

fifteen years has seen rapid growth in social programs targeted at blacks. And since in South Africa as in other threatened states, security and defence programs are the last to be cut when funds are tight, capital sanctions are likely to impinge first and foremost on social programs. In other words, capital sanctions, even those confined specifically to loans to the South African government, have in all probability slowed down the otherwise accelerating trend toward redistribution from white to black. Moreover each round of sanctions raises demands for government circumvention, and actually strengthens the state in its least liberal roles.

Domestic pressure

An alternative hypothesis is that the pressure for redistribution actually originated with sanctions. But most who are familiar with the Afrikaner mentality agree that if anything, foreign pressure redoubles Pretoria's resistance to change. Effective pressure for apartheid reform and social programs originated largely with domestic sources. Notably, the South African business community has sought to remedy the shortage of skilled workers, and to generate more affluent black consumers. Improved black education, the lowering of color bars which affect consumers and the removal of pass laws can all be traced to business pressure. Probably the second most important domestic pressure group has been the black labor union movement, which has arisen despite sanctions rather than because of them.

Disinvestment has proved perhaps the least gratifying anti-apartheid weapon of all. Since the beginning of 1986 well over 100 foreign firms have pulled out. Their physical plant has usually remained intact in South Africa, and has been acquired at bargain-basement prices that have made South African buyers rich. The most tangible effect on apartheid reform has been that foreign influence over unemployment practices, and moral support for South Africa's liberal business community, has markedly diminished.

Big business winners

A leading winner from sanctions and disinvestment has been big business. The share of the big four conglomerates on the Johannesburg exchange — Anglo-American, Sanlam, South African Mutual and Rembrandt — has gone from 70 percent in 1983 to 83 percent in 1987. Big business will also gain from capital-intensive import-replacement projects, such as the Mossel Bay oil-from-gas scheme. Management also gains from disinvestment, as local employees of disinvested firms move up the corporate ladder.

In theory, black businessmen can also compete for the spoils from disinvestment and sanctions, and their prospects have been enhanced by the Small Business Development Corporation, set up by Pretoria to provide financial and technical aid for black entrepreneurs. But black losers greatly outnumber black winners, as capital:labor ratios rise, and as foreign firms leave, reducing both employment and the quality of remaining employment. A study by the liberal South African economist R.W. Bethlehem (1986) estimates that "low intensity, gradually escalating" sanctions would add two million to the ranks of South Africa's unemployed by the year 2000. Perhaps the heaviest costs stand to be borne by the one to two million black migrant workers from the neighboring "front-line" states, whose jobs are the first to be lost.

And black unemployment not only hurts blacks directly, it also foments violent unrest, which takes its toll primarily on blacks themselves, which prompts harsh clamp-downs such as

the State of Emergency that has been in effect since 1985, and which dampens the government's enthusiasm for continued reform.

Black attitudes toward sanctions

But even if sanctions primarily hurt blacks, many foreign governments, Canada's included, seem to believe that blacks want sanctions, that they are willing to bear the burdens as part of the struggle for ultimate freedom. Of course it is not at all clear that sanctions have accelerated the reform process, and in the late 1980s they seem to have done the reverse. But the main arguments for sanctions seem to be political: either that they will strengthen black bargaining power, or that they will so intensify black suffering as to trigger revolution.

Several significant black organizations do support sanctions. Most surprising among these is the National African Federated Chambers of Commerce (NAFCOC), which represents about 16,000 black businessmen. This is perhaps because among blacks, businessmen stand to lose least from sanctions and lose most from apartheid. The Group Areas Act keeps them from living in neighborhoods they could easily afford. Until recently, various statutes prevented them from doing business in core downtown areas. But NAFCOC's opposition is muted, and indeed dates only from 1986: before then it opposed sanctions. Similarly, the (black) Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) came out in favor of sanctions only in 1985. Part of the reason was pressure from the African National Congress (ANC) and its surrogate, the United Democratic Front (UDF). COSATU's support for sanctions, like NAFCOC's, has been marked by internal dissent.

Leaders versus followers

Much of what the Western world gleans of black opinion comes from a handful of vocal and charismatic individuals, notably Oliver Tambo and Allan Boesak, spokesmen for the ANC and the UDF, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. But Tambo repeatedly voices his concern that white businessmen not emigrate, Boesak has recently suggested that "disinvestment... over five, six or seven years...[will leave] us with an economy that is a wasteland," and even Tutu admits that sanctions are a far from desirable weapon, though he maintains he can think of none better.

The level of ANC and UDF pressure to conform to a pro-sanctions line is very high, and undoubtedly stops many black leaders from speaking their minds. Intimidation among blacks on university campuses, as elsewhere, is rampant. Nevertheless Elias Links of the University of the Western Cape, South Africa's most prominent non-white economist, opposes sanctions. So do both the "Coloured" and Indian parliaments. So does Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who represents some six million Zulus, one-quarter of the black population.

The most meaningful indicator of black opinion is scientifically conducted surveys. In recent years, there have been some fourteen of these, of which twelve show that blacks do not want sanctions if they lead to job losses. On disinvestment, two surveys stand out. Professor Lawrence Schlemmer of Natal University produced seminal results (1986) which showed that 70-90 percent of blacks favored foreign investment as long as the relevant firms followed codes of conduct and recognized black unions. Mark Orkin of the Institute for Black Research produced results (1986) which were interpreted as contradictory