

Canadian sanctions and southern Africa

by Steve Godfrey

The roots of the vigorous stand which the new Mulroney government has taken on South Africa lie in the disintegration of US dominance of international diplomacy in southern Africa. By early 1985 the anti-apartheid lobby had drawn Congress so far towards sanctions against South Africa that the policy of "constructive engagement" was a policy in name only. The resultant withdrawal of this protective umbrella from South Africa, no less than the visible deterioration within South Africa, set in motion a flurry of diplomatic and political activity within the European Economic Community, the Nordic countries and the Commonwealth to fill the vacuum.

But the change of pace in Canadian policy has also been driven by another logic: the strong anti-apartheid stand which the Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, has taken on this issue. As a result, policy is no longer solely in the hands of Sussex Drive. In June and September the Canadian government announced a series of trade restrictions and other measures against the South African government, together with support for black organizations, unions and families of detainees and political prisoners. But most importantly, the government broke with the position of all previous administrations by declaring that it accepted the case for a total economic and political break with the Republic if moves to dismantle apartheid were not put in motion.

The progress to this position has not been smooth. In late August the Prime Minister was openly committing Canada to stronger sanctions, only to qualify his comments in response to traditional External Affairs arguments that sanctions would hurt blacks most and compromise Canada's defence of open trading systems. But scarcely two weeks later both Mulroney and Clark would state the willingness, in principle, for a total break in economic and political relations with South Africa. The imposition of modest sanctions by Britain and the US in the interim, and the clampdown under the State of Emergency in South Africa had driven Canada to move further to stake its claim to mediation in the international — primarily Commonwealth — arena.

South Africa today

This new Canadian activism is long overdue. The US domination of Western policies is almost universally recognized to have been a failure. The internal "reforms" pre-

sented by President P.W. Botha have not stilled unrest and the current level of political mobilization of blacks is unprecedented in South African history. The opposition is quite different from the youth protests around Soweto in 1976. It is more widely based, and while much protest is rooted in frustration, the target is clearly apartheid itself: government buildings and those black police and community councillors viewed as collaborators. Most significantly, the African National Congress (ANC) has strengthened its position within the country, not only among blacks, but increasingly among church, business, and press "opinion formers" in the white community.

In the wider region South African aggression against its neighbors has been devastating. Those nine neighbors have organized themselves into the Southern African Development Coordination Conference known as SADCC. Its members are Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. SADCC estimates that South Africa's program of regional destabilization has cost these countries over \$10 billion since 1980. This staggering sum exceeds the total value of all foreign aid SADCC countries received over the same period.

Fighting destabilization

The most brutal aspects of destabilization have been military raids on the capital cities of Lesotho, Botswana and Mozambique, the invasions of Angola, and support to armed subversion in that country and Mozambique. But destabilization also employed economic policy — such as subsidies to the transport routes through South Africa, interference with trading arrangements and financial inducements — to lock the SADCC states into greater dependence on their powerful neighbor. The guiding purpose of this strategy was not only to create a physical barrier to the ANC, but also to pressure black states into opposing economic sanctions.

The creation of SADCC in 1980 was instrumental in frustrating the South African goal of a constellation of

Steve Godfrey is southern Africa officer at Inter Pares, a Canadian non-governmental development organization in Ottawa.