SOUTH AFRICA: CANADA'S RESPONSE TO APARTHEID

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16 September 1985
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"The Canadian government has condemned and will continue to condemn with every fibre of moral strength which we possess, the policy and practice of apartheid in South Africa. It constitutes an unconscionable violation of fundamental human rights." (Stephen Lewis, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations, 1984).

Canada has denounced vigorously the apartheid system ever since it was introduced in South Africa at the beginning of the 1950s. The government of South Africa, however, has always been considered legitimate. The Canadian government rejected the concept that total isolation of South Africa would somehow promote fundamental reform in that country. It left the way open for contacts and dialogue which it believes increase Canada's capacity to encourage some process of change in South Africa. Racist mentalities feed on isolation. Isolation breeds the kind of defiance which further fans the flames of oppression and hatred. We therefore maintain diplomatic relations with South Africa. That is one means by which we can tell the South African government, the white minority, and the population as a whole that Canada opposes apartheid and supports social and political change. We do not recognize the governments of the so-called independent "homelands".

To reflect its opposition to apartheid, Canada has over the years taken repressive measures against South Africa. Canada played an active role at the 1961 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference which confirmed the principle of racial equality as a condition of membership in the Commonwealth -- a position that South Africa clearly could not endorse without drastically altering its domestic policies. Consequently, the South African government withdrew its application for membership in the Commonwealth.

Canada banned the sale and shipment of arms, ammunition and military vehicles in 1963; the embargo has rigorously been enforced ever
since. Since the end of 1977, we have ended active trade promotion in South Africa and closed consulates in Johannesburg and Cape Town. All Export Development Corporation accounts supporting transactions relating to South Africa were withdrawn. All residents of South Africa coming to Canada were also required to have non-immigrant visas. Moreover, special preferential tariff arrangements for South Africa in the Canadian market were terminated. In 1978 a voluntary code for Canadian companies was issued concerning their employment practices in South Africa. The guidelines include calling on companies to take progressive action on wage policy for their black employees, to improve their training and promotion opportunities and to help in the development of black unions. Canadian governments have had reservations about comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa for several reasons. First, Canada has always held that trade between countries (with legitimate governments) should not be influenced by ideologies. Second, cessation of trade is likely to affect blacks in South Africa more adversely than whites. (1) Third, it is doubtful whether such sanctions could be effective. All of South Africa's major trading partners would have to be involved and, even then, the size and strength of the South African economy would probably enable it to withstand such economic pressures. It might even be argued that comprehensive sanctions may hasten rather than avert conflict.

In the sporting area, for many years government policy has been to refuse financial assistance to Canadian individuals or organizations which competed in South Africa or held events in Canada in which South African teams participated. South African athletes or sporting officials are not allowed to enter Canada to participate on a nationally representative basis.

On the other hand, Canada has taken a number of measures to encourage peaceful change. These include annual contributions to various UN

(1) This argument has been advanced repeatedly over the years. Interviewed on this Labour Day weekend, Prime Minister Mulroney thus cautioned: "The question arises, how do you dismantle apartheid or persuade people in a vigorous way to dismantle apartheid without crippling, economically, the blacks and the coloreds and the Indians who very much need our help." "Sanctions against South Africa may hurt blacks, PM warns," Ottawa Citizen, 3 September 1985.
programs which provide assistance to the victims of apartheid. Examples over the past year include:

- $25,000 to the UN Trust Fund for South Africa.
- $350,000 to the UN Educational Training Program for Southern Africa.
- $141,000 to Canadian non-governmental organizations to assist in self-help community projects.
- $618,000 contributed over a longer period for black or integrated labour union training projects via the Canadian Labour Congress.

For the 1984-1985 financial year the Canadian government allocated $1.5 million for a special education project providing scholarships for training inside South Africa.(1)

Owing to a noted deterioration of the human rights' situation in South Africa, the Canadian government announced in July 1985 a series of restrictive measures with the object of conveying to the South African government a strong message of disapproval. The measures included:

- A strengthening of the voluntary "Code of Conduct" for the employment of blacks in South Africa by Canadian firms. The code has been largely ignored by companies which, except for one case (Alcan), do not bother to file annual reports.(2)


(2) It was reported earlier in the year that the Canadian multinational Bata Shoe Company, which operates two factories in a black homeland, violated the voluntary code for Canadian firms operating in South Africa. Bata contravened the code by ignoring the guideline that companies pay a minimum wage exceeding the poverty line by 50%; offering its black employees and their families no assistance for medical and health facilities, housing or education for their children or other social services; providing no medical, pension and disability insurance plans or paid sick leave; providing almost no opportunities for the movement of blacks into semi-skilled and skilled positions. See Michael Valpy, "Bata contravenes Ottawa code on South Africa," Globe and Mail, 15 February 1985.
- A ban on sales of sensitive equipment such as computers to the South African police and armed forces, to be enforced under the Export and Import Permits Act.

- A curtailment of the sale of South African Kruggerand gold coins in Canada.

- An embargo on imports of South African arms to Canada.

- An end to the double taxation agreements between the two countries, which allowed corporations and individuals to avoid paying taxes to both governments.

- An end to federal export development aid to Canadian companies trying to develop markets in South Africa.

- A ban on imports of Namibian uranium as soon as an existing contract with the Crown corporation Eldorado Nuclear expires in 1988.

- A $5 million package in education and training funding for blacks.

In conjunction with other measures announced by the government to demonstrate opposition to apartheid and support for peaceful change, the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport reaffirmed Canada's support for the Commonwealth policy limiting sporting contacts with South Africa. To assist Canadian sporting associations with the interpretation of this policy, the two ministers issued new guidelines. Entry visas will be denied to citizens of South Africa who wish to enter Canada to participate in sporting competitions, meetings or congresses as representatives of the South African government or one of its agencies, or as representatives of South African sport governing bodies or any of their components or affiliated organizations. No federal support, either financial or moral, shall be extended to any Canadian team or individual normally recognized by, or affiliated with, a Canadian sport governing body whose purpose is to travel to South Africa for sports competitions, meetings or congresses. Other guidelines apply to situations involving potential contacts in third countries.

A few weeks later the Canadian government delivered a diplomatic note which condemned the South African government for imposing a state of emergency and stepping up repression in that country. The note said:
"The Canadian government cannot but vigorously condemn the use of repressive measures to counter protests against injustice and inequality. We deplore violence from any quarter, but we cannot ignore that it is discrimination, exclusion and rejection which have brought about this desperate situation. We call again upon the government of South Africa to break this cycle of violence, to abandon repression and to enter into an equal and sincere partnership with all South Africans."(1) Canada's ambassador to South Africa was temporarily recalled to advise and refine Canadian policy in South Africa and assist in efforts to persuade Canadian companies' executives to help the government fight that country's legalized system of racial segregation.

In response to the South African government's unbending attitude, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark, announced further repressive measures on 13 September 1985. The new steps include: a voluntary ban on further bank loans to the South African regime except those that help blacks; a voluntary ban on oil sales to South Africa; an embargo on air transportation between the two countries; the establishment of a registry of actions to record measures taken by Canadian provinces, municipalities and institutions to express their opposition to apartheid. Mr. Clark also announced the appointment of former diplomat Albert Hart as administrator of the government's voluntary code of conduct for Canadian companies operating in South Africa. The code will now be backed by standard reporting forms and regular reports to Parliament. Lastly, the government will increase by $1 million its assistance to families of political detainees in South Africa.

In the event the current level of repression and violence continues, the meeting of Commonwealth heads of government in the Bahamas in mid-October will provide further opportunity for common action against apartheid.