

WHY I MUST SAY NO!

U.S. investment in South Africa - the \$2,5 billion question

The basic issues under debate

Hugh Murray, editor and publisher of the authoritative quarterly magazine 'Le Monde Diplomatique' interviewed some personalities closely involved

There are indications that the debate on disinvestment is to put it more correctly, the question of United States investment in SA, is gathering momentum and a victory for US presidential candidate Walter Mondale in November could certainly see this campaign rapidly

legislation would be approved. I suppose I have as much chance of getting all this legislation through as Chief Gertie Bumbie of the Zulus has of persuading Prime Minister P. W. Botha to hold a National Convention

Since 1983, however, that he is more hopeful now than ever that he will be able to come out of the conference committee with some legislation which might have been behind his efforts will consider truly meaningful

He replies: 'We fundamentally oppose the view that a withdrawal of investment can play a substantial role in resolving

prestige and authoritative US finance magazine, Fortune, devoted a supplement to the question of US investment in South Africa in its issue of October 1, 1984. People interviewed include Dr Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia, Mrs Lucy Mvubelo, General Secretary of the National Union of Clothing Workers, Mr Harry Oppenheimer, former Chairman of the Anglo American Corporation and Mr David Rockefeller, former Chairman of the Chase Manhattan Bank. Chief M G Buthelezi, Minister of KwaZulu, President of Inkatha and Chairman of the South African Black Alliance was also asked to contribute thoughts. Some of his major points are printed below and on the following page.

THE first question which must be asked in the disinvestment debate is what the people of South Africa themselves say about it.

I have yet to meet a humble worker who does not echo the sentiments of Soweto audiences. Oppressed as they are they will never support disinvestment. They have not and will not use it as one of their strategies for liberation.

How can I give my approval to pressure, regardless of the suffering they entail for my people? I cannot promise myself to tell the poor of this country that I am working for the cessation of foreign investment in South Africa. Investment which means jobs for the unemployed, clothes for the cold and food for the hungry.

How can Blacks manage to do the little we need towards our liberation and the care of our families BECAUSE of meagre investment that comes our way?

Disinvestment is, in fact, a strategy against liberation. Every foreign investor who has created employment opportunities in South Africa knows that by Monday morning there are hundreds of unemployed at their factories seeking jobs.

These people need a cash wage so that they and their families can survive. Only when there is food in their bellies can they afford to take the time to consider their political horizons.

There are more than 20 million Blacks in South Africa. In KwaZulu

millions eke out a living as subsistence farmers, domestic and clerical workers and so on...

The desperate poverty of these people can be seen in the 1980 census figures which reveal that 50 percent of KwaZulu's rural population earned less than \$650 a year and 50 percent of urban dwellers less than \$1 500 a year.

People starve to death in KwaZulu.

And still the disinvestment question and the more general question of South Africa's isolation in the international community is constantly raised.

South Africa's internal policies are so repugnant to the human conscience that the isolation of the country and the crippling of its economy seems to many to be a moral course of action.

I understand the moral indignation of the world and I am glad for it. However, disinvestment is a wrong strategy, a misguided strategy and will do nothing to aid the struggle for liberation within the country.

It is, in fact tactical madness...

Various voices clamour for disinvestment.

The African National Congress Mission in Exile, having abandoned the internal struggle against apartheid in favour of mounting an armed attack against the Government and working in collaboration with international forces favouring a revolution and the use of violence for political purposes, espouse disinvestment as an essential tactic.

Within the country there are minority groups, there are church groups and there are groups among the intelligentsia who also favour disinvestment.

There are, however, other voices — the voices of the masses, who totally reject the tactic.

When General Alexander Haig visited South Africa I told him that we felt the process of change should be associated with the vitalisation of the free enterprise system and the maximisation of the country's productive capacity.

I also said that we recognise the need, if at all possible to bring about changes in partnership with Western interests.

I felt incumbent to make it clear, and I will reiterate, that the present Government's commitment to racist politics is giving rise to deepening Black anger. As anger deepens so will Black politics become increasingly careless about the economic consequences of Black political action.

If change is not brought about by democratic and non-violent opposition to apartheid (principles of Inkatha) then it will sooner or later be brought about by violent means.

That there will one day be a new dispensation in South Africa there is no doubt.

But what sort of South Africa will we all inherit in which to share power? For unlike the White supporters of the ruling National Party, we in Inkatha

are not racists.

It is unfortunate that many of the people who are in the forefront of the disinvestment campaign rely on the ANC for their guidance.

My brothers and sisters in exile are sadly out of touch. They forget that most of us work, live and die within the borders of apartheid South Africa.

