apartheid more bearable to how they are needed to prepare South African blacks for

**Multinationals are changing their emphasis from how they allegedly make life under apartheid more bearable to how they are needed to prepare South African blacks for a "post-apartheid society." They do not say how apartheid will be abolished.**

a "post-apartheid society." When apartheid ends someday, blacks will need to be ready to step into new roles as corporate technicians and supervisors, according to this defense. Multinational corporations say they

must stay in South Africa to train blacks to assume those roles, and believe their critics should support that effort rather than try to cut off economic support for apartheid. As was the case for years with the Sullivan Principles, how apartheid will be abolished is not addressed.

**Secret plan:** The clearest expression of this PR strategy is contained in a 265-page game plan for combatting the Shell boycott. Code-named the Neptune Strategy, the plan was developed for Shell after the boycott was endorsed by major churches, civil rights groups, unions and other organizations in the U.S. and 11 other industrialized countries. It was prepared for Shell by Pagan International, a consulting firm founded by Rafael Pagan, who helped Nestle counter the boycott it faced over unethical marketing practices that endangered the lives of babies in poor countries.

According to the Shell plan, "post-apartheid planning should deflect [anti-apartheid groups'] attention away from the boycott and disinvestment efforts and direct their vision and energy into productive channels."

To implement this strategy, Shell hired, through Pagan International, a former president of the National Council of Churches, James Armstrong. He and Pagan met with top church leaders and "went to great lengths to move the discussion to focus on post-apartheid South Africa," said Tim Smith of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR). "Shell's goal was to obscure ways in which Shell concretely supports white minority rule and apartheid by diverting the debate."

The church strategy backfired on Shell when the ICCR obtained a copy of the Neptune Strategy paper and released it to the news media. Several churches, including the United Church of Christ and American Baptist Churches, reacted by strengthening their support for the boycott.

**about the violence between your United Democratic Front and Zulu leader Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha (a more conservative black political movement based in Natal Province's Kwa-Zulu homeland). The enmity is characterized as evidence of a split in the opposition.**

Inkatha is a homeland-based group. Inkatha worries that if the situation should change, they would not have the place that they want for themselves in the new South Africa. Now that Buthelezi sees that he is becoming less popular, that the UDF is growing in spite of what is happening in Natal, he gets far more desperate. Part of that desperation comes out in the kind of violence that you see. Also, we know that the police have been helping Inkatha. We saw it at the funeral of Victoria Mxenge [UDF lawyer assassinated in 1985]. People were inside the church, the police threw tear gas in, the people ran out into the spears and the guns of Inkatha. And the police stood around as if nothing were happening. And that same pattern is repeating itself.

**What about on the labor front? Few would doubt that organized labor holds a key to the liberation process. Can you**



In 1986 students at the University of Cape Town

To "minimize the involvement of the major civil rights groups" in the boycott, Shell hired, again through Pagan, a former national staffer of the United Methodist Church, Rev. Gilbert Caldwell. Caldwell helped establish the "Coalition on Southern Africa," a committee of black church leaders and university administrators that told reporters of the need to help South African blacks prepare for the "post-apartheid period." The group called for more U.S. scholarships for poten-

**tell us what happened in the miners' strike last fall? What appeared to be a critical effort ended in failure.**

We do not believe that the strikers failed. The strikers failed only insofar as the workers did not get the percentage in terms of money that they wanted. But the strike was about more than money. The strike was a political test for us. And we won. It was the first time that Cyril Ramaphosa [leader of the National Union of Mineworkers] had an opportunity to test his own leadership, among his own workers, and the bosses, and the South African government. The mine-workers showed that they were willing to suffer day after day, to risk harassment, shootings, privation, and forcible return to the homelands. Their children and their families had to do without. There was no big, million-dollar strike fund to dip into. And yet, in spite of all of that, the strike went on for three-and-a-half weeks. I hope that it was a sort of warming-up exercise.

**Are you talking about a revolutionary situation?**

That is what is happening. I don't think you will find anybody in black South Africa who

## Boesak

Continued from preceding page

ment, the ANC fails. In 1960 the ANC said "after 50 years of non-violent action we are now also going to have some military action." But it took them another 20 years to begin the program. If you talk to Oliver Tambo today, he says, "you know, I agonize over the fact that we must do things that will kill people at home." The South African government doesn't deserve a man like Tambo. They deserve someone who is a cold-blooded murderer, if you want to put it that way.

**At what stage is the black rebellion?**

I think we are further along the road now than ever before. Never before in our history have so many people been involved at so many different levels...People are involved from every oppressed community. Also, the workers are involved in an organized way. The students, the young people are involved. And it is ongoing. They banned one youth organization, and a few months later the young people formed another. The South African Federation of Women is being formed

again, involving more women than the previous one. Taking into account what the South African government has been trying to do in the past few years, it is no less than a miracle, to use Tambo's words, to look at the people and see what we are still able to do in that situation.

**One has the impression of spontaneous, not organized, resistance.**

A lot is happening. For example, there was real organizing responding to the release of Govan Mbeki. And I don't know what they thought. Maybe they thought that people would just say it's Mbeki, it's not Mandela. But then the community wanted to welcome the man. They had to ban the rally in Port Elizabeth. We organized another rally in Cape Town, we were expecting 100,000 people by the police account, not ours, so there would have been many more. They banned that rally. And then they banned Govan Mbeki. Why? It is because they know that in spite of the state of emergency the people would have come in the hundreds of thousands to welcome the man.

**You sound very optimistic about political possibilities. Yet, most news coverage is**