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SANCTIONS file.

There is method in it

The EKD and the sanctions issue

by Hans-Christoph May

Sanctions against South Africa are possible, can indeed be implemented and will produce a political effect. The key to effective sanctions is held by a small group of six countries (the USA, Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, France and Switzerland) which manage 90 % of South Africa's economic and financial external relations. Even the implementation of one of the various means of sanctions would place Pretoria under great pressure.

These are the conclusions of a study entitled "The Economic Impact of Sanctions against South Africa" produced by the "Starnberg Institute for the Research of Global Structures, Developments and Crises" (1), Starnberg, FRG, in 1987 on behalf of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD).

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In his foreword to the published study, Dr. Günter Linnenbrink, chairman of the "Association of the Churches' Development Services" (AGKED), outlines that the above study is "the first part of an extensive study project" on the issue of sanctions and that it was undertaken upon a suggestion made by the South Africa Council of Churches (SACC) at the end of 1986. At that time, the SACC's clear demand for comprehensive sanctions was already on the table which the Council of the EKD had so far refused to support. Some personalities within the EKD might have cherished the hope to obtain from the study "ammunition" for their own argumentation. But when the study presented clear proof of the efficacy of sanctions, the following happened:

Since some members of the "Protestant Commission for Southern Africa" (EKSA) (2) are said to have criticized that the study did not fulfil the task stipulated by the EKD, the Commission, upon meeting for the discussion of the study of the Starnberg Institute in September 1987, was furnished with a second supplementary paper by the EKD Head Office. (3) This second paper was not a study, neither one which had been commissioned by the EKD, but was in fact a lecture of the economic scientist Prof. Hermann Sautter (3) who is also a member of the "Standing Advisory Commission (Kammer) of the EKD for Development Affairs.

Sautter, too, is of the opinion that a boycott "which is consistently being adhered to will ruin the economy of the country" (p. 64), and that "economic sanctions, even if they are incomplete, can inflict sizeable damage on the economy" (p. 70). However, in respect to the political consequences Sautter moves into a different direction than the Starnberg Institute. Sautter considers the "rupture of our economic relations" to be "irresponsible" (p. 76). In order to substantiate this, however, Sautter is forced to take recourse to speculation. He claims to know of South Africa's whites that "the laws inherent to sanctions" would lead with them to "an increasing hardening and a decreasing readiness for reforms" (p. 72), while he, with a view to the black people, states that sanctions are suited "in the medium run to increase bitterness and despair among the black population and to deepen the polarization between unyielding whites and fanaticized blacks" (p. 74). After a defamatory attack against the African National Congress (ANC), Sautter goes on and, with a purposeful grasp into the anticommunist junk-box, conjures up the spectre of "an intervention of the Eastern great power" and the danger of "conditions resembling civil war of the Lebanese type" (p. 76). (Nota bene: as a result of sanctions!)

Sautter proposes as an alternative to sanctions "to offer economic aid to the Republic of South Africa" (!), whereby "its implementation should be bound to the stipulation to abolish the apartheid laws" (p. 77).

In its political recommendations (no sanctions, but economic aid instead), Sautter's lecture contradicts diametrically the study commissioned by the EKD. In addition, Sautter's recommendations are incompatible with the resolutions passed by both the Council and the Synod of the EKD (selective and calculable sanctions). Yet, under the cover of "forming an opinion" and of "balancing" (Ausgewogenheit), Sautter's lecture is being thrown into the debate as a "supplement" to the study of the renowned Starnberg Institute - a lecture which distinguishes itself not so much by scientific seriousness but all the more by recommendations based on speculation and favourable inclination towards the West German business sector. The Council and the Head Office of the EKD are thus incurring the suspicion that they wish to weaken the political conclusion (sanctions) contained in the study of the Starnberg Institute and to collect arguments to reject it. (4) The Council of the EKD has taken cognizance of the study and assented to its publication by the "Association of the Churches' Development Services" (AGKED). There are plans to organize a dialogue between

the staff of the Starnberg Institute and Sautter. A discussion about the political implementation of the study of the Starnberg Institute is not foreseen (5) The communiqué of the meeting of the Council of the EKD of October 9th/10th, 1987 following the presentation of the study does not mention the issue of sanctions with one word. (6) At the meeting of the subsequent EKD Synod in Berlin in November 1987, Bishop Kruse, chairman of the Council of the EKD, underlined again the consensus prevailing within the EKD Council: Rejection of a "total economic and political boycott" and support for "limited sanctions". The study of the Starnberg Institute is not being mentioned at all. (7) (x=viz Errata below).