I must stress that we cannot afford to adopt the attitudes of theoreticians towards our own suffering.

Those who advocate disinvestment have adopted a strategy born out of pathetic misanalysis.

Many factors have been ignored and on top of this is the fact that South Africa is not as vulnerable as many people think it is.

Consider the following:

- * The South African economy has already reached such a level of self-sufficiency that disinvestment would only act as catalyst for greater achievements.
- * The country is a nett exporter of food and energy to Africa and elsewhere in the world.
- * It is an exporter of a whole range of strategic and other minerals.
- * The economy of this country is already integrated with the vested interests of the Western industrial world and with the developing economies of Africa.
- * Various British Governments tried to use sanctions to topple Ian Smith's Government of 200 000 White settlers and together with the United Nations failed. It is now known that some of the biggest names in commerce and industry throughout the world assisted in the sanctions busting which kept Rhodesia (as it then was) afloat.

So I must try to hammer home that it is too simplistic to regard any action meant to harm the economy of South Africa as something that will only harm South Africa.

Any harm to the South African economy would reverberate in Africa and throughout many Western industrial countries.

Disinvestment may shake South Africa's economic foundations. It would certainly pulverize the rest of Southern Africa — such is their economic dependence (although often hidden) on Pretoria.

One has to ask whether supporters of disinvestment merely wish to bring the Government to its knees... or, do they have in mind the destruction of the entire South African economy?

If so, the naivety of their quest is mind boggling.

This raises the question of — given

"If we cut off investments we would lose jobs in this country and we wouldn't necessarily help Blacks in that country ..."

Andrew Young, former US Ambassador to the UN.

"If you want a complete transformation of this society, the easiest thing to do is to get everybody packing their bags, taking money out, etc. But of course, the moment that you do that you create economic chaos. And that is a sure guarantee for full-scale, bloody, racial confrontation which would unleash a blood-bath such as we have never seen ..."

Percy Qoboza, South African journalist and former Neiman Scholar at Harvard University.

"I have spent my life in endeavouring to achieve trade union rights to assure all South African workers the necessary economic advancement and security that would in turn give them the clout and leverage to gain the political rights now denied to Black workers. This clout can be obtained only if South Africa remains economically sound... are we Blacks to achieve our political rights on empty stomachs?"

Mrs Lucy Mvubelo, General Secretary of the National Union of Clothing Workers.

"People in the US are demanding two totally contradictory things. On the one hand they want to help the Blacks by not investing in South Africa and, on the other, they demand that wages and other conditions be improved. But you cannot achieve improvements in the field of wages and other working conditions if industry is not registering a steady growth. The only way to bring about peaceful change is to allow a modern economy to build up — which cannot exist without the participation of vast numbers of Black people holding down skilled and highly paid jobs ..."

Harry Oppenheimer, former Chairman of the Anglo American Corporation of South Africa.

the facts — why some people in the international community are still so determined to see this tactic endorsed by the captains of commerce and industry.

Why are they so persistent to push disinvestment even with the knowledge that we Blacks (whom they purport to be helping) are the ones who will suffer the most?

Already we fail to do more for ourselves because we are caught in the various cycle of poverty, ignorance and disease. Disinvestment would strip us bare.

So I must conclude that those who advocate disinvestment do so in complete disregard of what Black people themselves think.

I have told the United States Ambassador to South Africa, Mr Herman Nickel, that we Blacks are grateful for the concrete help we receive from time to time from the US as opposed to the radical rhetoric which has emanated from some Administrations.

Assessments of the South African situation by Western Governments, as I explained to Mr Nickel, are made up in terms of their own vested interests and they are different from the assessments which Black South Africans themselves make.

When it comes down to brass tacks foreign governments, the United States included, at this stage do not want to take sides in Black politics.

There is for them as yet insufficient clarity about who in Black politics will emerge victorious and what force will ultimately be the force that has to be reckoned with. There is a kind of waiting to see which way the cookie crumbles and there is kind of immoral opportunism at work which does not want to back the wrong horse.

In a country such as ours you cannot have an expanding political vision in shrinking economic circumstances. Ever-increasing poverty is an increase in political radicalism.

We believe the struggle for liberation must be waged by the people of this country and we will continue to reject any suggestion that external forces should move in to rectify our position for us.

Dialogue between America and Black South Africa needs to go far beyond intercourse between radical pressure groups in the US and protest by Black politicians in South Africa.

American national interests and South African national interests are not served by pressure groups which reject Black market-place pragmatism in favour of the magnification of forces of conflict.