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SOUTH AFRICA
CAPE PROVINCE

The starvation of young

or 10 days in the spring of 1989 a prominent American publisher and a distinguished member of the American library community visited the Republic of South Africa. Their mission was to survey the availability of US books and other educational materials and to learn, at first hand, how South African writers, librarians, educators and anti-apartheid activists feel about books and educational materials being included in the cultural boycott against South Africa undertaken by certain individuals and organisations in the United States.

The mission was composed of Lisa Drew, vice-president and senior editor of William Morrow & Co, and Robert Wedgeworth, dean of the School of Library Service at Columbia University. During the course of their visit they talked with more than 75 individuals, black and

white. and visited numerous schools,

libraries. universities and private charitable organisations, gathering facts and opinions regarding the boycott. During an informal debriefing shortly after their

108

black minds

A report of a US fact-finding mission to South Africa last year to determine the effects of book boycotts on that country

return, Dean Wedgeworth told the sponsoring organisations that by embargoing the sale of US books to South Africa, Americans were unwittingly abetting the South African government in its "systematic starvation of young black minds".

The mission was carried out under the auspices of the International Freedom to

Publish Committee of the Association of American Publishers (AAP) and the Fund for Free Expression. It was supported by the Freedom to Read Committee of AAP.

The International Freedom to Publish Committee of the AAP is the only group

The above report was published by the Association of American Publishers and the Fund for Free Expression.

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formed by a major publishersâ\200\231 organisation anywhere in the world for the specific purpose of defending and broadening the freedom of written communication internationally. The committee monitors human rights issues and provides moral support and practical assistance to publishers and authors outside the US who are denied basic freedoms. The International Freedom to Publish Committee carries on its work in close co-operation with other human rights groups. including Human Rights Watch and PEN International.

The Fund for Free Expression was established in 1975 by a group of publishers, authors, lawyers, journalists and concerned citizens to promote freedom of expression throughout the world, as guaranteed by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Fund supports anti-censorship efforts around the world. The Fund for Free Expression is an arm of Human Rights Watch.

The Freedom to Read Committee is the AAPâ\200\231's First Amendment advocacy group;

THE BOOKSELLER 12 JANUARY 1990

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working to promote and strengthen First Amendment rights, the committee plays a major educational role through its reports and public programmes. The Freedom to Read Committee has participated, as plaintiff and as a friend-of-the-court, in several landmark First Amendment cases and works with other organisations to promote the cause of intellectual freedom.

The following is the formal report of the mission and its recommendations, which have been strongly endorsed by the sponsoring organisations.

Background

Prior to 1984, container shipping and the existence of a few subsidiaries of US publishing companies "in South Africa made it possible for US books in quantity to be competitive in the South African market. After the US enacted the 1986 Anti-Apartheid Act imposing economic sanctions on South Africa, certain educational and cultural organisationsâ\200\224think- ing that the sanctions did not go far enoughâ\200\224promoted a cultural boycott as well. A few corporations whose principal products could not be sold in South Africa due to the economic sanctions also happened to have publishing interests.

A number of local school boards, libraries and city councils around the US threatened these companies, and independent publishers and booksellers as well, with a boycott of their products if they did any business with South Africa. Some were asked to sign pledges to this effect. The immediate result was that those with South African companies sold them to local buyers at bargain prices. Other publishers, without publicising the action, have stopped shipping books to South Africa.

Such restrictions on the free exchange and dissemination of information are contrary to the traditions of publishing, education and culture in the US, and specific amendments have been proposed for the 1989 Anti-Apartheid Act making it clear that it excludes books, educational materials and medical supplies.

The mission

The goal of the groups sponsoring the survey was to ascertain the effect of the boycott on South Africansâ\200\224especially

representatives of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) who are not banned by the South African government. Although we heard a great deal about it, our mission was not to determine how divestment was affecting the South African government or whether it was a good strategy.