In a draft resolution prepared by the respective standing committee of the EKD Synod for the plenary, the word "sanctions" was already written down in quotation marks. And a formulated demand addressed to the churches in the FRG for sanctions against the most important West German banks was watered down in the final resolution adopted by the Synod's plenary in November 1987, now saying: The churches should examine how care can be taken that the capital investment of church funds does not buttress the apartheid regime. A report on this should be presented to the 1988 Synod. (8) - And so another year of "examining" and "reporting" goes by.

The events around the study of the Starnberg Institute elucidate the endeavours undertaken by the decision-making bodies of the EKD to evade to launch a public call for (comprehensive) sanctions. Endeavours of this kind are not new. They extend like a red thread throughout the EKD Council's debate about the South Africa and sanctions issues.

Sanctions: Categorical "No" and Excuses (until 1985)

The demand for sanctions against South Africa increased in the 1970s also in church circles. The World Council of Churches (WCC) demanded already in 1968 the withdrawal of investments, followed in 1972 by a resolution on disinvestment and the discontinuation of trade with South Africa and, two years later in 1974, the demand to end bank loans to South Africa and the call to close accounts with respective banks. In 1980, and after world-wide consultations, the demand for general and comprehensive sanctions was made; as an act of concrete implementation and demonstration of what the churches could do, the WCC closed its own accounts with respective banks a year later (1981). The resolution about the banks and the demand for sanctions were expressly confirmed at the WCC Assembly in Vancouver in 1983.

Within the South African Council of Churches, too, this view gained increasingly ground. Already in 1976, the representatives of the SACC and of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) made known to the EKD their "vehement protest against both the broad industrial and particularly against any nuclear cooperation between the Republic of South Africa and Western industrial nations", and expressed the fear "that the strengthening of the economic and military potential will inevitably produce detrimental effects on the peoples of black Africa against whom such potentials will be directed". (9) In 1978, Bishop Tutu called for economic boycott measures while visiting the FRG. The fact that the SACC as an organization still held itself back with public demands has largely to do with the white minority's administration of "justice" in South Africa which classifies the appeal for sanctions as a criminal act of sabotage entailing prosecution. It appears to be rather strange, therefore, that the Council of the EKD legitimizes its own public "reserve" on the sanctions issue by pointing to the (public) reserve of the SACC. In spite of the world-wide sanctions demands, the EKD continued to conduct their own "talks with business companies" ("Firmengespräche") which

were explicitly conceived as "an alternative to the demand of the World Council of Churches to discontinue the economic and financial relations with South Africa, and to support the so-called Special Fund" of the WCC. (10)

For years the Council of the EKD rejected categorically to support sanctions, mainly on the grounds of the following two arguments:

"because a) clear indications about the factual usefulness of such an action with a view to demolishing racial discrimination could not be given especially by our South African church partners (SACC, FELCSA) (many of them fear that the extent of misery and unemployment particularly among the black part of the population will increase); and b) because such an action can be defended in socio-ethical terms only if those who are immediately affected, i.e. the suffering black majority, explicitly desire such measures and if all attempts to demolish discriminating conditions by negotiation have not brought about any progress". (11)

The basis for such prevarications had, however, long since ceased to exist.

1. The economic efficacy of sanctions has been sufficiently proved.
2. By imposing a state of emergency in July 1985, the South African government made it clear again that it excludes negotiations.
3. The SACC, authentic voice of the "suffering population", stated on June 28th, 1985 in spite of all prevailing dangers: "We believe that disinvestment and similar economic pressure are now appropriate as peaceful and effective means to exercise pressure on South Africa's government to implement now the basic changes which the country needs" (re-translated from German.Transl.). The partner churches were requested "to continue with their efforts to find possibilities for effective and economic pressure" (re-translated from German.Transl.). (12)
After the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN) had called for sanctions in September 1985, the SACC together with numerous church leaders of Africa, of Western countries as well as representatives of the World Council of Churches likewise called upon the international community to impose "immediate and comprehensive sanctions against South Africa" (Harare, December 1985). (13) The main argument which the Council of the EKD had used to evade the call for sanctions was thus now no longer valid. However, the Council of the EKD was by no means prepared to stand by its own words (and by its partner churches).

