

Foreword by the Commonwealth Secretary-General

The study which follows is, I believe, unique in its detailed examination of the aims, methods and fallacies of South Africa's pro-apartheid propaganda. It is important for what it says, and also as evidence of the Commonwealth's role in the struggle to end apartheid. This leadership role in international action against apartheid is an inevitable consequence of the Commonwealth's commitment to the fundamental principles of multiracialism, equality, democracy and anti-colonialism. Apartheid is an affront to everything for which the Commonwealth stands.

When, in 1960, the massacre at Sharpeville alerted the world to the brutal reality of apartheid, South Africa's continued membership of the Commonwealth was already being actively questioned in an association changed and strengthened by the membership of its first black African country, Ghana, as well as its initial Asian members, including the India of Nehru. The shock of Sharpeville ran through the Parliaments of the Commonwealth, and hastened South Africa's departure from the Association in 1961.

Apartheid was, of course, equally repugnant to the principles of the United Nations as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Not surprisingly, therefore, on the evil of apartheid the Commonwealth and the United Nations have long been as one: only concerted global action, in support of the anti-apartheid struggle of the majority of South Africans themselves, can be effective in removing its stain on our civilisation.

In the years following Sharpeville, the international community at the United Nations reacted sternly against the South African regime's continued violation of human rights by instituting the trade boycott, establishing the Special Committee against Apartheid, adopting the Declaration and International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and calling repeatedly on the Security Council to impose mandatory sanctions against South Africa. And, of course, in 1974 South Africa was suspended from the General Assembly. It is significant that only last year Mr H E Oppenheimer, Chairman of De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd, could have told the Governors of the Foreign Policy Association in New York that 'the

present world attitude really dates from the dismantling of colonialism and the withdrawal of South Africa from the British (sic) Commonwealth.'

Commonwealth action did not stop with South Africa's exclusion. Its Gleneagles Agreement of 1977 against sporting contacts with apartheid South Africa also set a standard for the international community and assisted in making possible the United Nations' International Declaration against apartheid in sport. And Commonwealth leaders have kept developments in South Africa under regular review. When they came to consider the situation at their New Delhi summit in November 1983, they reaffirmed their long-held view that apartheid is the root cause both of repression and violence within the country, and of South Africa's campaign of intimidation, destabilisation and outright aggression against neighbouring African countries, designed to force them to co-exist and co-operate with the apartheid regime.

In condemning these attacks, and reiterating that apartheid is a totally unacceptable denial of the inalienable rights of the African majority, Commonwealth leaders at New Delhi expressed concern at a particular aspect of the regime's policy, which was signalled above all by Pretoria's attempts to disguise apartheid with sham 'constitutional reforms', wholly excluding the African majority, while seeking to co-opt other non-white groups. This was an attempt to deceive the outside world through a campaign of propaganda aimed particularly at target countries with which the South African regime maintains strong economic ties. Commonwealth Heads of Government decided that the Commonwealth, as a key part of its struggle against apartheid, should take effective measures, in co-operation with the United Nations, to counteract that propaganda by disseminating the truth about apartheid and the situation in South Africa and in other African countries. This study by Donald Woods, a distinguished South African journalist whose experience has given him special insights into the struggle for democracy in South Africa and into the nature and methods of the forces which oppose it, is a direct result of that decision. It is the first of a series of measures to be taken as part of a programme to discharge the New Delhi mandate.

Mr Woods is the former editor of a major South African newspaper and author of several books on South Africa. He is uniquely qualified to expose South Africa's propaganda which he has observed closely over many years. In this specially commissioned study, he lists ten central claims on which that propaganda is currently based, and effectively demolishes each by showing it to be wholly fallacious. There is a message here for us all, but, in particular, for people in business, education, the media and public life who are bombarded by these propaganda

claims and are their special targets. I hope they will be dissuaded by Mr Woods' cogent presentation from accepting these claims at face value, and will be helped to see through the masquerade to the monstrous reality of apartheid.

The Woods Study could not be more timely. South Africa today stands, as perhaps never before, at the crossroads of history. Recent events underscore the necessity for all of us to look more critically at the situation there, as it appears to us through the media or other channels: to look, but also to act. We have a duty to repudiate apartheid as the most glaring contemporary example of racial injustice and bigotry. Alone in the world, the Pretoria regime enshrines racism in its basic laws and political institutions. The time has now come for ordinary citizens everywhere to exert maximum pressure, individually and through their governments, for fundamental changes in South Africa. We must not allow that pressure to be diminished as the regime burns its outermost, least essential defences, for example by repealing the Mixed Marriages and Immorality Acts, while retreating within the fortress laager of the basic apartheid laws which disfranchise the black majority, and which therefore constitute the red brick works of apartheid.

Pretoria is under greater pressure now from within and without. In the United States, a target area for South African propaganda, the groundswell of protest has dramatically heightened since the Commonwealth's New Delhi summit. But it is in South Africa itself that the tide is really turning. The people of South Africa have proved over the years their determination to resist tyranny and fight for their birthright by a variety of means. They have demonstrated unequalled courage, resilience and ingenuity in supporting their travail. All of us should salute them. The response of the authorities to the widespread challenge to the system has been in character — more repression and more massacres: even, as if to mock and cruelly repudiate it, on the 25th anniversary of Sharpeville. But it is too late for apartheid; the world is being roused to its true nature by the process of events inside and outside South Africa.

In this campaign to end apartheid, increasing knowledge of the innermost workings of the system, such as the Woods Study provides, can be invaluable. It will be effective, however, only if it leads to more practical and concerted action against apartheid, a crime against human dignity which can have no place in our world.

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