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SECTION V : DOCUMENTATION

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, BISHOP DESMOND TUTU. THE INTERVIEW WAS BROADCAST BY SABC-TV ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1978. THE INTERVIEWER WAS MR C SAUNDERS OF SABC-TV

CS. The general-secretary of the South African Council of Churches, the Rev Desmond Tutu, leaves for Europe tomorrow to raise funds for the SACC - a body which represents some 24 denominations in South Africa which, in turn, represents some 13-million black and white Christians. The bishop's visit follows a recent remark by the Minister of Justice, Mr Jimmy Kruger, who said that in the past few years the SACC had received R7-million in donations from foreign sources, and that the organisation should disclose how it spent this money in South Africa.

Now, Bishop Tutu, I think the first thing to confirm is: Does the SACC receive such vast quantities of money from abroad and is it true that some 90% of the fund comes from foreign sources?

DT. Yes, it is true that a very large proportion of the funds that the Council of Churches receives comes from our sister churches overseas.

CS. Is the percentage about 90?

DT. It is roughly about that.

CS. Now Bishop, the sources - could you identify, very briefly, the main sources of your funds?

DT. Yes, it is the churches in Germany, It is the churches in Scandinavian countries, it is churches in Switzerland, Holland, in the UK and in the United States.

CS. These churches and church organisations - are they all affiliated to the WCC?

DT. Yes

CS. Bishop, to get down to the nitty gritty, it is clear that the bulk of funds being used by the SACC in this country comes from sources which are generally hostile to this country. In other words, what has been called the South African way of life.

For example, the WCC and its foreign members - they openly support terrorism and violent overthrow of white governments in Southern Africa. Now, do you not feel that in view of this, the money which is received by the SACC from foreign sources is tainted or suspect?

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- DT. Well, I have to say to you quite frankly that I reject completely your premise that these churches support terrorism. Because even the WCC has indicated times without number that the grants that it gives to the liberation movements are grants given for humanitarian purposes. It is grants that are given in order to demonstrate a solidarity of the international Christian community with those who are struggling for justice.
- It does not say, and this they have underlined repeatedly, it does not say therefore, that the WCC condones the methods that are used by those who have - rightly or wrongly - opted for armed struggle. Nor does it say "we support you in the way you are doing whatever you are doing, but we support you for the goal which is an open society". And therefore, I must say again that I must reject your premise.
- CS. Bishop Tutu, can I remind you that in 1974 when Dr Lucas Fischer was in South Africa - a prominent member of the WCC - he said that he condoned, and the WCC condoned, what he called the constructive violence of the liberation movements. And also we have had obviously funds given by the WCC to various organisations. This year the Patriotic Front and Swapo.
- DT. Yes, but you are coming back to the same thing. I mean, I have to also underline repeatedly it has been said, and it was when these grants were made, that they are grants made for humanitarian purposes. And I have to say again that the special fund from which these grants are made is a fund that was set up to assist racially oppressed groups round the world - not only in Southern Africa.
- CS. You say humanitarian purposes. But can I take you up on that point, then? That the general-secretary of the WCC, Dr Philip Potter, has said quite categorically that the WCC has no control over the funds it gives, and that it has to trust the people it gives the money to. So that the WCC, in other words, does not know this money is being used for humanitarian purposes.
- DT. I think that one can concede to some extent the fact that it is difficult to monitor how the funds are used. But I would like to say two things on that score: One: those who are the recipients of these grants are not so naive as to erode the goodwill of those who have said we are giving you the money for this specific purpose. They are aware that that kind of action would immediately evaporate any goodwill they might have had.
- The second point is those involved in the armed struggle have so many others who are able and wanting to give them arms that it would not be a problem for them to get arms. It would be exceedingly unwise for them to ask for funds under false pretences.

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- CS. Now you have mentioned the question of eroding goodwill. But to get back to the original question I put to you - in other words money being tainted and suspect from abroad. Surely the motives must be suspect because no organisation hostile to South Africa would pump millions into this country unless it felt that this money was paying dividends to its purpose. And in this case we know the purpose is to support the militants and revolutionary elements. In other words, to change the order of things in South Africa.
- DT. Well, I made it quite clear from the way the funds are used that your allegation is quite groundless. Because, I mean, if the funds were used at all in a subversive way, the security laws of this country are so rigid that it would be impossible for any organisation with the kind of scrutiny that we are getting to get away with it. I would like to spell out how the money is used if you would like me to do that.
- CS. I would at a later stage. At this point can we just concentrate on another thing. Do you give a detailed report to the foreign organisations who supply you with funds?
- DT. We report to two sets of people because the money is church money. We report to the churches in South Africa at our national conference annually where our accounts are tabled and are gone through with a fine tooth comb after they have been audited by a reputable firm in Johannesburg.
- CS. But you also report to the foreign sources that provide you with the money.
- DT. They are foreign sources only in so far as they are in foreign lands. But I mean as members of the Christian community we believe we belong one to another and they assist us as their fellow Christians.
- CS. They are also organisations which are hostile to the South African way of life and which support organisations such as the Patriotic Front, Swapo and the ANC for instance.
- DT. Not, let me try to get you away from this particular point ... no, no they are not hostile to South Africa. They are hostile to a particular policy. This is the kind of thing we keep getting in this country, that when you criticise a particular political party policy that you are thereby ipso facto being unpatriotic. I am very deeply, passionately, in love with South Africa. I am a patriot. But I can tell you that until my dying day I will criticise, and criticise vehemently, anything that I believe is inconsistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And the present policies of the Government of South Africa are to me such..

