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African National Congress marks year in Tokyo

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The African National Congress (ANC), an organization opposed to the South African government, today celebrates the first anniversary of its Tokyo office.

Jerry Matsila, the ANC's Tokyo representative, and his supporters see a great advance in Japanese awareness of, and support for, the fight against apartheid. However, they had difficulty convincing government and business circles to impose total economic sanctions to protest racial segregation.

ANC's supporters and volunteers have increased over the year. It held two successful rallies and a concert. Matsila has delivered 300 speeches across Japan and felt timere sympathy being transformed into a concrete belief in action?

A fund created for the office by a citizens group, the Japan Asia, Africa and Latin America Solidarity Committee (JAALA), has swollen to Y15.35 million.

In that sense, I think our activities were successful," Matsila said. Our aim for the next year is to convince government and trading companies to set up economic sanctions?

In early 1988, other countries criticized Japan for being the No. 1 trading partner of South Africa, with \$4.12 billion of trade in 1987, while elsewhere in the world business was being withdrawn in protest against apartheid.

In answer to this criticism, Foreign Minister Sousuke Uno asked business circles to show self-restraint in trade with South Africa.

Trade fell in 1988

As a result of pressure from both the government and citizens' groups, some companies shrank their dealings with South Africa.

At the end of 1988, Japan's two-way trade with South Africa dropped by 4 percent to \$3.98 billion, according to Finance Ministry report.

Japan became South Africa's No. 2 trading partner, after West Germany.

However, Matsila claims, the drop doesn't reflect the truth, because Japanese companies are only covering up their trade with South Africa by using third countries. He said even though Japan's imports of gold from South Africa dropped by 11 percent from 1987 to 1988, its imports from England, which imports gold from South Africa, increased by 26.9 percent, based on an official report released in England.

Raising consciousness  
Opportunities to hear, talk and think about apartheid increased greatly over the past year? said Yoji Kambayashi, secretary-general of the Japan Anti-Apartheid Committee (JAAC).

Public interest was aroused by symposiums, movies, books and a play.

Various grass-roots groups such as J AALA, J AAC and the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) organized more than a dozen conferences and symposiums on the issue.

The motion picture "Cry Freedom," which depicted the struggles of an anti-apartheid white newspaper editor, recorded 3 billion in box-office profits in February 1988 and was shown to lawmakers at the Diet. Donald Woods, the author of two memoirs on which the film was based, visited Japan last May and appealed for economic sanctions to end apartheid.

Another anti-apartheid movie, "A World Apart" attracted about 37,000 viewers in Tokyo. A spokesman for distributor Herald Ace said the film will be a long-run hit.

In February, a South African play, "JERRY MATSILA (center), Tokyo representative of the anti-apartheid African National Congress, links hands with staff members Naoko Tsuyama (left) and Kazunari Hirano. capacity audiences totaling 28,000 people to a tiny Shibuya theater for two weeks.

However, Kambayashi is afraid the anti-apartheid movement has become fashionable without generating much fundamental understanding of the problem.

It seems to me that among Japanese people there is a gap between knowing about apartheid and acting for its

abolition? said Ruiko Yoshida, a photojournalist who visited South Africa in December 1987. She is the author of the book *South Africa, the Republic of Apartheid*.  
Citizens' activities don't acquire wide support in Japan, as they do in Europe and the US. I think that's because Japanese education forgot to teach the importance of basic human rights," she said.

Japan is a nouveau riche country which has limited its mind to making more profit to catch up with the Western world. We learned only the material aspects of democracy, not its spirit? she said.

Ministry setback

Matsila and his supporters said the Foreign Ministry's removal of a sympathetic official from its Africa Division last summer was a "terrible setback" for their cause.

"He fully understood our problems and gave us moral support," Matsila said. "I assume he was far ahead of the ministry's policy, and that is probably why he was removed from his position."

Takashi Onda, director general of the Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau of the Foreign Ministry, argued that the ministry was taking necessary measures to make clear to the Pretoria government that Japan denounced apartheid and supported blacks in South Africa.

However, Onda said the Japanese government did not think total economic sanctions were the best measure to take. He said destruction of the South African economy was undesirable for all concerned - black and white residents of South Africa and of neighboring countries that depend economically on South Africa.

Onda said Japan was doing what it could, such as providing scholarships for black students to study abroad. He said the Foreign Ministry was inviting a few students to study in Japan over the summer.

Matsila is frustrated with such measures. "Giving scholarships to a handful of students is the least effective measure," he insisted. "You don't educate slaves; you free them."

The ANC is holding a reception to celebrate its anniversary at 6 pm. Saturday at the University Co-op Building in Chuo Ward.