

136

SANCTIONS AND THE LIBERATION STRUGGLES  
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: THESIS AND ANTI-  
THESIS OF IMPERIALISM.

BY S. GUTTO, B. HLATSHWAYO & S. NZOMBE

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*Paper 5*

*SANCTIONS AND THE LIBERATION STRUGGLES IN  
SOUTHERN AFRICA: THESES AND ANTITHESIS OF  
IMPERIALISM*

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1. INTRODUCTION: ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AS A WEAPON IN THE LIBERATION STRUGGLES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The imposition of sanctions whether economic, involving military arms, cultural or otherwise is ultimately a political act aimed at weakening or disrupting the economic, social and political structure and/or stability of the target country. In the case of South Africa, both for its internal fascist policies and its illegal colonial occupation of Namibia, the international movement for collective imposition of economic sanctions as represented by the International Conference on Economic Sanctions against South Africa recognised this objective as early as 1964, a good 23 years ago, when it observed that:

2. It was agreed that the object of economic sanctions was to produce a sufficient breakdown in the operation of the South African economy to create a situation in which apartheid would be brought to an end.....(1)

This was then the view supported by the main liberation movement in South Africa, the African National Congress, through its then Deputy President-General and now President Oliver R. Tambo who said that;

If this conference should find, as the opponents of White domination in South Africa have insisted, that there is nothing the world can do if it does not impose sanctions to destroy apartheid, then let this Conference throw its full weight behind the demands of African, Asian, and other nations upon South Africa's trading partners to stop trading with a country which refuses to abandon a slave system.(2)

Given that voluntary punitive sanctions exist at this moment in time as is evident from the various measures by the US, the EEC.. the Commonwealth countries, the Nordic Countries and others to impose sanctions on South Africa, the ANC and other progressive forces are currently calling for mandatory and comprehensive sanctions against the apartheid regime.(3)

The effectiveness of sanctions against South Africa is objectively premised on the character of the South African economy. If sanctions were able to exert a damaging effect on Rhodesia [despite the fact that many imperialist countries violated them] then there is a stronger case for South Africa whose economy is more vulnerable than Rhodesia's in 1965.(4) It must however be pointed out that the decisive damage was done in the battlefield, factories, farms and mines.

At this moment in time it is no longer necessary to set out in detail justification for sanctions against South Africa. The need for sanctions is now accepted by all reasonable opinion throughout the world. However differences exist as to the nature of sanctions that must be imposed, their extent and the reasons for such measures. It is one of the objectives of this paper to analyse the basis of these differences.

Why has the international community particularly the West suddenly paid attention to the question of sanctions? Why is this question suddenly becoming prominent after a lull in the 70's? The answer does not lie in a moral reawakening of the world or in visits to South Africa by delegations of all sorts. The answer lies in the political struggles being fought by the oppressed majority. It is this mass action combined with the diplomatic initiative of national liberation movements and the support of socialist, and other progressive forces for this struggle that has resulted in the resurgence of the sanctions debate.

Sanctions in this context are seen not as the only weapon for the dismantling of the apartheid regime but is one of the weapons.

The weapon of sanctions as one which can only be wielded by certain forces in the world owing to their objective relationship with the apartheid regime. South Africa as a capitalist and fascist country is part of the international capitalist system and therefore all those countries in this system can objectively impose sanctions on South Africa. The degree to which these countries trade with South Africa differs.

The Leading trading partners of South Africa among the developed capitalist and imperialist countries include Britain, the US, West Germany, Israel, France and others. South Africa has very close trading relations with countries in the region, the leading ones being Lesotho, Malawi, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Swaziland. The capacity of these two groups of countries to enforce sanctions is different and so is the degree to which they can do it without committing suicide. The first group of countries can impose sanctions and be able to find alternative trading and investment partners. As regards the second group of countries others can and others cannot, depending on the extent to which their economies are linked with that of South Africa and their geographic positions.

When these two groups of countries call for sanctions they are not necessarily referring to the same thing. For instance in a paper presented by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation on "Reflections on a South African Policy for the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1980's" the foundation noted that "The consequences of the West's behaviour up to now are obvious. The African states are disturbed and disappointed as regards the intentions and behaviour of the West; in their eyes our relationship with the apartheid state is a strain on our relations with them. Our possibilities for bringing our influence to bear on the continent [and in South Africa in particular - our addition], the increasing importance of which is evident are correspondingly reduced"

Official US and Britain vigorously oppose punitive sanctions on "moral" grounds and on the basis that they will hurt blacks most and increase the reliance of the West on the socialist countries.(5)

This position is shared by most capitalist and imperialist governments even though they are not as outspoken as the US and Britain.

On the other hand the Non Aligned Movement is unequivocal in its support for punitive sanctions.

The frontline states of Zambia and Zimbabwe have also been unequivocal in calling for sanctions notwithstanding the extent to which they will suffer as neighbours of South Africa and the historical economic links which they have with South Africa. Their political commitment to sanctions is undoubted.