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CS. Bishop, I concede the point that these organisations are hostile to the South African Government, But at the same time will you concede that they favour the terrorist organisations such as Swapo, the Patriotic Front and ANC?

DT. They have done nothing of the sort. I mean they are supporting groups that are struggling for justice in very many parts of the world.

CS. But they give money to these groups?

DT. Yes, but I mean let us speak about the money which they give to us which was the subject of the Minister's interview.

CS. No, I was trying to establish a link between these organisations and between the ANC, Swapo and the Patriotic Front organisation...so I was asking you if you do not agree then that they are favourable to these organisations?

DT. Well, there are those of them who do that, but I've got to point out that the fund, the Special Fund, is earmarked money. It doesn't come out of the general fund that is made available by the various churches. So that each specific church decides that it is going to make an allocation to the Special Fund.

And I don't need to point out to you that there has been considerable controversy in Europe and other parts of the world from the churches to show that they are not sort of monochrome, and they are constantly self-critical.

CS. Bishop, you indicated that you have to report to these foreign sources on what you do with these funds. But now is it not logical to assume that what is being done with these funds, what you tell them in other words, satisfies them to the extent that they continue giving the SACC funds? And Bishop, if that is logical, then is it not just as logical to conclude - this is the way people think - that these organisations are satisfied that the SACC activities in South Africa support their hostile ideas - be it then even in an indirect or peaceful way?

DT. Now again I would like for us to take issue with your keeping on speaking about them as "organisations". That seems to me "political organisations". Now I want to stress again and again that these are churches with which even the Dutch Reformed Church has been in relation until recently; that these are churches,

CS. But they are supporting political and terrorist organisations .

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- DT. Wait a bit. I have to make my point. When you keep calling them "organisations" you want to get into the minds of various people that these are not, in fact, churches - whereas their primary concern, and I've got to underline these, their primary concern is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Is justice, Is love. Is reconciliation, Is peace. These "organisations", you call them, are churches that are concerned for freedom, for a new society in South Africa. And they will give anything for us to bring about the change that even the Government has stressed is something that ought to happen.
- CS. But many people will say that although they are Christian, the way they see their task, in other words by supporting terrorist organisations, they are nevertheless jeopardising the security of the people in Southern Africa.
- DT. Let us come to the funds that they gave us and how they are used, because that is what the Minister spoke about. He spoke about terrorism and in that context he mentioned the SACC. These funds are used in various areas. One is in the area of education. We have an African bursary fund. This is where these monies are used. These monies are used in self-help projects. In community development. In rural development. That is where this money is used. Then, and this is important, the funds are used, particularly the Asingeni Fund monies, are used to give relief to people who fell foul of occurrences since June 1976. But also they have done a tremendous thing of providing legal defence for those had up for political offences.
- CS. Bishop, accepting that you do good work with these funds and with these various programmes, are you also not in effect showing solidarity with the revolutionaries in South Africa? Because is it not so that some of the SACC's main programmes, and a lot of its money, is to assist those, as you said, who run foul of South Africa's security laws and their dependants? Are you not showing solidarity with these people by doing so?
- DT. Well, one of the things you are assuming, and it is one of the awful things about South Africa today, is that someone is guilty until he has proved that he is innocent. This is one of these awful things, we have had this sad abrogation of the rule of law. Now we believe that each person has the right to the best possible legal defence that he can get, and that is not to say we condone whatever he may have been alleged to have committed, and I would have thought that a Minister of Justice would have been exceedingly pleased that there was an organisation that was helping him in the administration of justice.

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CS. But Bishop, let us look at the overall effect. You are helping people who are accused of revolutionary activities. Now whether they are innocent or not, the fact of the matter is: are you not giving a sense of security insofar as he knows that if he is caught he will have a good defence and that his dependants will be cared for? Do you not agree then, that in this way you are encouraging the revolutionary in South Africa - innocent or not?

DT. Now you are pointing up to another awful feature of our land, which says that supposing that someone is guilty of an offence, that you punish not only the miscreant, but you have to punish any and everybody associated with him. That is a very odd piece of jurisprudence.

CS. You spent a large amount of money on people who have fallen foul of the security laws. Do you spend an equivalent amount on poor people who have to appear in court for reasons of common crime?

DT. These people are often able to go to the legal aid centres to find that kind of assistance, and in any case they are usually involved in cases that are not as expensive as these particular ones. And these are a special category. We believe that a great deal of what is happening is due to the sick nature of our society.

