

APPENDIX A

LETTER DELIVERED TO US SECRETARY OF STATE, DR H KISSINGER, FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

"The Hon Dr Henry Kissinger,  
Secretary of State for the United  
States of America,  
C/o. The Hon the U S Ambassador  
to South Africa,  
PRETORIA

Dear Sir,

As official representatives of the South African Council of Churches, a body representing and acting on behalf of 15½-million Christians in the Republic of South Africa and Namibia, we welcome you in our country. The USA, the State which you represent on your visit to South Africa, has this year celebrated the Bi-Centennial of the American Declaration of Independence and its liberation from Colonial rule. It was this event which led to new concepts of freedom and democratic government in the Western world of that time.

It is our conviction that your visit can be a contribution to solving the crisis in human relationships in our country, if, in your negotiations with the South African Government, you would apply the basic concepts developed at the time when the United States formed its present constitution. In our view the most important principles are the following:

- \* That Government has to be based on the consent and participation of those who are governed;
- \* that provision is made for peaceful changes in the Government and in Government policy in accordance with the needs, the wishes and the principles of the people subject to its authority;
- \* that the judicial system is protected against interference of the predominant power groups in the Government of the country;
- \* that the interpretation of the constitution and the legitimacy of human rights which correspond to generally accepted moral standards of justice in the life of the individual, the society and in international relationships.

We are aware that the American Declaration of Independence has contributed essentially to the understanding of human rights as it has been formulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the two covenants on human rights formulated by the UN in 1966. It is these rights which are internationally accepted and recognised as a criteria for justice and for the legitimacy of legislation, which are denied to the majority of the people in South Africa. In our country, power is wielded by a minority and is used by it to protect and entrench its privileges at the expense of those groups which have no universally accepted share in the political decision-making processes. The Black people of South Africa, i.e. those groups which are excluded from political responsibility have, for decades tried by peaceful means to negotiate for democratic rights to be accorded to them in the country of their birth. They had hoped that they would receive the support and understanding of Western democratic countries.

/The Atlantic .....

The Atlantic Charter and the UNO Charter, formulated during and after the Second World War, strengthened this hope. They were, however, disappointed by the South African Government as well as by Western countries which, by their foreign, strategic and economic policy, appeared to entrench a political set-up in South Africa which denied them the fundamental human rights enshrined in both these Charters.

Failing to achieve their ends these oppressed groups then developed non-violent methods of working for change. We refer to great leaders like the Nobel Prize winner Albert Luthuli, and also to the great Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi who, already before the first World War, developed his philosophy and strategy of working for peaceful change in South Africa. The South African Government has consistently responded negatively towards all attempts to have human rights implemented in the South African society. This has led to violent confrontation like the Sharpeville massacre, guerilla activities against Namibia, and now the latest internal urban uprisings, which itself started as a peaceful demonstration. The Government has responded to these confrontations by intensifying institutionalised violence in legislation and strict security measures, e.g. the Internal Security Act. The Government has sought to justify its harsh actions by claiming that all its policies are aimed at destroying Communism, while ignoring the unjust system that prevails and which is in itself a ripe breeding ground for Communism.

As a result the Government has, to all intents and purposes, lost the credibility to legislate for all the peoples of this country. We would emphasise that in the light of this critical situation, our concern as Christians is for all people, including our Government leaders.

Consequently, there are a number of facts regarding the present disturbances in this country which we believe we ought to bring to your attention.

1. The fundamental reason which one will be given by many influential Black urban leaders for the current unrest is the denial of basic human rights. Consequently, recent announcements that certain forms of discrimination will be done away with (eg removal of apartheid signs at post offices), while welcome, are totally inadequate in terms of meeting the reasonable aspirations of the oppressed Blacks - Africans, Coloureds and Asians - in this country.
2. Mr Vorster announced on Monday night in Pretoria that he was not prepared to call a multi-racial convention. We submit that this stronghanded attitude can only further alienate the Black people who are once again being told by Whites what is good for them, without any notice being taken of their legitimate aspirations. Mr Vorster's refusal to hold such a conference cannot be reconciled with his willingness to see majority rule in Rhodesia.
3. Government statements that Black leaders are "consulted" must be seen in its correct perspective. To be sure, the Prime Minister has met at times with "homeland" leaders. However, even these leaders will tell one that the Prime Minister has taken scant notice, if any, of their recommendations. A prominent homeland leader and the leader of the Coloured people have both warned in the past that violence would result if the Government did not meet the demands of the Black people. Their warnings were ignored and violence has now overtaken the situation. There have been similar warnings by White opposition leaders as well. The Government has been shown to be either unwilling or unable to take action in spite of the timeous warnings given.

/4. Urban .....

4. Urban African leaders who are recognised by the Government, the so-called "Urban Bantu Councillors", have made it quite clear that they do not regard themselves as the true leaders of the people. On September 7, 1976, during a visit to Soweto, the one-man commission of enquiry into the recent unrest was told that he would have to listen to the views of detained Blacks because it is they who are regarded by Black people as their leaders. To date, so far as we are aware, the Government has not taken any steps to release and speak to these leaders. On the contrary, more people have been detained."

