

Relating to Southern Africa: A Voice From the Church

In a press conference held on March 20, 1970, the tenth anniversary of the massacre of dozens of South African blacks in Sharpeville, South Africa, representatives of six Protestant denominations, of the National and the World Council of Churches, and of several related organizations—such as the National Committee of Black Churchmen—issued statements condemning racial oppression and social injustice in Southern Africa. These groups agreed to rally around three themes: (1) support of the use of moral and economic pressure on the American economic community's "business as usual" relations with Southern Africa; (2) humanitarian support for the cause of liberation movements in Southern Africa; and (3) a commitment to urge the U.S. government to seek ways to press for racial justice in Southern Africa. Among the statements presented at the press conference was the following, a brief but direct address by Dr. Alford Carleton, Executive Vice-President, Board for World Ministries, United Church of Christ:

The Church of Jesus Christ has always been concerned with the denials of justice and human dignity. The UCBWM and the United Church of Christ and its sister denominations have expressed their concern for the unjust conditions existing in Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia, South and Southwest Africa.

To our satisfaction, the U.S. policy as expressed by President Nixon and Secretary of State Rogers reflects some of the same concerns about injustices in Southern Africa as those of the Christian Church. In President Nixon's statement of African policy he said: "Clearly there is no question of the U.S. condoning or acquiescing in racial policies of white-ruled regimes. For moral as well as historical reasons, the United States stands firmly for the principles of racial equality and self-determination." On March 9, 1970, Mr. Rogers emphasized in the strongest terms that the sentiments of the United States are on the side of the African majority by closing the consulate in Rhodesia.

In light of the foregoing:

We urge the Administration to discontinue Defense Department training of Portuguese forces in anti-guerrilla warfare—training which can only be useful in Portugal's war of colonial domination.

We urge our Government to study Portugal's use of arms supplied under NATO agreements in their attempts to maintain control of African colonies—and to take appropriate action to cut off such supplies to Portugal.

We urge Congressional action to revise the Sugar Act which has granted South Africa a lucrative portion of our sugar purchases at higher than world market prices. This act was meant to assist developing nations. Assisting the white-ruled racist government of South Africa should not be included in this act.

We urge the Administration to review the activities of the Commerce Department which is encouraging increased American investments in South Africa. We believe the activities of the Commerce Department should be directed rather to encouraging American industry in South Africa to ensure that non-white employees are treated in a manner reflecting our American commitment to equality in both working conditions, living facilities and wages.

Finally, we urge our State Department to reconsider their present policy of appointing white Americans only to diplomatic posts in Southern Africa. This policy is supportative of national racist policies, particularly in South Africa. In view of the presence of other non-white diplomats in South Africa, our government should see that our own racial balance is reflected in its diplomatic appointments in that area.

The churches have charged their boards and agencies to implement their policies with programs of education and action, using the political channels available. This means wide dissemination of facts about what is happening in these countries, through the press and other news media. We believe this program should be carried on in cooperation with secular agencies interested in furthering the cause of justice and human dignity. We urge the U.S. government to seek new ways to press for racial justice in Southern Africa and to end those policies which lend support to minority rule.