Other progressive countries in the world like the Nordic countries have gone out of their way to try and impose punitive sanctions of varying degrees against South Africa.

But why is the West generally not in favour of punitive sanctions? We submit that their response to sanctions is not based on any high, noble and abstract morality but that it is historically determined. South Africa with its apartheid policies provides cheap labour and low production costs resulting in super profits being reaped by those who invest in it. Thus we find many multi-national corporations involved in business in South Africa directly or indirectly. It is these same corporations that dictate to their governments what policies they should have. Thus the response of these governments is not surprising.

That South Africa is very vulnerable to sanctions one only need to look at the economy. 17% of its capital comes from abroad. 55% of the South African gross domestic product is made by foreign trade. In 1982 South Africa imported 50% of its transport equipment, 50% of its machinery and 30% of motor vehicles. This is how the Standard Bank Review summed up the economic position of South Africa in 1985: "As a small relatively open economy, the country's prosperity is based to a great extent on its ability to freely sell materials and products abroad. In turn South Africa depends on the outside world for many essential inputs." (13)

South Africa has also acted historically as a springboard for the expansion and penetration of imperialist monopoly capital in the Southern African region. This has made its economy also dependent, although on a very small scale, on the economies of countries such as Zimbabwe and Botswana. The Zimbabwean case was recently articulated by the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe when he threatened that if South Africa were to close its borders and deny Zimbabwe access to export and import routes, Zimbabwe would confiscate South African assets and capital in Zimbabwe and that it is South Africa that would suffer more. (14)

There is no doubt then that comprehensive mandatory economic sanctions if carried out by the international community, particularly the major imperialist countries whose investments and trade relations form the basis of the South African economy, the South African regime will not be able to rule in the old way. The basic problem, however, is that precisely because the world imperialist system has apartheid South Africa as its integral and very profitable part, the efficacy of the weapon of sanctions is doubtful or will be marginal at the very best. Of course, apartheid can be made unprofitable and unworkable by revolutionary mass action and armed struggle in which case imperialist monopolies will pull-out, but not as part of the international efforts based on the principle of national and social emancipation in South Africa. Already a number of monopolies such as Bata, IBM, General Motors, General Electric, Coca Cola, Honeywell, Barclays Bank, Kodak and others are designing modalities for disinvesting without losing out by transferring their exploitative capital to all manner of institutional devices. (15) This goes to underline the fact that sanctions can accelerate the process of dismantling apartheid and enhancing the process of national and social liberation in South Africa and Namibia. Sanctions are therefore, important but they are not the only way in which the backbone of imperialist monopoly capital that nurtures apartheid fascism can be broken. It is a high time the supporters of apartheid realised this.

That sanctions can work to coerce South Africa is ironically proved by South Africa itself in its relations with its neighbours. The region has cruel evidence of South Africa's use of economic and military means to coerce countries in the region to certain forms of behaviour. The locus classicus case was that of Lesotho's blockade by South Africa which led to the ousting of the late Chief Jonathane. South Africa continues its undeclared war assuming various forms - economic and military - against Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia and to a lesser extent Swaziland and Lesotho. Some observers have noted that the purpose of this war is to "foster a dependence that will be politically submissive for them and economically lucrative for it and a bulwark against sanctions." (16)

The history of imperialism is also littered with the use of sanctions as a weapon albeit unsuccessfully, either against governments opposed to imperialism or those who in the eyes of imperialism abuse their sovereignty by differing with the US on key international issues. The examples of Cuba and Zimbabwe easily spring to mind. The main reason for the failure of these sanctions is that they have not received world wide support and backing and also that they were seen by the progressive and developing countries as unacceptable gunboat diplomacy, contrary to the basic principles of international law - features that clearly distinguishes them from South Africa.

Our objective in this paper is not only to underline the importance of economic sanctions as one of the principal weapons that should be directed at apartheid South Africa and the problems associated with their implementation. The paper also aims at providing a concrete appraisal of the historic nature of the liberation struggles in Southern Africa. The role of sanctions in bringing down the apartheid regime and the problems associated with this and other methods of struggle against racist and fascist apartheid regime as a profitable child of imperialism can only be properly understood if the historic struggles in the Southern African region are concretely understood.

## 2. HISTORICAL MATERIALIST INTERPRETATION OF THE LIBERATION STRUGGLES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT AND THE QUESTION OF SANCTIONS

Whereas the founders of Marxism demonstrated clearly the transformation in the productive forces and revolutionary changes in the relations of production that the big capitalist nations forced upon their colonies, (17) Lenin extended this to the era of imperialism in the 20th Century by showing clearly the political struggles of the oppressed nations and the historic duty on the part of revolutionaries to demand and support the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination. (18) Immediately following the historic October Socialist Revolution, the first state of the working people under Lenin's leadership held firmly to Lenin's scientifically guided observations that countries under the yoke of imperialist domination and oppression must be supported in their own struggles to liberate themselves. An apt summary of this was made recently by Anatoli Gromyko:

The Historical Decree on Peace drafted by Lenin a few days after the October Revolution, proclaimed for the first time the principles of genuine democracy in international relations. It called for equality of "big" and "small" countries, condemned colonialism, urged liberation of all oppressed peoples, and declared legitimate all forms of the national struggle. (19)

National liberation struggles for national self-determination and independence in Africa, Asia and elsewhere are objective historical social demands of the colonised and oppressed nations that emerge out of contradictions with and in opposition to imperialism. They express historical laws of development of society. They express the disintegration process of the imperialist world order. The success of national liberation struggles leads either to the uprooting of imperialist social structures in which case imperialism reacts savagely and ruthlessly against this violent act, or it may lead, in the interim period, to only partial replacement of imperialist domination in which case imperialism is forced to readjust to the new situation where it is not in full legal and political control.