Sanctions - "selective" and "calculable":

Selective adjustment and protraction (since 1985)

On September 13th, 1985 the Council of the EKD issued the extensive "Statement on the current Situation in Southern Africa". (14) Compared with previous pronouncements this statement is indeed a "progress"; its more prominent feature are, however, the semantical acrobatics employed to dodge the SACC demands. The demand contained in the SACC resolution is being re-interpreted into an "appeal": The Council of the EKD "understands" the resolutions of the SACC as an "urgent appeal to use the last remaining non-violent possibilities and ways, in order to find a political solution still". Instead of "disinvestment" - unconditionally demanded by the SACC - the Council of the EKD speaks of the "continuation of economic involvement" which, however, was "to be made dependent on the fact as to whether the South African government owns up to unequivocal political goals as they have repeatedly been voiced as political demands by representatives of the SACC ...". After ./.

naming some concrete demands (e.g. lifting of the state of emergency, release of political prisoners, stop of forced removals), the demands made in terms of boycott read as follows: "Investments in militarily relevant industrial companies should at all events be strictly excluded". The Federal Government is being requested "to strictly surveille the adherence to the United Nations arms embargo and to extend it to the police sector".

The Council of the EKD weakens with diplomatic-watery formulations not only the SACC demands, but neglects also many insights and proposals of an advisory group that was established by the Council, the "Project Group: Public Relations Work on South Africa Issues". (15) While in respect to Botha's reform policy the Project Group "doubts that it is ultimately a step on the way for a fundamental improvement of the situation", and in addition fears that the reform policy will produce a "worsening of the situation", the Council of the EKD says in its statement merely that Botha's reform policy was not a "convincing measure". The said Project Group names the ANC as a possible partner to which one ought to address oneself (Ansprechpartner), since the ANC "was likely ... to enjoy the largest popularity", and criticizes "the general hesitation to enter into an intensive dialogue with them" as "inadequate" and as "a result of an insufficient readiness for dialogue on our part" (p.16). However, in the September 1985 statement of the Council of the EKD the ANC is not mentioned with one word. Dialogue partners of the Council are "those responsible in politics, economy and trade unions", respectively the "Federal Government, the sectors of trade, banks and industry".

The EKD Synod held in Trier in November 1985 did not go beyond the position stated by the Council of the EKD. (16)

In December 1985, numerous church leaders from Western Europe, the USA, Australia, South Africa and other parts of Africa as well as representatives of the World Council of Churches, the All Africa Conference of Churches and other bodies met in Harare, Zimbabwe, for a South Africa conference (which the present chairman of the Council of the EKD and former chairman of the "Protestant Commission on Southern Africa-EKSA", Bishop Martin Kruse of Berlin, attended); the conference resolved, inter alia:

"We call on the international community to apply immediate and comprehensive sanctions on South Africa"; and: "We call on the Church inside and outside South Africa to support South African movements working for the liberation of their country". (17)

The Council of the EKD was thus forced to take action. In a first statement (18) following the Harare conference, the Council now considers "selective, calculable sanctions" to be "absolutely necessary". A "total economic boycott", however, were out of question for the EKD Council; because "support of the demand for a total economic boycott means that one would accept incalculable and presumably also chaotic consequences into the reckoning". Concrete proof of this claim was not provided by the Council. And support of the liberation movements - as demanded by the church leaders in Harare - is not being mentioned at all. Instead, "talks with the Federal Government, with representatives of the business sector, trade, banks and industry at various levels" are being called for by the EKD.