5. Indeed, the Government has now gone so far as to allow the arrest, without trial, of representatives of the African and Coloured communities, who have actually chosen to work within the system of apartheid. One of the executive committee members of the Coloured Persons Representative Council, an elected representative of his people, and National Chairman of the Labour Party, has been arrested without trial. Several candidates in the Transkei general election representing the Transkei's opposition Democratic Party have also been arrested and have not been brought before a court of law.

Of the more than 800 people arrested by security police since the outbreak of the disturbances in June, some 78 have been served with notices in terms of the country's Internal Security Act, - a measure which includes a clause enabling the police to arrest people for "preventive detention". On August 8, 1976, the Minister of Justice, Mr J Kruger, said the application of the preventive detention sections of the Act were being taken only as a precautionary measure. He stated in a Press report of that date that he would "most definitely try not to use it". Yet use it he has - including its use for the arrest of people whom we know to be deeply committed to the Christian tenet of justice and reconciliation and peaceful change, and whom we do not believe could be a threat to the security of the State.

6. The police, presumably with the backing of the Government and at the very least, with its tacit approval, have used violence against the Press in this country in an endeavour to prevent the media from telling the public about the situation and, more importantly, the facts behind the violence. We believe the attached photostatic copy of a front-page editorial by the Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg) accurately sums up the situation regarding the media.

It causes us considerable concern when we see that the South African Government is adopting the same hardline attitudes towards the present disturbances as it has done consistently since 1948 and sporadically before then.

No expert is needed to understand that South Africa is facing a crisis. Yet the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues persist - for public consumption at any rate - in asserting that the country does not have a crisis on its hands. As representatives of several million people who belong to churches which do not seek violence, it is alarming to note that the Prime Minister and his Government may only take meaningful action to restore human rights once they believe the country is in fact - in their terms - facing a crisis. If the present disturbances throughout the country, involving as they do loss of life and massive imprisonment without trial, do not constitute a crisis, then presumably only further massive bloodshed and detentions without trial will, so far as the Government is concerned, constitute a crisis.

/We would .....

We would submit that the tensions in South Africa will not tolerate the type of situation which the Government envisages as a crisis. As representatives of caring and peaceloving Christians, we believe that further bloodshed and detention without trial should be prevented at all costs. At present, only the Prime Minister and his Cabinet wield the constitutional power to bring about drastic changes in the socio-political structure in South Africa so that further unrest, bitterness on all sides, and escalating bloodshed can be prevented. As a representative of a body which has itself constantly re-examined its role in the interests of promoting a just society in this country, we would bring to your attention our own standpoints in regard to the specific situation which now exists in this land. These are expressed in resolutions which were adopted by the national conference of the South African Council of Churches which met at the end of July this year.

We believe therefore that your efforts towards peace in this region could be much more fruitful if you could persuade the South African Prime Minister to appreciate the need for meaningful change.

Specifically, we believe that lasting peace can only come about if the following conditions are met:

- 1) That the Government recognises that the policy of apartheid as unworkable in the multi-racial South African society.
- 2) That the policy of the homelands is also not viable and that these territories should remain an integral part of South Africa.
- 3) That urban Blacks are already assimilated into the South African economy and that no number of laws making them citizens of homelands they have never seen will alter this fact.
- 4) That the Government should call a non-racial convention, representative of all the people of this country, including those in exile and in prison, to thrash out a system of Government for this country in which the interests of all will be protected.

Finally, we would emphasise that we believe that the Church, being the Body of Christ, and dedicated to the service of God and men unites man in one common bond of fellowship which transcends all racial, national and geographic boundaries (1 Cor 12:12-26). We believe that such a bond of fellowship can contribute positively towards the attainment of human rights and the realization of the full potential of man, irrespective of race, colour or creed.

We would submit, with respect, that your true imminent duty lies not only in securing peaceful change in the Southern African region, but also in the Republic of South Africa itself. As we have pointed out earlier, we believe a pre-requisite for peace in this region is peace and a just society in South Africa. The United States has, through the application of a constitution which recognises the freedom and equality of man, clearly illustrated that peaceful change is possible in the face of various crises.

Furthermore, the United States has demonstrated that true democracy can work in a heterogeneous society which, in fact, is similar in many respects to the South African society.

/It would be .....

It would be a tragic mistake if the United States, in the face of its own concern for freedom, were to assist in perpetuating the status quo of an apartheid society for political and economic expediency. We would point out that your task is made that much more difficult by the fact that United States investment in South Africa is regarded by many Black leaders to be a contribution towards maintaining the apartheid structures in this land.

We would sincerely and urgently ask you to use all the means at your disposal to ensure that the South African Government takes immediate steps to bring about meaningful change in this country.

Yours faithfully,

SIGNED: John Thorne (Rev)  
PRESIDENT

K Schmale (Dr)  
VICE PRESIDENT

John Rees (Mr)  
GENERAL SECRETARY