In the Southern African region imperialism is facing various forms and stages of challenge to its order. It is struggling to undermine national liberations in South Africa and Namibia or at worst (since it cannot forever stop the wheel of history) according to the demands of imperialism, to ensure neo-colonialist solutions to the South African and Namibian struggles; imperialism is faced with the reality of triumph of the working people who, in the process of national liberation, have established dictatorships of the workers and peasants in place of the dictatorship of imperialist colonial capital in Angola and Mozambique; it is faced with the reality of the process of anti-imperialist national democratic revolution in Zimbabwe; it faces independent new states in Zambia and Tanzania which are sacrificing a lot to support national liberation in Namibia and South Africa but also with internal policies that are essentially, although not consistently, anti-imperialist; imperialism is also concerned about Botswana and Lesotho which have not developed into perfect puppet/neo-colonial regimes like Malawi, Kenya and Zaire. It is therefore correct to say as Gontcharov does that:

The distinctive feature about the situation in Southern Africa is that imperialism is fiercely fighting there not only for the general sake of preserving its traditional influence in the region, but also against the national liberation movements and progressive forces which hold power in a number of local countries. That is why the primary objective of this struggle is not so much to resolve the problems of Namibia and South Africa as to undermine the forces working for a genuine national and social liberation of their peoples from the shackles of imperialism and neo-colonialism. (20)

Let us now isolate the above inter-related and interlinked forms and stages of anti-imperialist struggles or "threats" to imperialism and analyse them briefly.

#### South Africa and Namibia:

In South Africa and Namibia apartheid South Africa, an outgrowth and integral part of world imperialism, is struggling against the progressive forces of national and social liberation, that is, against the dismantling of colonialism. With the oldest and most developed modern industrial production in Africa, South Africa also possess the largest concentration of industrial workers - and their reserve army - in Africa. Imperialism created the Black working class through some of the most brutal and highly exploitative methods known in the entire history of capitalism. (20(a)). In the process it created its own grave-diggers, the working class, who are now in the forefront leading the other oppressed classes and strata in the struggle for national and social liberation. The anti-imperialist revolutionary content and force in the South African liberation movement led by the ANC in alliance with the SACP/SACTU and other workers' and mass movements forged over decades in struggle must be seen not as the imperialists do as the work of agitation of a few Moscow inspired Communists but in its concrete reality based on the growth of imperialist-apartheid capitalism in South Africa itself. However, because the history of national liberation struggles in South Africa has taken a longer period than elsewhere in Africa, the colonial capitalist system has worsened the conditions of the working people, exploitation, racism, and fascism have been intensified over time.



As Lenin put it:

Capitalism is progressive because it destroys the old methods of production and develops productive forces, yet at the same time, at a certain stage of development, it retards the growth of productive forces. It develops, organises, and disciplines the workers - and it crushes, oppresses, leads to degeneration, poverty, etc. Capitalism creates its own grave-diggers, itself creates the elements of a new system, yet, at the same time, without a "leap" these individual elements change nothing in the general state of affairs and do not affect the rule of capital. (21)

The movement for the struggle for national liberation in South Africa has also gained from the changed conditions of the decolonization process in Africa since the 1960's. Not only has scientific socialism based on the teachings of Marxism-Leninism been adopted and are being implemented as guides to development by ruling political parties and governments starting with Congo in 1969 followed by Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and to lesser degrees in a few other African countries, the struggles within the neo-colonies in Africa against continued imperialist domination has not and could not have escaped the attention of the revolutionary masses of South Africa and Namibia. The dialectical unity of the conditions inside South Africa and the surrounding regional and international balance of forces has, therefore, meant that the liberation struggles in South Africa and Namibia have naturally acquired new and higher content that are historical and irreversible.

Besides, South Africa - and by extension Namibia - is not only regarded as a "colony of special-type" by the main liberation movements in South Africa (22) but imperialism also regards South Africa as 'special'. Imperialism regards South Africa as "independent" and because of this it has used this cover of "independence" to open-up the South African economy for competition and collaboration between imperialist monopolies from all the major imperialist countries. South Africa is the ideal arena for imperialism and it is the show-piece in the African region. It has a special and historic significance to imperialism which underlines why imperialism finds it useful not just for the profits but also for its regional strategic importance as a base for imperialistic dominance and expansion of imperialists interests.