CS. Bishop, what is your attitude to violent methods? Are you a man of peace?

DT. I am a man of peace but I am not a pacifist. I am not a pacifist. I am struggling at the present time to avert what the former Prime Minister called the alternative too ghastly to contemplate. I and all of our churches are working to bring about change reasonably peacefully. Note, I say reasonably peacefully, because we cannot say that the South African situation is non-violent. Ever since June 1976, if I can take that one. The number of people who died, especially in the black community, indicates that we are in a violent situation, that we are striving to avert the holocaust.

CS. Where you are interested in methods of peace, is it not also true that you supported the R74 000 which the WCC gave to the Rhodesian Patriotic Front, which is an organisation that murders missionaries and civilians, which shoots down a civilian aircraft, massacres the survivors, and which has perpetrated many other atrocities? And you are also on record as saying - I am quoting you - that the "SACC should not abandon our brothers and sisters where the course they decide to take is one of violence".

Now this appears to indicate while you are not personally a violent man, that you support violence against governments?

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DT. I would like you to know that the first statement you made is absolutely wrong because there is nowhere that I said I supported that particular grant.

CS. Don't you support it?

DT. And I would like to come to the second point. The second point, in fact, is a statement that comes from the Lambeth Conference in which, in passing a resolution on human rights, the Lambeth Conference said in many parts of the world there are those involved in the struggle for human rights at great cost to themselves and often the struggle may become violent. And the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops said we must not abandon them even when the struggle became violent. This is to say they do not cease to be your brothers and sisters. I say that even if your child misbehaves ... if your child misbehaves horrendously, that child does not cease to be your child.

CS. Do you not then support the R74 000 given to the Patriotic Front by the WCC and also the R112 000 given to Swapo?

DT. I have not said I do or I don't.

CS. But could you say?

DT. I'd like to say why the WCC gave it.

CS. I am trying to find out what your attitude is towards these funds

DT. I have been on record with the SACC that we would not support the granting of these funds.

CS. So you are against the granting of these funds?

DT. Yes. But I'd like you to know why I am saying what I am saying. It is that I find that we have a selective morality in South Africa. These grants have made people begin to think a little more deeply about the whole issue of violence, and we are very quick to condemn, and I have condemned actions of violence by those who in this country we call terrorists. But I have not heard the same kind of condemnation, the same sense of outrage, expressed against the violence say, of the South African armed forces going in hot pursuit into Angola, or the Rhodesians into Mozambique or Zambia.

CS. Do you not regard it as retaliatory raids?

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- DT. Not when they kill women and children. Because that is done by the South Africans. That is not violence in your view. Is that not violence when they kill women and children in the camps and we have a banner headline in most of our newspapers "Thousands killed", reported almost gleefully. Now I condemn that and I would expect Christians who say they condemn violence would condemn that kind of violence as well.
- CS. In other words, you condemn the kind of raids that South Africa does where it crosses into another country as a retaliatory raid against the terrorist forces which have camps over there, which we know operate from those countries into neighbouring countries such as South West Africa, murdering mainly civilians? This being a terrorist activity?
- DT. I would like to say again that if the South African forces were able to say to me that we are clear, that our objectives and what we have in fact destroyed are only military places, I would accept that. Maybe that sort of thing should happen but they will not because they know it is not true. They have been able to go into the refugee camps, and there is proof of this, that they have killed women and children. And that is violence.
- CS. Where did you get this proof, Bishop? Because the South African forces say constantly that their targets are the terrorists and these are the people they kill, although they would concede that some innocent people would suffer as a consequence, if they are in the vicinity of the camps.
- DT. Yes, but you are now saying that some innocent people ... how many are "some" ? This is the point I am trying to make. Let us condemn violence, and I would like us even more than condemning the violence that is sort of outside, to condemn the structural violence that is in this country.
- CS. A final question, or should I say a quotation which I should like your comment on. And that it was Russia's communist leader, Lenin, who said, and I quote him here: "Our most fruitful area is the area that is the field of religion." He said because religious people were the most gullible of all, they would believe almost anything., everything, if it was presented in a religious form.
- DT. Very good. Now I can say to you again that we have had the criticism levelled at the Christian Church that it preaches pie-in-the-sky when you die. People are miserable on earth and you tell them: Don't worry, things will be alright in the hereafter. No. We say that the Gospel that Jesus Christ brought to this earth is a Gospel that says God loves you and wishes you to have fulness of life here.

/Jesus Christ .....



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Jesus Christ fed the hungry on this earth. Jesus Christ healed the sick on this earth. He did not say "Oh you are sick. Don't worry, it will be alright when you get to Heaven". And we are carrying out that ministry that Jesus Christ has given us. And it is a ministry also seeking justice for the oppressed, for the exploited, seeking peace and reconciliation.

And I am saying I am giving my whole life to this whole endeavour of trying to bring about peaceful change in South Africa so that black and white together can stride forth proudly, holding hands into this future where we will matter not because of the colour of our skins, but we will matter because we are human beings made in the image of God.