

## Sanctions Shore up

### Apartheid

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**K**ipling listed keeping your head whilst all those around you are losing theirs as the first of his prerequisites for manhood. Voters prefer reason to ranting moral indignation when it comes to electing their government. They did in 1983 and so will they again in 1987. The blissful, righteous ignorance of opposition is luxury indeed when contrasted to the necessary wisdom of government. The authors of the present SDP policy statement on sanctions and apartheid, *Ending Apartheid*, clearly seem to prefer the former, losing their heads totally by coming up with a set of policies to impoverish the whole of southern Africa and put it under Soviet control.

Of course, that is not their intention. Beyond trying to catch a few faddish voters by espousing the current good cause, I would imagine that deep within their none-too-original advocacy of economic sanctions and disinvestment lies the hope that President Botha can be brought by poverty to end apartheid. But, vandalising the South African economy will do nothing of the sort. Sanctions and disinvestment will surely stifle trade and industry in South Africa. Many people, Blacks especially, will lose their jobs, whilst most will take some cut in living standards. Thus will sanctions make most South Africans poorer and more miserable, but that is not at all the same thing as ending apartheid.

#### Poverty does not equal Revolution

Poverty and isolation do not, of themselves bring down unjust regimes. Indeed, many such regimes have voluntarily opted for isolationism and a protected economy. The classic example here is Albania which has been out in the cold since the late 1960s. Though Albanians are none the richer for it, their government has not been made any more tolerant. Albania, though its government wishes none of it, cannot but on

occasion break with its protectionist faith and admit foreign goods. If protectionist Albania can do so in spite of its best intentions, why could not a sanctioned South Africa do likewise in spite of the best intentions of others. Where there's a will, there's a way. Has everyone forgotten the degree of sanctions-busting that went on in Salisbury under Ian Smith?

An interesting footnote to all this is that the most vehemently protectionist wing of the Labour Party backs sanctions. Though Heffer, Benn and the rest think that protectionism will make the UK supremely viable, they yet manage to argue that an autarkical South Africa is a dead duck! In fact, isolation and poverty would make life a lot harder in South Africa, as they would in Britain, but apartheid would go on. The Soviet Union is much poorer than South Africa and Ethiopia is poorer still. The poverty of the people has neither affected the resolve of the governments in question nor the apathy of the masses in putting up with them. About the only political consequence of sanctions would be that Botha would either abandon his reforms or get the electoral chop. The effect, in either case, would be about the same. Though Botha is, in the eyes of most Western observers, the blackest man in Africa, the whole sanctions business depends implicitly upon his being there to be stung by six of the sanctions best into making sweeping changes. Since after sanctions - if he is there at all - he would be in no mood for reform, the whole thing would be academic. Even if we could starve him into legalising the ANC and giving non-Whites the vote, what would come of it? If the ANC won a majority of the votes in any free and fair election, as it surely would, there would follow one-party rule at the soonest possible opportunity and effective Soviet domination of South Africa and its satellites. In bringing all this about by sanctions and disinvestment, we would have functioned as the honest dupes of the revolution. We would have been blinded by our hatred of apartheid into assisting the overthrow of a government which is, at least, responsible to a few million Whites, and its replacement by one responsible to a handful of Kremlin lackeys. Small wonder then, that

faced with a choice between such domination or the privations of self-sufficiency under sanctions, most white South Africans would prefer to take their chances with the latter.

Some pro-sanctions people are honest. They are out to abet a revolutionary black dictatorship by inducing an economic crisis in South Africa. This too is nonsensical. Many on the far left in Britain longed for such a slump here, believing that it would spark the workers into revolution. Today, with a slump of that sort part of everyday reality and no revolution on the cards, the same people are hopeful of a boom to engender the same rebellious spirit. But revolutions and wars are not subject to such economic laws of cause and effect. They depend upon all manner of things, including the beliefs of those involved. It cannot be denied however, that both are more logistically feasible the greater the availability of resources to some or all of those involved. In any South African civil war, the Whites would win, even if the front-line states became involved in the conflict. South Africa's neighbours are too weak, poor and divided by tribalism to mount any effective challenge to the Pretoria regime. Since most depend, to varying degrees, upon South Africa for trade transit, tourists, a place for work for migrant labourers, and even, in some cases, currency, sanctions would impoverish them as well. In fact, though the misery of sanctions would affect almost everyone from Cape Town to the southern tip of Lake Tanganyika, Blacks would be the worst affected. The idea that such starving people might somehow make a revolution is truly madness.

I have tried to show that sanctions would probably lead to nothing more than a poorer southern Africa and a South African government less likely than ever to go in for reform. Furthermore, the consequences of universal suffrage - likely ANC domination etc. - are too grim for most Whites. They would prefer the relative privation which would accompany any attempt to ride out sanctions. I hope that I have demonstrated the poor case for arguing that sanctions will make a revolution mere likely. How then, can apartheid be ended?

## **Trade away Apartheid**

Clearly, apartheid will only end when Blacks and other non-Whites are sufficiently powerful to demand that the relevant, abominable pieces of legislation are scrapped. Such power will come only when the fragmentation of the black population, which is the result of centuries of tribalism, is ended. Industrialisation has opened to many Blacks an escape from the narrowness of tribalism through involvement in the urban social world and all that it has to offer. Opponents of apartheid as diverse as Alan Paton, Helen Suzman, Steve Biko and Gatscha Buthelezi have long realised this and are against sanctions and disinvestment. They realise that a thriving economy will mean more jobs for Blacks and that better trained and paid Blacks will be in a stronger position to organise and agitate for more political say. The most reactionary of Afrikaners have long been aware of the potentially subversive effect of a thriving economy and have even argued for a protectionist policy on the grounds that a poorer South Africa will be less likely to be troubled by upwardly mobile Blacks. Sanctions would thus play right into their hands.

Any thriving economy needs workers. A thriving South African economy is no different and this need must be met either through the training of non-Whites or through the attraction of foreign workers. This latter has been a rather inefficient compromise to appease the protectionist bigots. Foreign workers tend to come from the multi-racial societies of the West and have been critical of apartheid. Since the anti-apartheid movement has succeeded in conferring pariah status upon any who choose to seek work in South Africa, it is likely that the number of liberal types doing so has fallen off of late. If that is the case then our impotent anti-racists can rest assured that Britain is giving the Boers the sort of Western immigrant much more to their liking.

Sanctions and disinvestment would simply remove the only real chance for the non-White advancement in South Africa - involvement in a thriving economy. It is necessary to disdain political fads and call

for more, not less involvement in the South African economy. The anti-apartheid movement would be better occupied if it lobbied British companies in South Africa and demanded that these start to do more for their black employees in terms of training, pay and promotion.

As private companies, they have the freedom to flout the conventions of institutionalised racism within their own walls, and they should be urged to do so. In effect, sanctions should be opposed in favour of constructive engagement. It is only the latter which is likely to have any serious, long-term beneficial consequences. As the one approach to apartheid which takes account of political and economic realities, it is to be commanded above the wrong-headedness of the sanctionites and disinvestors. In politics, it is necessary to learn early that elections and issues are won and lost on the basis of which parties aspire to govern and which aspire to gesture; which aspire to realism, and which to fantasy.

**Free Life**