Imperialism thinks and is actively working to maintain South Africa as it is but, given the national liberation struggles supported by the whole progressive world, imperialism is actively also bent on influencing a neo-colonial solution to the decolonisation process should it be triumphant. This is also the imperialists strategy for Namibia whose liberation struggle, economy and regional geopolitical significance is viewed as a n extension of that of South Africa. As a historic process:

Imperialism would never put up with the prospect of losing the opportunity to exploit the emergent nations. But since fundamental changes in the world made it impossible to maintain the relationships based on direct [colonial] domination and extraeconomic coercion, the imperialist states clutching to the remaining grounds, institute a search for an equivalent to the colonial system. Neo colonialism was to become the sought-for equivalent in the new historic conditions. (23)

Since the national liberation struggles in South Africa and Namibia are the more "open" forms of struggle in the Southern Africa region, and they should be the most immediate, there is a general tendency to view the imperialist destabilisation schemes in Southern Africa as a whole as being directed by imperialism to stop any assistance to the liberation movements in South Africa and Namibia only. We argue, however, that for imperialism the strategy to neo-colonize the entire region is generalised and is pursued concurrently and interwovenly with the efforts to undermine genuine national liberation in South Africa and Namibia.

We shall now proceed to examine the above as well as the potential of the frontline states to participate in the imposition of sanctions against South Africa.

### Angola and Mozambique

The establishment of the workers and peasants' governments in Angola and Mozambique following the heroic struggles led by MPLA and FRELIMO in the middle of the 1970's shook the consciousness of imperialism world wide and those with entrenched interests particularly those in South Africa. No sooner had the new revolutionary states been established and the liberation movements developed into new types of parties guided by Marxism-Leninism that these states began to demonstrate their real significance in the region.

FRELIMO and Mozambique developed and strengthened the international role which made Mozambique the main rear base for the struggle for liberation of Zimbabwe. FRELIMO undermined Rhodesia's economy by cutting the main routes Rhodesia had with the outside imperialist world, provided material, logistical and other support to the ZANLA forces. Smith tried to counteract this by creating the bandit units, now developed into the so-called MNR. But, the backbone of Smith's regime was broken and whatever imperialism tried through South Africa proved too costly for imperialism and quickly imperialism started developing schemes to determine the future of an independent Zimbabwe.

Internally the colonial capitalists left in disarray, having destroyed most of the infrastructure. Most made South Africa their home - ready for counter-revolutionary bandit operations. But Mozambique had chosen its side. As Samora Machel put it:

As men, as a country, as a State, we must always choose which side we are on: on the side of a privileged handful, with the people against us, or on the side of the people, with the dethroned privileged handful against us. (24)

This choice and its practical implementation under the leadership of FRELIMO - Party had by early 1980's demonstrated clearly for the whole world to see that the new society in Mozambique was the antithesis of a neo-colony. The subversion of the new Mozambican society became objectively the wish of imperialism and apartheid South Africa, whether or not Mozambique was assisting the South African national liberation movements in their struggles or not. Assistance and solidarity with the South African national liberation movements, particularly the ANC and the SACP only aggravated the historic crime Mozambique had committed by opting for the non-capitalist road to development.

Again, Machel captured the essence of the situation when he observed that:

It has, therefore, effectively imposed "sanctions" against South Africa and can and should join others in the collective imposition of sanctions for diplomatic, political and moral reasons only.

The announcement from Luanda about the re-opening of the Benguela railway line (Herald, Monday, April 20, 1987, P.2) can only add to the economic strength of Angola which would enable it to preserve itself against imperialist neo-colonial designs.

The imperialist - particularly the U.S.A. - demands for linking the independence of Namibia and the presence of the Cuban internationalists and friendly forces in Angola, which has been roundly rejected by all right thinking people, is meant by imperialism to weaken Angola and make it a sitting duck for South African occupation so as to establish a neo-colony, ready to serve the larger imperialist interests. It is meant to destroy PLAN, the armed wing of SWAPO, so that SWAPO can agree to neo-colonialist arrangements for the future independent Namibia. The success of such a plan would obviously strengthen South Africa and lead to another neo-colonialist arrangement in South Africa.

#### Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Lesotho

Of this group of countries, Zimbabwe stand out for being the only one which has adopted officially the path of socialist development under the guidance of scientific socialism. The conclusion of the national liberation struggle in Zimbabwe produced concrete conditions where the ideological struggles between socialism and capitalism are fought openly, thus providing the opportunity for the revolutionary masses to equip themselves with the theory and knowledge of concrete practical achievements of Marxism-Leninism. The process of national democratic revolution with socialism on the agenda is a reality. But so are counter-revolutionary forces struggling fiercely in all sorts of manner and in all sorts of institutions, including the state and the ruling Party, ZANU (PF), to establish a neo-colonial path for Zimbabwe. And these counter-revolutionary forces are stronger than the emerging and still weaker revolutionary forces.