We visited and/or spoke at length to more than 75 representatives of various organisations and institutions. Although

THE BOOKSELLER 12 JANUARY 1990

they had various reactions to the cultural boycott in general, not one supported the inclusion of books and educational materials. Among the organisations and institutions represented in our discussions were:

Universities:

University of Witwatersrand (WITS)
University of Cape Town (UCT)
University of the Western Cape (UWC)
University of South Africa (UNISA)
University of the North

Schools:

The Open School, Johannesburg
Funda Center, Soweto

St Barnabas, suburban Johannesburg
Sea Point, Cape Town

Private educational organisations:
Sached Trust, Johannesburg

Read, Johannesburg

National Libraries:

The State Library, Pretoria
The South African Library, Cape Town

City Library:

Cape Town

Provincial Library:

Pretoria

Black townships:

Athlone
Mamelodi
Soweto

Bookstores:

Central Johannesburg Shopping Centre
Juta, Cape Town

Eve Jammy, Johannesburg

Book Distributor:

Exclusive Books

Publishers:

David Philip

Tafelberg, Daniel van Niekirk
Cosmopolitan and Femina, Jane Raphaely
South African Report, Raymond Louw

normally assume, therefore, that they would support apartheid. However, it is surprising to see the extent to which government-supported libraries and universities are continually and actively engaged in challenging the system.

The universities

There are 20 universities in the country, all of which are theoretically open to all races. A few remain almost totally white due to restrictive admissions policies. Several others are almost totally black (as used here, 'black students' includes those of Asian or mixed-race backgrounds) due to their location in the so-called black homelands or as a result of their original designation as ethnic universities. This latter restriction is no longer enforced. Nevertheless, the University of the North, which was established to serve the Sotha, Tsonga and Venda populations, has attracted only a few white or Indian students out of a student body of 7,000. The University of the Western Cape, which was established to serve the coloured population, has about 60 whites in a student body of 12,000.

Most of the formerly all-white universities have steadily increased their black

enrolments. WITS and UCT now have black enrolments of over 20 per cent. The Law School at WITS is 37 per cent black and the Medical School is over 40 per cent. The largest university in South Africa, UNISA, a correspondence school, is almost 50 per cent black. In each of these instances black African students comprise the largest component of the black enrolment.

Progressive elements

Beyond efforts to diversify enrolments, several of the universities have been quite vocal in their attempts to represent a progressive element in South African society. They have issued policy statements on the importance of political rights and human rights for all of South Africa's people, and they have successfully defended themselves from interference in their internal policies by the government

Numerous writers: including Nadine Gordimer an unprecedented case decided by the

dimer, Jonathan Paton, Ahmed Essop;
Chris van Wyck and Alastair Sparks.

We acknowledge the assistance and
counsel of Selma and Jules Browde,
Johannesburg; Mary Burton, the Human
Rights Monitor in South Africa, Cape
Town; and the USIS in Pretoria, for making

Supreme Court.

While these universities are demon-
strably more progressive than others, the
assumption that their source of funding
determines their policies, as it does in the
US, is incorrect.

With the exception of the determinedly
all-white towns like Pretoria, the city

it possible to meet so many people in such _ppublic libraries are open to all races.
a short time.

In the preceding list are a number of
institutions which are heavily funded by
the South African government. One would

Employment of black personnel above the
clerical level is not common. The avail-

ability of qualified personnel is most
frequently cited as the barrier to the

employment of more black librarians. The lack of evidence of any significant effort to change this, either by the employing institutions or the professional society, is some indication that it is not perceived to be a major problem. Yet the majority of users we observed in public libraries were black students using out-of-date textbooks, while the staffing and collections are oriented toward a group of more sophisticated users barely in evidence. The schools we visited were private and charitable efforts to supplement what the government of South Africa provides for black students. We were told that the public schools situation is characterised by substandard instruction, inferior texts here available, frequent student strikes protest against school conditions, and major distractions resulting from student involvement in the Mass Democratic Movement in black communities. Students reported that their lives are systematically disrupted by police efforts to combat racial unrest among blacks. They are also routinely and randomly detained and questioned about the MDM for indefinite periods. There is great concern that this generation of black students is missing the opportunity to prepare for leadership responsibilities.

