

apartheid on sale at Merrill, Lynch



The South African government is now selling one-ounce gold pieces—"Krugerrands"—throughout the United States. It has labelled the pieces "a gift of love" in its major advertising campaign. But they should be called a **gift of blood**: the blood of African miners forced to work for starvation-level wages in terrible conditions; the blood of South African patriots who are killed every day in their struggle to free their country.

Who Mines the Gold?

The South African economy, especially the mines, is based on the labor of Blacks, who make up 87 per cent of its 24 million people. Black miners often toil three miles underground, on 12-hour shifts, with the temperature ranging over a hundred degrees. There are, on average, three deaths a shift.

The rewards for this labor are slim. The all-white government has imposed **apartheid**, keeping Black wages at starvation level. It rules that Africans may be permanent residents of only 13 per cent of South African territory, the "Bantustans." Over a quarter of Africans there are unemployed. The land is unproductive, unindustrialized, terribly overcrowded. There, the people starve and die: over half of African children in the Bantustans die before age six, while white South Africans enjoy the highest living standard in the world.

To save their families, African men must take jobs in the "white areas" at any wage offered; they may only stay outside the Bantustans if they have a white employer. Many sign 18-month contracts with the mining companies. By law, their wives and children must stay behind.

Black South African miners earn \$100 a month, a fifteenth of white miners' wages. Blacks are barred from skilled and supervisory jobs. Unions and strikes are illegal.

What is the Significance of Krugerrands?

In 1976, resistance to apartheid reached a new level. Black determination to claim their rightful place in the country was shown by demonstrations and uprisings involving hundreds of thousands of workers and students. Their struggle will continue until freedom is won.

But the minority regime also faces an economic crisis. Over two million blacks are unemployed; inflation is over 11 per cent. The balance of payments deficit has reached almost \$2 billion. Military spending has been enormously increased—up 42 per cent over 1975.

To buy South African gold is to invest directly in the oppression and poverty of apartheid. The regime sells the Krugerrands to strengthen the economy and buy weapons to repress the four-fifths of the South African population which is Black.

Merrill Lynch is the agent for South African government Krugerrand sales in Boston. In acting for the regime, the company contributes directly to the denial of human rights in South Africa, delaying the time when Black South Africans win the right to a decent life in their own country.

The Boston Coalition for Liberation in Southern Africa calls on Merrill Lynch to stop its sales of Krugerrands and other South African gold in Boston.

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1983

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