Because private capital dominate the economy with a strong foreign element, objectively the capitalist base has not yet been destroyed and replaced with socialist ownership and relations of production. Given the sanctions against Smith's regime which South Africa took advantage of, the foreign capital element is substantially tied to South Africa, which in turn is tied to the world imperialist system. Zimbabwe is therefore, in a contradictory position. The big capitalists who dominate the economy have the same interests as those in South Africa and would resist moves towards sanctions against the racist-fascist regime in South Africa. The political leadership, at least the progressive section of it led by the Prime Minister Robert Mugabe would go for sanctions against the wishes of the big capitalists. There is every prospect that this political action can and may be taken although it is not very clear how far reaching the measures taken would go. The masses are likely to back Mugabe fully.

The big capitalists in Zimbabwe, however, have a double and contradictory interest that should be manipulated. They have shown a clear hunger for the prospects of big profits accruing from the success of the Beira Corridor, as is explained later below. At the same time they want to maintain the South African connection.

In this situation many would be persuaded by the prospects of bigger profits to prefer the Beira Corridor prospects to the uncertain South African routes and other connections. The best persuasion for the capitalist is profit, in the short and long term.

The imposition of sanctions by Zimbabwe would entail both the stoppage of transport links, imports of consumer and a few capital goods as well as with-holding remittances of all profits, savings and pensions that accrue to South African based financial and industrial companies and individuals. This, as we stated earlier, is likely to meet with a strong counter-action by South Africa which may militarily want to attack Zimbabwe and also to cut-off access routes to Zimbabwe. This is to be expected. It is however, evident that military action against Zimbabwe would meet with its match and would be very expensive for South Africa which is already over-stretched in Angola, Namibia, Mozambique and more importantly inside South Africa itself.

As for Zambia, the dominance of international capital in the mining industry, which is the country's major economic base in the absence of meaningful peasant state or private capitalist farming and agro-industrial development, is naturally linked with the South African financial and mining industries and is dependent on South Africa for a number of consumer and capital goods. There is, however, less South African investments in Zambia than in Zimbabwe, a fact which makes it less significant for Zambia to freeze South African assets and capital.

Zambia also has better alternative access routes, via Tanzania, than Zimbabwe and is more unlikely to suffer from serious South African retaliatory action should she adopt effective sanctions measures against South Africa. With the opening of the Benguela railway line (see, above) and the now open and functioning Beira Corridor (rail and road), Zambia should be in a fairly good position to withstand serious disruption from South Africa although all these routes are fairly long and therefore expensive for a weak economy.

Zambia has a long history of support for national liberation struggles in Southern Africa and continues to do so. She supported the war for the liberation of Zimbabwe and the ANC headquarters is situated in Lusaka. She suffered from Ian Smith's raids and terror campaigns and is currently a target of similar acts by South Africa. It is evident in practice, however, that the Zambian leadership and the masses are willing to defend themselves and continue to support the liberation struggles in South Africa and Namibia. This is in spite of the fact that its utopian ideas about socialism through "humanism" as opposed to class struggle based on scientific socialism, which is the motor of historical movement, makes the conditions for the working masses worsen on a daily basis and makes her vulnerable to the pressures of the predatory IMF/World Bank, which are close friends and supporters of apartheid South Africa.

In the event of military attacks, Zambia may be less able to defend herself but this must be seen within a regional context since other internationalist neighbours with tested fighting ability like Tanzania and Zimbabwe would definitely come to her assistance. It is also unlikely that South Africa can launch a large scale attack on her and maintain its other costly aggressive commitments in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and at home. Besides an attack on Zambia would require an additional attack on Zimbabwe which we have indicated would be disastrous for the apartheid regime.

For Botswana and Lesotho their dependence on South Africa for consumer items, finance and other small capital investments is so high that they are unlikely to participate in any significant way in affecting South Africa through sanctions, except, for Botswana, who might deny South Africa air transit facilities. Politically none of the two countries can really stand direct pressure of an armed nature from South Africa. Given their political and economic weaknesses, it is clear that their participation or non-participations will have a decisive impact on South Africa. Their moral support of sanctions is, however, important and would help to isolate apartheid in the eyes of the world.

South Africa is however, a dying horse that kicks even empty air. This is why it does not stop at making raids in Botswana and Lesotho to destroy even the little humanitarian solidarity that the two countries have in the past given as sovereign states to the displaced and struggling masses of South Africa. The racist regime is likely to continue such bellicose reactionary internationalism, but this will not stop the tide of historical changes that are gaining momentum in the region.

In summary we can see that Southern Africa holds a decisive historical significance both for the conclusion of the world-wide process of decolonisation, the first major stage in the dismantling of the old imperialist world system. It too holds a decisive place in the history of Africa in its movement with the rest of the world from capitalism to socialism. It is the concentration of these two interlinked historical processes that makes the region special and highly explosive and revolutionary. The struggle against apartheid and imperialism, to which sanctions is but one important weapon, must be seen in this context.

We now proceed to examine as a case study how the world imperialist system particularly the U.S.A, views in theory and practice the sanctions question since it is the imperialist world that created and supports the apartheid system while holding the key to the success or failure of sanctions as an effective weapon of struggle to dismantle the apartheid regime.