Half a year later, on July 28th, 1986 - the state of emergency in South Africa had meanwhile been renewed and tightened up -, the Council of the EKD substantiated its notions of "selective sanctions" in an extensive statement entitled "Thoughts and Proposals on Possibilities of Exerting Political and Economic Influence on South Africa". (19) The demands put down in that paper (e.g. suspension (!) of the Cultural Agreement, stop of the Hermes export guarantees, prohibition of arms deliveries) do constitute a "progress"

within the Council of the EKD, but they remain far behind the demands of other countries, of the United Nations and of the South African churches. Already the cautious and uncommitted language used ("Thoughts and Proposals", "possible economic measures") shows the care taken to arouse as little displeasure as possible in the political and economic quarters. Not one word is said about the fact that the Federal Republic of Germany, due to the policy of its government and the South Africa connection of its business sector, belongs to the last pillars of apartheid. Instead a "sense of responsibility" and "considerable initiative in terms of social policy" is being certified to the West German companies. At a time of an aggravated state of emergency, Botha's policy is without any further comment described as "reform policy" by the Council of the EKD (thus even falling behind its own declaration of September 13th, 1985).

In its "ethical justification of selective economic measures" (chapter 1 of the July 1986 paper), the Council of the EKD recalls as basic point the "responsibility for third parties", i.e. precisely those people in South Africa and Namibia who, through their church councils and liberation movements, decided themselves in favour of comprehensive sanctions. The political thoughts contained in the paper do not go beyond commonplace remarks (economic pressure as "part of an overall political strategy") and political phrases (abolition of apartheid "not overnight, but within the period needed for the political steps required").

The Synod of the EKD, meeting in Bad Salzungen in November 1986, adopted the above July 1986 paper. (20)

The sanctions debate reached a new climax in early 1987 in connection with the demand made by the "Campaign: Kirchentag against Apartheid" to the presidium of the Protestant Church Convention (Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag - DEKT) to close the DEKT's account with the Deutsche Bank. After the presidium's decision in March to sever DEKT's business relations with the Deutsche Bank (21), the Council of the EKD issued a statement dissociating itself from that decision. And although the Deutsche Bank had made it clear, once and for all, that it would not let their business be spoilt through "political demands" (22), the Council of the EKD deemed "talking with all those responsible in the political, economic and trade union sectors" to be "of crucial importance" as much as ever. (23)

In May 1987, the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) of the World Council of Churches called together a Southern Africa conference held in Lusaka, Zambia, to which the liberation movements ANC and SWAPO were also invited. The "Lusaka Statement" called upon the churches to cooperate with the liberation movements and demanded again "immediate and comprehensive sanctions". The churches were requested to report about concrete actions taken after a lapse of 18 months. (24) A reaction to this does not exist so far from the Council of the EKD.

It is more than fifteen years now that the decision-making bodies of the EKD manoeuvre by commissioning expert studies, and under the cover of cultivating the "political dialogue", in order to shirk the call for comprehensive and mandatory sanctions. The way of argumentation hitherto applied points to the following trend which the debate is likely to take as from now:

1. Since the economic efficacy of sanctions has been proved by studies and the reality, the discussion will be shifted to the possible political effects ("formation of political will" in South Africa). In this connection, the question is already being thrown into the debate as to whether "sanctions, contrary to the intentions, might not cause a worsening of the conflict". (25) By putting questions in this form,

one can go on and on with ample speculation and for as long as no comprehensive sanctions are being applied.

2. The violence issue will increasingly be brought back into the debate. It should be noted that sanctions - described by the SACC as "the last remaining non-violent means" - are already termed "combat measure" (Kampfmassnahme) by the EKD. (26)
3. The "ethical justification" will play a greater role. Recourse will be taken to the "responsibility for third parties" to justify the deviation from the SACC demands. Especially in respect to "the actual ecclesiastical-theological aspects" (Linnenbrink) a vast field for discussion and speculation opens up - far removed from all scientific experience and the suffering of the Africans.

Until the point is reached where "indications for future debates" (Linnenbrink) may emerge, there remains still a lot of time: for the West German business people to continue with their activities; for the Council of the EKD to dodge the political decision which is already overdue.

And for the black people in South Africa and Namibia?

