

First World Anti-Apartheid Newsletter

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JAPAN - SOUTH AFRICA UPDATE

REPORT FROM THE JAPAN ANTI-APARTHEID COMMITTEE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONSULTATIONS OF ANTI-
APARTHEID MOVEMENTS AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGA-
NIZATIONS: GENEVA 4-5 NOVEMBER, 1991

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THIRTY YEARS OF BEING HONORARY WHITES

In 1960 when South Africa was isolated from the international community because of the Sharpeville atrocity, while European and U.S. firms were withdrawing from South Africa, the country which went in and strengthened its economic ties was JAPAN. Japan reestablished ties with South Africa and signed a trade treaty in 1961. In return the Japanese were given the status of honorary whites and have assisted the Apartheid Regime until now.

When the Population Registration Act was abolished in June 1991, the Japanese lost the opportunity to reject this "honorable" title by their own wish. In any case, the Japanese government has never shown any signs of regret for this title and for its support of the white regime.

In the 1970's, when the South African government put into effect a massive 10 year industrial development project to develop mineral resources as well as fundamental industries, positive cooperation from the Japanese was expected. Japanese trading houses established offices in South Africa from the end of the 1960's through the 1970's, and automobile and electronics manufacturers RUSHED to set up plants with the result that bilateral trade tripled in just ten years from \$640 million to \$2 billion in 1970. It is particularly disturbing to see the enthusiasm with which African Americans buy Japanese cars, which are cheaper only because of the BLOOD, SWEAT, TEARS and genocide control against their Black brothers and sisters in South Africa.

In order to evade economic sanctions, Japanese companies early on established locally owned corporations, through which they could deepen economic ties. The Japanese companies could argue that since they had no management rights, they need not pay any concern to such problems as the poverty wages being paid to Black workers by such local corporations as, for example, SOUTH AFRICA TOYOTA, which are, in fact, Japanese companies.

In 1987, when bilateral trade reached \$4.3 billion, Japan became the number one trading partner of South Africa and was denounced in the U.N. General Assembly in 1988. With the idea that "It would be better not to be Number 1", South African rare metals were then imported via third countries, including Switzerland, France and Britain; so direct trade figures fell to \$3.3 billion in 1990. The Japanese foreign ministry was very proud that Japan's sanctions were more strict than those of the West, but the basic view that the Apartheid regime was an important trading partner did not change.

HOW SOUTH AFRICA IS REPORTED IN THE JAPANESE MASS MEDIA



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HOW SOUTH AFRICA IS REPORTED IN THE JAPANESE MEDIA

Recently, public interest in Apartheid has increased because of Nelson Mandela's visit to Japan, the "Apartheid Non" art festival and the arrival of South African musicians and theatre companies. However, the public does not really understand the current situation in South Africa. They are completely dependent on the reports of the mass media in South Africa. In the middle of July, in spite of the disclosure of the white regime subsidising Inkatha, the Japanese mass media were still giving reports where the headlines referred to "black-on-black" violence or tribal conflict or a power struggle between the ANC and Inkatha. Such reports only profit the Apartheid Regime. Even when the media interview South Africans on whether Apartheid has ended or not, the interviews only take place with de Klerk or other white executives.

In September we invited to Japan representatives of a group which is fighting for the civil rights of the homeless. Our invitation was for the purpose of revitalizing the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Japan. They gave us a vivid picture of how people are presently living in the townships. Some people were killed by Inkatha members just because they did not call Buthelezi by his full name. All the migrant labourers living in the hostels, even those who are ANC members, have to have the Inkatha membership cards in order to save their lives. We were deeply impressed by their message that it cannot be said that the present situation is one of improvement for the most oppressed. These voices we hardly ever hear in the reports of the mass media. The media only report that South Africa has been changed and that Apartheid was wrong, according to the voices of the establishment. But they do not report the voices of the oppressed Blacks who say that they are still suffering.

As a result of such reporting, unfortunately the general public in Japan has a deeply embedded image of Africans as only in conflict and killing each other. It is a very important task for the Anti-Apartheid Movement to provide information about what is happening in South Africa, through the words of the Black people who still suffer.

RECENT MOVES BY JAPANESE GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS

In June 1991, the Japanese government lifted sanctions restricting tourist travel and educational and cultural exchanges between Japan and South Africa. Then the following sanctions were lifted on October 22nd: bans on imports of iron, steel and gold coins, ban on direct investment and loans. The bans on arms sales and on exports of computers to agencies that implement Apartheid remain in place.

It is a well-known fact that the government did not lift sanctions until the end of October, because it wanted to protect its candidacy for a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council through getting the support of the "independent" African countries. This kind of hypocritical decision-making saying: "Be patient until we get the seat" is a long way from acceptable behaviour. The press also reported this reason for Japan postponing the lifting of sanctions, but without any criticism.

ANTI-APARTHEID ACTIVITIES IN JAPAN

Under the circumstances outlined above, Japanese Anti-Apartheid activists are also questioning their future direction.