### 3. THE IMPERIALIST ATTITUDE AND APPROACH TO SANCTIONS

A proposal in the United Nations Security Council by a group of Non-Aligned countries, led by Zimbabwe, to introduce comprehensive mandatory sanctions against South Africa failed in February, 1987 when the United States and Britain vetoed, while West Germany voted against it. France and Japan abstained from voting, leaving only Italy, among the capitalist and imperialist powers to vote for the resolution. (26) What is even more surprising about the behaviour of imperialist countries with regard to this resolution is that the U.S.A itself and Britain vetoed the package of sanctions which was based on the United States package of sanctions.

How is this behaviour of imperialist countries on the sanctions question to be explained? What does it teach us about the strategies and designs of imperialism in the context of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, its illegal occupation of Namibia and reaction in the Southern Africa sub-region?

In order to answer these questions we will examine briefly how the attitude and approach of imperialist countries over the sanctions question has developed historically and more specifically we will analyse the attitude and approach of the leader of the world imperialist system the U.S.A. - and carry out a case study of the so-called "comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986" passed by the U.S. Congress and Senate over an unwilling President. The aim of the case-study of this Act and its subsequent developments is to demonstrate using a specific imperialist country the counter-revolutionary and anti-liberation designs attitudes and approaches to the sanctions questions by all imperialist countries in general. (27)

The call for comprehensive and mandatory sanctions against South Africa as one of the weapons in the struggle against apartheid is as old as the history of the national liberation struggle in that country. However, imperialist countries have resisted this call as the Berlin Declaration observed:

"While the international community has recognised for many years the need to eliminate apartheid, effective international action under the United Nations Charter has been blocked by the persistent obstruction of a few Western Powers and the greed of numerous transnational corporations to profit from the crime of apartheid. A continuation of the situation poses a grave peril to humanity. The United States of America and other Western Powers bear a great responsibility in this respect" (28).

It is therefore their entrenched and vast economic and political interests in apartheid South Africa which have determined imperialist U.S., Britain, West Germany and France's attitudes and approaches to the sanctions question. These and political economic interests determine the earlier stubborn resistance to the sanctions call. They also determined the panicky imposition of selective sanctions as the struggle of the oppressed to overthrow the apartheid regime intensified internally and began to draw strong international support. The high water-mark of these pressures was reached in the 1980's when imperialist countries were faced with solid international pressure from the Non-Aligned Movement (N.A.M), the socialist countries and all the democratic and progressive world community. Internally imperialist countries felt the pressure of anti-apartheid movements within their own borders. But most important of all they feared the imminent overthrow of the apartheid regime as the struggle intensified within South Africa and sought to influence these developments. The economic measures or "packages" that came about can be summarized as follows: (29)

#### The Commonwealth Package

We quote in full here the Commonwealth package which so far stands out as the most comprehensive package of sanctions ever proposed against Pretoria. Endorsed August 5, 1986 by six Commonwealth leaders inspite of British Prime Minister Thatcher's opposition, the following are the package of economic sanctions which however are non-binding and can be acted upon at the discretion of the 49 Commonwealth nations;

1. Bans new investment or reinvestment of profits earned in South Africa.
2. Bans agricultural products
3. Ends double taxation agreements
4. Bans government procurements
5. Ends government assistance to investment in and trade with South Africa.
6. Bans government contracts with majority-owned South African Companies.
7. Bans new bank loans
8. Bans import of uranium
9. Bans import of coal
10. Bans import of iron and steel
11. Bans South Africans from obtaining visas at Commonwelath consulates in South Africa.
12. Bans promotion of tourism.
13. Bans air-links with South Africa

#### The Britain Package

Announced Aug 5, 1986; second and third proposals took effect immediately, and the first was to take effect in September if European Community approved the same.

1. Bans import of coal, steel and iron [West Germany vetoed the banning of coal in the E.E.C package in September, 1986]
2. Voluntary end to new investment
3. Voluntary end to promotion of tourism.

#### The European Community Package

Announced June 27, 1986 action scheduled for and taken in September 1986.

1. Bans new investment
2. Bans import of coal [Vetoed by West Germany]
3. Bans import of iron and steel
4. Bans import of Krugerrands.

#### The U.S. Senate Package

The United States President Ronald Reagan's veto was overridden and a limited and selective range of sanctions was passed under the so-called Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act which we will summarize shortly.

#### Voluntary withdrawals

In addition to state action there has been a spate of withdrawals by U.S and British TNC's from apartheid South Africa. However, most of the withdrawals have been exposed as insincere as the TNC involved effectively maintained their interests in South Africa.

It is in the context of the totality of these measures and their historical development that the U.S. Sanctions package in particular must be viewed. In a paper entitled Preliminary Observations and Assessment of some Key Counter-Revolutionary And Anti-Liberation Aspects of the U.S.A.

"Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986" and which appears as an appendix to the present paper we welcomed the passing of the legislation but at the same time indicated the weaknesses and warned about the counter-revolutionary and anti-liberation provisions in the U.S. sanctions legislation. The major strengths and weaknesses of the U.S. sanctions legislation can be summarised as follows:(30)

#### Strengths

1. Prohibits the importation of South African coal, steel, textiles, uranium, agricultural products, and commodities produced and marketed by South African government controlled or owned companies (parastatals).
2. Immediately prohibits the landing of South African airlines in the U.S and U.S airlines in South Africa.
3. Prohibits the importation of South African arms, munitions or military vehicles. This provision also prohibits co-operation between U.S. agencies and South African armed forces.
4. Prohibits the export of crude oil and petroleum products.
5. Terminates the US/South African Income Tax Treaty. U.S. corporations will not be permitted to deduct S.A. taxes from their income.
6. Includes Namibia in the definition of South Africa, thereby making all of these sanctions applicable to U.S. corporations and other entities illegally exploiting Namibian natural resources.

#### Weaknesses

1. Restrictions of anti-apartheid initiatives in the U.S.A. - Section 606 of the Act states that state and local governments receiving federal funding must bring any selective purchasing or procurement restrictions into agreement with federal laws within 90 days or risk losing those funds. State or local laws prohibiting purchases from and contracts with corporations doing business in South Africa are deemed to be in conflict with federal requirements for competitive bidding for federally funded projects.
2. Public Sector Loans - Short-term trade financing is still permitted and sales on open account can provide extended credit. Banks are still permitted to re-schedule outstanding loans to the apartheid regime.
3. Private Sector Investments - U.S. corporations are allowed to invest profits made in South Africa either in their own corporations or in any other entity in South Africa. Through brokerage accounts U.S. nationals can still invest in South African stocks and securities.
4. Exemption of "Black owned" businesses - the sanctions legislation exempts so-called "black-owned businesses" which can be used as fronts for White South African interests from any sanctions. (31)
5. Aid for people "disadvantaged by apartheid" - As argued in the paper appended to the present one, the U.S sanctions Act does not regard genuine anti-apartheid organisations as victims of apartheid and at any rate all patriotic South Africans have refused to take any U.S. government money because of the role of the U.S. in supporting the apartheid government. Under the Sanctions Act these funds can be given to any organisation that has "community support" regardless of their reputation or legitimacy.
6. Reference to the ANC - The A.N.C activities are called "terrorist" and the sanctions Act calls for an investigation of the ANC under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. We argue in the appended paper (Parts Two and Three) that these provisions are directed at arresting and possibly reversing the revolutionary and liberatory processes in the Southern Africa sub-region.



7. Termination of sanctions - The Act can be terminated if the President certifies that apartheid South Africa has adhered to 3 of 4 conditions for termination as soon as this certification is made, the sanctions are removed. The Congress will have to pass a joint resolution disagreeing with the President before the sanctions are re-imposed. This is yet another example of many such examples of chicanery in the U.S. Sanctions Act which we pointed out in our appended paper (Part One) This puts anti-apartheid forces on the defensive. The Reagan Administration is not in support of any sanctions Act. The decision of whether South Africa is in compliance needs to be confirmed by the Congress, BEFORE the sanctions are removed.

8. The Act contains thinly veiled threats against Frontline States (See Parts Two and One of our appended paper) by "encouraging, and when necessary, strongly demanding that all countries of the region take effective action to end cross-border terrorism" (Section 104 (b) (6)), and urging "diplomatic and political measures against those promoting terrorism and against those countries harbouring such groups" (Section 103 (b) (7)). Thus, the U.S. Congress has fully embraced in the Sanctions Act, the discredited policy of "constructive engagement" - a policy which defines freedom fighters as "terrorists" and fascists as "friends" (32)

In the final analysis therefore the so-called Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 passed by the U.S Congress is anything but comprehensive. Its provisions are a sieve of loopholes that do little to curb U.S. corporate collaboration with the regime as we argue in Part One of our appended paper. On the whole it is largely a legislation for warding off international pressure for the imposition of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions, a legislation for disarming and emasculating the anti-apartheid movement in the U.S itself, a legislation for promoting neo-colonial arrangements for the future liberated South Africa and Southern African sub-region. It is as we concluded in our appended paper "a weapon for U.S. crusade against what it regards as world communist threat to the democracy of exploitation and inequality. It is a decision of war against the progressive and growing forces in the South African national liberation and class struggles."

Nothing shows this more clearly than the State Department confidential report delivered to Congress on January 8, 1987. (33) The 11 page study by the department entitled "Communist Influence in South Africa - A Summary" was prepared in response to a request from Congressional conservatives angered over the enactment of the economic sanctions against apartheid South Africa. The New York Times comments further:

"Such requests often become part of legislation, and the department similarly was obliged to provide a report demanded by Congressional liberals as to the extent of malnutrition in the so-called black homelands within South Africa" (34)

The report on "Communist Influence in South Africa carried out under Section 501 of the so-called Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act shows that the real interests of imperialist U.S.A (and indeed all other imperialist countries) in imposing sanctions was to protect its own interests, which it saw endangered, as the confidential Congressional report clearly indicates, by:

(a) inflexible attitude of the Botha regime towards negotiations with the ANC

- (b) growing so-called influence of the South African Communist Party within the ANC
- (c) development of democratic mass organisations inside South Africa and their revolutionary link with the ANC.
- (d) The increasing consciousness of the Congress of South African Union (COSATU) and the ANC - SACP - COSATU revolutionary alliance.