Footnotes

1. "The Economic Impact of Sanctions against South Africa" (Wirtschaftliche Auswirkungen von Sanktionen gegen Südafrika), a study undertaken by the "Starnberg Institute for the Research of Global Structures, Developments and Crises" (Starnberger Institut zur Erforschung globaler Strukturen, Entwicklungen und Krisen e.V., Starnberg, FRG), July 1987; published in German in "Sanctions against South Africa" (Sanktionen gegen Südafrika) with a foreword by the Rev. Dr. Günter Linnenbrink, in the series "texte" No. 41, by "Dienste in Übersee", Gerokstrasse 17, 7000 Stuttgart 1, FRG, October 1987.
The study of the Starnberg Institute is available in English.
2. Newspaper "Frankfurter Rundschau", 18.9.1987.
3. Hermann Sautter: "The Effects of Economic Sanctions - A Scientific Economic Analysis" (Die Wirkung von Wirtschaftssanktionen - Eine wirtschaftswissenschaftliche Analyse), issued by the Protestant Academy Arnoldshain, June 1987; published in German in Evangelischer Pressedienst (epd), "epd Dokumentation" No. 42/87, 24.9.1987, Frankfurt/M..
This lecture was delivered by Sautter at a one-day conference on sanctions against South Africa organized by the Protestant Academy Arnoldshain on June 11th, 1987. Criticism was raised against the event because only opponents of sanctions had been invited to attend.

Footnotes cont'd

4. There is a certain savoury touch to the fact that the Frontline States and the other over 40 delegations attending the Commonwealth Summit in Vancouver, October 1987, referred to this EKD-commissioned study of the Starnberg Institute against Thatcher's argument that sanctions must be rejected since their success could not be expected.
Viz "epd Entwicklungspolitik", No. 21, November 1987, p. 5, Frankfurt/M..
5. "Frankfurter Rundschau", 18.9.1987.
6. Communiqué of the 22nd session of the Council of the EKD on October 9th/10th, 1987, published in "epd Zentralausgabe" No. 197, 14.10.1987, Frankfurt/M..
7. ("epd Ausgabe für kirchliche Presse", 4.11.1987).
See x) Errata at bottom of this translation.
8. Newspaper "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung", 9.11.1987.
9. Viz Report of the Chairman of the Council of the EKD (then Bishop H. Class) to the EKD Synod in Braunschweig, November 1976, published in German in "epd Dokumentation" No. 31a/78, 18.7.1978, p. 28 (excerpt), Frankfurt/M..
10. Rev. Dr. Heinz Joachim Held: "The EKD in the debate about Southern Africa", address given by the president of the EKD Office for Foreign Relations at the EKD conference on Southern Africa in Königstein, 19th-21st October 1977; published in German in "epd Dokumentation" No. 31a, 18.7.1978, p.14, Frankfurt/M..
11. Rev. Dr. Günter Linnenbrink: "Drawing a Balance of the EKD Talks with Companies and Trade Unions", address to the EKD conference on Southern Africa held at Königstein, 19th-21st October 1977; published in German in "epd Dokumentation" No. 31a/78, 18.7.1978, p. 89, Frankfurt/M..
12. South African Council of Churches, National Conference 1985, Resolution No. 5: Disinvestment, 28.6.1985; published in German in "epd Dokumentation" No. 13/86, 10.3.1986, p. 1, Frankfurt/M..
13. "The Harare Declaration", South Africa conference of the World Council of Churches and the South African Council of Churches, 4th-6th December 1985, Harare, Zimbabwe; published in German in "epd Dokumentation" No. 13/86, 10.3.1986, p. 24, Frankfurt/M..
14. Council of the EKD: "Statement on the current situation in Southern Africa", Bonn, 13th September 1985; published in German in "epd Zentralausgabe" Nr. 177, 16.9.1985, and in "epd Dokumentation" No. 41/85, 23.9.1985, p. 1-5, Frankfurt/M..
15. "Justice and Reconciliation for Southern Africa", Report of the "Project Group: Public Relations Work on South Africa Issues". Received by the Council of the EKD on September 13th/14th, 1985 in Bonn.
On October 13th, 1985, the Council of the EKD agreed to the publication of the text "as a contribution of the authors to the (public) discussion". Published in German in "epd Dokumentation" No. 41/85, 23.9.1985, p.7-20, Frankfurt/M..

