

EPISCOPAL CHURCHMEN
for
SOUTH AFRICA

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—For A Free Southern Africa—

The Editor
THE LIVING CHURCH
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Milwaukee, WI 53202

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Dear Sir:

Lester Kinsolving's "Look at ECSA" (LC, March 30) was as scant and frantic as his long distance call to me the day before Christmas Eve (I was away at the time and he in New York). I carefully explained to him that ECSA in all its 19 years had never been a one-man operation, that I am the sole paid staff and that all the other members volunteer their time and work.

Kinsolving's perceptions of South Africa do not merit those of a serious newsman. A reporter intent on examining the plight of political prisoners would do other than rely on the jailors. Hundreds of South Africans - and citizens of Namibia, that country South Africa occupies in defiance of the lawful authority, the United Nations - are imprisoned and detained and are shifted about at the whim of the police apparatus. As a former chaplain and one in holy orders, Kinsolving had a pastoral obligation to try to ascertain their whereabouts and treatment and make known his findings on these prisoners of conscience.

He could have exercised investigative zeal by following in the footsteps of Judge William Booth, whose visit to Leeukop Prison produced a view of South Africa's prison system incisively at variance with Kinsolving's. Kinsolving could have gone to the Bantu Commissioners Courts (Judge Booth was arrested in one) where a thousand African men a day are sentenced for violations of the Pass Laws, a system of control which makes South Africa itself the greatest prison of all for the country's 17 million Blacks. He could, as did Judge Booth, have visited resettlement camps in which tens of thousands of "superfluous" Africans are dumped and where in that land of inordinate wealth men, women and children are dying of starvation.

Perhaps Kinsolving might, through the courtesy of his hosts in the Department of Information, have been able to speak with Nelson Mandela on Robben Island and to have begun to understand the reasons for armed warfare against what the South African Council of Churches calls that society's "primary, institutionalized violence".

Since Portugal's surrender of its African empire to determined liberation movements, the South African regime is desperately trying to shore up its defenses. Central to this strategy is a major effort to inveigle the United States of America into all-out support, the chief responsibility of the South African Department of Information.

William Johnston
William Johnston
President

A Look at ECSA

By LESTER KINSOLVING

For some years now, I have been receiving regular mailings of mimeographed material from an organization called "Episcopal Churchmen for South Africa" (ECSA).

When I visited the one-room office of ECSA, in the parish hall of Manhattan's Episcopal Church of the Ascension, I learned that ECSA is essentially a one-man operation.

"May Dyckman and I are the paid staff," explained affable William Johnston, a middle-aged layman, who went on to disclose:

✓ ECSA was founded in 1956, incorporated the following year, and has a board of directors including Judge William Booth of Manhattan and six others.

✓ ECSA has "Between 500 and 1,000 members—by that I mean people who reply to our mailings, which we try to arrange so that they will reach at least all of the clergy."

✓ "Only one contributor is from outside the U.S. . . . And we are not lobbying. We only try to encourage people to take an active interest." (This brought to mind the sticky question as to just what does constitute a lobby, for one recent ECSA mailing listed both HR 8005 and S 1868, with requests that senators and members of the House be contacted.)

ECSA is subtitled "Toward a Free Southern Africa."

This geographical limitation ("Southern Africa") was cited by Johnston, by way of explanation as to why ECSA has manifested no such social concern for the comparatively horrifying lack of freedom in Uganda (East Africa). For here Maj. Gen. Idi ("Big Daddy") Amin has slaughtered an estimated 75,000 blacks—which is conspicuously more than the 69 blacks who were shot when a crowd confronted a South African police station in Sharpeville a decade ago.

Big Daddy has also brutally deported some 62,000 Asians ("Oceanic Apartheid") and suggested that Great Britain demonstrate its lack of racism by providing

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ing Princess Anne to be one of his wives!

Yet ECSA concern for Africa seems to perish north of Zaire—where black dictator Mobutu has currently and arbitrarily changed the date of Christmas—on top of ordering Christians to cease using Christian names. (One ECSA map, however, does show one non-Southern Africa area of ECSA concern: Guinea and Guinea-Bissau—which, surprisingly enough, are farther away in West Africa than is comparatively nearby Uganda.)

Repeatedly, ECSA mailings have solicited my prayers for assorted "political prisoners" who, they report, are presently being held in such institutions as Pretoria Central Prison.

Hence, when I visited South Africa this February, as a guest of the Department of Information, I asked to visit Pretoria Central Prison. (I also wanted to see just how open this government would be, in accordance with the full understanding that I would write about both good and bad as I see it.)

While the South Africans were somewhat surprised (not many guests ask to go to prison) they arranged for me to visit this allegedly infamous prison with only three hours advance notice. Having been a prison chaplain, I did not find conditions at all infamous. But the list of actual prisoners at Pretoria Central contained not one of the alleged Pretoria Central prisoners which ECSA has been asking me to pray for!

Could this have been a ruse?

Well hardly. Because these prison authorities immediately recognized the names of other "political prisoners" elsewhere on the ECSA list—such as:

✓ Bram Fisher. This prisoner, now in a hospital suffering from cancer, is head of the Communist Party of South Africa. This organization has been outlawed for years—not unreasonably I conclude—because of the number of Communist-trained terrorists at the borders of Rhodesia and South Africa.

✓ Neville Alexander. This gentleman has a Ph.D.—and is serving 10 years for sabotage. (One of Dr. Alexander's fellow saboteurs was sent to the gallows. He was a school teacher who put a bomb in the waiting room of the Johannesburg railroad station. He went to the gibbet singing "We Shall Overcome." He overcame, all right. He blew one old woman to bits—while standing nearby was a seven-year old girl, who survived. I tried to interview her. But she was in London, in order to undergo the latest in a dozen operations, in which surgeons are trying to give her something approximating a face. Hers was blown off.)

✓ Nelson Mandella, attorney, Johannesburg. Mr. Mandella was born in the Transkei, which is scheduled to receive its independence in October of 1976. But this apparently does not satisfy Mr. Mandella. For he was one of the organizers of a terrorist organization called "Umkonto We Sizwe" ("The Spear of the Nation") which was discovered to have planned a detailed campaign of terrorism in a violent attempt to overthrow the government and incite to domestic insurrection. Mr. Mandella was arrested several times be-

fore he left the country, returning only after receiving military training from one of the bloodier of the foreign terrorist groups. For these offenses, Mandella was tried, convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Apparently such conduct is not at all offensive to the ECSA—for attached to the wall of their small office I saw a picture of Angela Davis, with the caption: "Blessed art thou among women."

This is one hint as to how ECSA can ignore the murderous atrocities being committed all over Africa by assorted black dictators, in order to focus exclusively on South Africa, whose standard of living as well as local governmental suffrage is beneficent by comparison.

No genuinely concerned group of Christians could focus on the mote of South Africa while ignoring such beams as Big Daddy and his notorious crocodile pond, or the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of blacks in Burundi, in Biafra and in Sudan.

ECSA, I suggest, is either deliberately or unwittingly permitting itself to be used in a propaganda attempt to destabilize South Africa. This is not out of social concern for individuals so much as because South Africa is the one Southern African country with a food surplus; as well as the West's leading source of chrome, gold, uranium, diamonds, platinum, manganese and asbestos.

I suggest this as a primary reason for the horseblinders when ECSA—as well as the National and World Council of Churches—looks toward Africa, and almost invariably ignores any and all atrocities north of Rhodesia.