All the anti-apartheid, anti-imperialist forces, all patriots and peace-loving people of Southern Africa must heed the clarion call to prepare for a historic confrontation with rabid apartheid and imperialist forces all of which are headed by the chief imperialist power the U.S.A, which has so ably articulated their collective aims and designs in the policy document purposely misnamed and thus disguised as the "Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act". The pressure for the imposition of mandatory sanctions under Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter must be brought to bear on the imperialist countries, support for the national liberation movements must be increased and the Frontline States must be fully supported so as to form a secure rear-base for national liberation struggles in South Africa and Namibia.

## FOOTNOTES

- (1) R. Segal (ed) Sanctions against South Africa (Penguin, 1964 "Reports of Commissions I and II", p. 247.
- (2) O.R Tambo, Apartheid - the indictment", in Segal (ed.), above p. 30.
- (3) See The Herald (Zimbabwe) 3 September, 1986.
- (4) See E. Schmidt - Sanctions: The lessons from Rhodesia in Africa Asia No 32 August 1986.
- (5) P. Calvocoressi, "The Politics of Sanctions: The League and the United Nations", in Segal (ed), above, pp 48 - 61
- (6) Peoples Republic of Mozambique, Economic Report, Maputo, January 1984.
- (7) Since about 1986 the Zimbabwean newspapers particularly the Financial Gazette the Business Herald, are full of analyses which establish clearly that the Mozambican trade routes were much cheaper than the South African routes, which Rhodesia was forced to use after Mozambique closed its borders in 1976.
- (10) V. Lenin, "Guerilla Warfare" (1906) in Coll. Works, vol II, pp.212 - 214.
- (11) Phineas Malinga, Sanctions - Imperialism Looks After Its Own," The African Communist No 104 First Quarter 1986, pp. 50 - 58.
- (12) H. Alonso, "The Withdrawal Method: Controls on Transnationals are not too effective," Prisma (Havana) 1/87, pp 5 - 6; See also part 3 of this paper.
- (13) See note 12 above at pp. 57 - 58
- (14) The Herald (Zimbabwe) 4/10/86
- (16) See ANC News Briefing, Week ending 28/12/86 p. 15 and Alonso, footnote 12 above.
- (18) See Lenin's several works: e.g. "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of nations to Self-Determination" (1916); "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism" (1966); "Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Question", 1920 2nd Congress of Comintern
- (17) K. Marx, Capital vol.1 Chap XXXIII "The Modern theory of Colonialism"
- (19) A. Gromyko, "Specific Features of the Revolutionary Process in Africa" in Two Directions of Socio-Economic Development in Africa (African Studies by Soviet Scholars No 7. USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow 1986) pp. 10 - 25 at p 12.
- (20) V.I. Gontcharov, "Specific Aspects of Imperialist Strategy in Southern Africa", in Colonialism, Neo-colonialism, And Africa's Path To A Peaceful Future, L. Rothmann et. al (eds.) Asia, Africa and Latin America; Special Issue 16 (Berlin, 1985) p.94
- (20(a)) J. Burger The Black Man's Burden (London, 1943)
- (21) V. Lenin "Differences in the European Labour Movement", (1910) 9n. Coll. Works, vol 16 pp 347 - 351
- (22) F. Meli, "South Africa's colonialism of a Special Type" L. Rothman, G. Kuck, H. Hutschenreuter and A. Kress (eds.) Colonialism Neo-Colonialism and Africa's Path to a Peaceful Future. Africa Asia and Latin America Special Issue 16 (Berlin, 1985)
- (23) E. Tarabrin, From "Colonialism to Neo Colonialism in T. Buttner and Hall. Walter, Colonialism, Neo Colonialism, And Studies on the Berlin Conference 1984/85, Asia, Africa and Latin America, Special Issue 13 (Berlin, 1984) p.99
- (24) S. Machel, Our Sophisticated Weapon (Maputo, 1982)
- (25) Ibid

- (26) The Sunday Mail, February 22, 1987 p. 1
- (27) See paper by same authors attached as an appendix to this paper and entitled: "Preliminary Observations and Assessment"
- (28) U.N. Doc A/CONF. 137/Ref 10 p. 15
- (29) Based on a summary in New York Times, 16 August 1986.
- (30) Based on Major Strengths and Weaknesses of The Congressional Sanctions Legislation", by the Washington Office On Africa 9/23/83
- (31) See also S. Gutto, et al Preliminary Observations Part Two
- (32) Jean M. Woods, Analysis of the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986" (unpublished paper)
- (33) See New York Times, Friday, January 9, 1987
- (34) Ibid