Footnotes cont'd

16. Synod of the EKD: "Declaration on the Situation in South Africa", Trier, 3rd-8th November 1985; published in German in "epd Dokumentation" No. 13/86, 10.3.1986, p. 36, Frankfurt/M..
17. Viz Footnote 13.
18. Communiqué of the session of the Council of the EKD on December 13th/14th, 1985 in Hannover; published in German in "epd Dokumentation" No. 13/86, 10.3.1986, p. 37, Frankfurt/M..
19. EKD Head Office, Hannover: "Thoughts and Proposals on Possibilities of Exerting Political and Economic Influence on South Africa", adopted by the Council of the EKD on July 26th, 1986 (Ref.Nos. 1150/7.241 and 5186/5/7.241).
English version available at the EKD Head Office. An excerpt was published in "Ecumenical Press Service" (EPS), Geneva, No. 37, 6-20 December 1986.
20. Bishop Dr. Martin Kruse, Report of the Chairman of the Council of the EKD to the EKD Synod in Bad Salzungen, November 1986; published in German in "epd Dokumentation" No. 48/86, November 1986, Frankfurt/M..
Resolution of the EKD Synod, 6.11.1986; published in German in "Sanctions against Apartheid", series "texte" No. 41, October 1987, "Dienste in Übersee", Stuttgart, p. 84.
21. Statement of the Presidium of the Protestant Church Convention (Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag - DEKT), 16.3.1987; published in German in "epd Dokumentation" No. 16/87, 6.4.1987, p. 4.
Statement of the Board of the DEKT, 12.2.1987; published in German in "epd Dokumentation" No. 13/87, 16.3.1987, p.8.
The Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches had welcomed the decision as "an important sign for Christians and churches coming from the depth of our common faith" (letter PCR to DEKT, 19.3.1987, published in "epd Dokumentation" No. 16/87, 6.4.1987, p.7, Frankfurt/M..
22. Letter of the Deutsche Bank to the General Secretary of the DEKT, 22.1.1987; published in German in "epd Dokumentation" No. 13/87, 16.3.1987, p.9, Frankfurt/M..
23. Communiqué of the session of the Council of the EKD on March 26th-28th, 1987 in Loccum; published in "epd Dokumentation" No. 16/87, 6.4.1987, p.43.
While the Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches described the Deutsche Bank as "one of the strongest financial pillars of the apartheid state South Africa" (letter PCR to DEKT, 19.3.1987 in "epd Dokumentation" No. 16/87, p.7), Bishop Eduard Lohse of the Church of Hannover, in turn, defended the Deutsche Bank:
"One can, therefore, scarcely maintain that the Deutsche Bank is at present actively supporting the South African apartheid policy" (Report of the Bishop to the Synod of the Church of Hannover, Hannover, 27.4.1987; published in German in "epd Dokumentation" No. 21a/87, 11.5.1987, p.11, Frankfurt/M..

Footnotes cont'd

24. "The Lusaka Statement", Southern Africa conference of the World Council of Churches in Lusaka, Zambia, 4th-8th May 1987; published in German in "epd Dokumentation" No. 31a/87, 6.7.1987, p. 1, Frankfurt/M..
25. Rev. Dr. Günter Linnenbrink, chairman of the "Association of the Churches' Development Services" (AGKED) in his foreword to the publication of the study of the Starnberg Institute ("Sanctions against South Africa" - viz Footnote 1).
He thus takes up ideas postulated by Sautter.
26. Viz Footnote 25.

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x) ERRATA

Translator's note:

The study of the Starnberg Institute was indeed mentioned in the report of the Chairman of the Council of the EKD to the EKD Synod, November 1987. After quoting a passage from the study he outlined that a "weakness" of the study lay in the fact that it did not give a complementary analysis of underlying political developments in Southern Africa both in connection with and independently of sanctions (Although it is clear that these aspects were not included in the task given by the EKD to the Starnberg Institute and so the publicly proclaimed "weakness", if there is any, is not the Institute's fault. Transl.). He continued to say that, in any event, the study was providing important impulses for the public debate of the sanctions issue, and reiterated the Council's position of rejecting a "total economic and political boycott" and of recommending "limited sanctions, i.e. calculable economic and political pressure in order to promote a peaceful change in South Africa".

Footnote No. 7 to the above article should read:
"epd Dokumentation" No. 48a/87, 9.11.1987.