â\200\230Many publishers, librarians and educators are increasingly uncomfortable with the irony of the US role in helping the government of the Republic of South Africa to isolate its population by stemming the free flow of information and ideas from the US.â\200\231

For the most talented black students a few private schools are the only alternatives at the elementary and secondary level. For others, several private educational and cultural organisations attempt to combat illiteracy, train teachers and provide materials to students and teachers. The work of all of these organisations, schools, libraries and universities is vitally affected by the cultural boycott.

Non-fiction books and other educational materials from the US are generally unavailable to South Africans in

schools, libraries or bookstores. Orders .
sent to US publishers and booksellers are
returned routinely with notices that the
firm does not do business in South Africa.
ome of the more obvious effects are:

Those books that manage to make their
way to South Africa via third parties are
expensive and very slow to arrive.

In certain fields, universities must use
inferior texts as alternatives to US books.

South African university students are
cut off from vital sources of information
and access to postgraduate research in
the US by private firms and by some
libraries, including the Library of Con-

ess, who simply do not respond.

There has been a dramatic increase in
photocopying and a decrease in efforts to
combat it, since a text now costing \$50 to
\$60 can be made affordable by sharing the
cost through selling photocopies.

An even poorer education is being
provided for those who need it most. The
emphasis of the majority of blacks is now
on education. With the government
spending five times more on education for
whites than blacks, the book boycott
weakens the meagre alternative resources
for blacks. ;

American books of general interest in
South Africaâ\200\224civil rights movement,
ethnic childrenâ\200\231s and young adult litera-

ture, books of Jewish interest and non-
racial, non-geographical picture books for

hildrenâ\200\224are in short supply.
Qo indirect effect is a more insular

outh African white population which is
not exposed to the realities of the world.
For these and other similar reasons, all of
the persons with whom we spoke, even those
who support economic sanctions and the
general cultural boycott as it affects athletic
contests and rock concerts, oppose the
boycott on books. Some US books (mostly
fiction and politics), find their way to
South Africa in British editions and they
are popular despite their expense. They
carry the banner of American cuiture, but
the bulk of exposure is represented by
movies and television. (The most popular
TV show in the black township of Soweto

is â\200\234Dallasâ\200\235, while in the white Orange Free State it is â\200\234The Cosby Showâ\204ç.)

Many publishers, librarians and educators are increasingly uncomfortable with the irony of the US role in helping the government of the Republic of South Africa to isolate its population by stemming the free flow of information and ideas from the US.

However, it also seems clear that removing books from the cultural boycott might appear a self-serving action on the

part of the US publishing industry. Whatever action is proposed by the publishing industry and supported by library and educational interests should be directed toward expressing a commitment to the free flow of information and support for individuals and organisations working to build a non-racial society in South Africa.

Recommendations

1 That the Association of American Publishers urge its members and other publishers to discontinue the boycott of books and other educational materials to South Africa.

2 That the AAP request the support of the American Library Association, African Studies Association and other relevant educational and cultural organisations for this action. The basic tenets of these organisations support this position, it is consistent with US economic sanctions, and it is supported by the African National Congress in its most recent policy statement on the cultural boycott issued in Lusaka, May 1989. Paragraph 2.6 of that policy statement reads as follows:

The suppression and circumscription of the inflow of information, cultural products and artefacts from outside South Africa is an important weapon in the arsenal of the

ges regime, which it wields to con-

olidate its power vis-a-vis the oppressed and exploited majority. The NLM and the MDM support the inflow of progressive

| cultural products, artefacts and ideas into our country so that these become readily accessible to the widest sections of our people. We support and encourage the dissemination of all cultural products, artefacts and ideas that enhance the struggle for democracy and promote democratic human values as opposed to the oppressive, retrograde values and misanthropic ideals. This applies to books, newspapers, magazines, video, film and

sound recordings manufactured and produced outside of South Africa.

3 That the AAP encourage its members to donate books to designated schools, libraries and charitable organisations active in the struggle for a progressive, non-racial society in South Africa.

4 That the AAP encourage those US corporations that have divested their South African holdings to continue some of their charitable contributions to worthy and progressive recipients.

Lisa Drew
William Morrow & Co.

Robert Wedgeworth
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