Keidanren, the most influential business organization, sent a mission to South Africa in April, and the leader reported then that "racial discrimination had disappeared in South Africa". Businesses have avoided taking a clear attitude concerning sanctions and repeatedly said that they would just follow government policy, while, on the other hand, the government said that "free enterprises could not be restricted." Therefore, both sides have been adopting an irresponsible attitude. Keidanren has been trying to collect a fund over the past two years for providing assistance to Black enterprises, and student scholarships. But the total target amount of \$3 million is miniscule when compared to the \$4 billion of annual gross profit earned from Apartheid. Even so they are having difficulties in reaching the target because of the indifference of businesses. When we see the reality of how Japan hypocritically lifted its

sanctions, the possibilities and the focus for future activities must be appropriate for that reality.

When our South African visitors went to Hiroshima, where the Atomic Bomb was dropped, they said that Japan should really "export" the facts of this visible tragedy so that humanity would not engage in war again. Our visitors also discovered the exclusionary tendencies in Japan when they were outside the Peace Park. Even the offspring of Koreans (forced to enter the Japanese army during World War II) who were born and brought up in Japan continue to be discriminated against. The memorial for those Koreans who died in the Atomic bombing in the same way as the Japanese, is not permitted to stand inside the Peace Park. Discrimination has continued even after death.

The People of South Africa are now trying with their blood and sweat to construct a new society. Perhaps it is only for one's own country that a total commitment can be found. Nonetheless, through meeting with other people, including those who have been discriminated against in Japan or those who grappled with issues in Japan, activities on a grassroots level with South Africa have been born. There is now a project to support the building of a homeless camp school. We define this problem of homelessness as being on the "front-line of Apartheid". Keeping to the focus of "forced removals" is just a beginning. But we can build on this and not just take the one-sided approach of only sending financial assistance. Nor can we deny that there is a connection in that we have a responsibility to build because we tread in the footsteps of the past between Japan and South Africa.

Japanese companies should have a plan for making a positive contribution to their Black workers, which should be closely observed by those engaged in the grassroots promotion of support activities to raise the status and the living standards of South African Blacks. Else, there will probably end up being many loopholes. The establishment of a CODE OF CONDUCT with binding rules and our support activities, should be two sides of one coin.

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an editorial
by Oscar L. Beard
Consultant in African Studies

Those who lament the present negotiations with the South African Regime as a Mandela "sell out", might well reflect that Africans have been fighting white settler colonialism in South Africa since 1658 with the Khoi Khoi War; since 1497 if one wishes to count the Xhosa expulsion of Vasco da Gama and his entourage from The Bay of Cows in 1497. After the Khoisan, the settlers went against the Xhosa, the Matabele, Zulu and others, a relative lull in the fighting not occurring until after the slaughter of some 4,000 Zulus at Blood River in 1838. The Zulus were to deal another death blow, this time to the British, in the Zulu War of 1878-79.

With the discovery of diamond in Kimberly, South Africa in 1867, and the discovery of gold in 1886, Cecil Rhodes and Paul Kruger literally worked-to-death 20 million Africans in just 15 years, in mineral pursuits. The Maxim Machine Gun was paying off for the imperialists all over Africa. Black People in every corner of the globe were up in military arms against White People throughout the 1800's. The Germans were to annihilate two-thirds of the population of Namibia between 1904 and 1907, literally hunting them down like dogs, throwing them into huge snake pits, of mass machine gunnings, castrations and strange fruits hanging from trees. Bambatha and his five hundred men were put down in 1906, Bambatha's head paraded through the streets of South Africa and taken back to his village. Bravery being taken as a given for both Africans and the white settlers, the whites, after agitating for the battle, ultimately succeeded with a more devastating war technology.

In 1988-89 South Africa was spending over \$2 million per day on its various military campaigns against African militia in the Southern Africa region. This included the War in Angola, which South Africa lost in the Summer of 1989, a shock for those who had begun with the premise that the white military police State is invincible. The War in Angola had been noted by mutual military cooperation against the South African Defense Forces by the Angolan Government (MPLA), the revolutionary militia of Namibia (SWAPO), who had been fighting a guerilla struggle against South Africa for some 23 long years, but also the ANC and Cuban troops.

Having been forced out of other Frontline States by South Africa's military aggression and economic reprisals against the various independent African nations of the Southern Africa region, Angola was the ANC's last strategic military base and footing to strike against South Africa. The new partnership between the two big white brothers, the U.S. and the former Soviet Union, also meant that the ANC, who had initially approached the U.S. for military support, had lost a military supporter. The Cold War was over in Angola, and African Liberation was no longer able to capitalize upon the antagonism between the two big white brothers.

At base, both sides, the ANC and the South Africa Defense Forces, were tired of fighting. The defeat in Southern Angola had brought the self-righteous South African minority to the negotiating table for the independence of Namibia. The way had been paved for the political phase of the struggle for South Africa.

A more poignant debate would be, how are African Americans going to make their technical expertise available to the Motherland, and cease being used as technical pawns to maintain white domination over Africa? Few African Americans would even bow to any African coming here in the 60's to tell us how to conduct the Civil Rights Struggle. Well then, let the Africans decide when to shoot and when to talk. They are the ones who are paying the price in blood!

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