

AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS - Finnish Office
Report for Chief Rep's meeting, 9-11th December 1990, JHB
Helsinki, 23rd November 1990

1. Present Finnish Policy

Present government policy is based on the joint 1988 Nordic Programme against Apartheid which calls for pressure on the South African regime. The cornerstone of this pressure policy is the law that forbid loans to, investments in and trade with South Africa. This policy was re-affirmed at the half-yearly Nordic Foreign Minister's meeting in Norway, 11-12th Sept. The previous meeting held in Finland in March, however, revised the guidelines for issuing visas to South Africans so as to take account of the "new situation" and "promote the democratisation process". This amendment is now being implemented and has already affected the cultural and academic boycotts (refer paragraph 7 below).

2. Shift in Political Climate

Since February 2nd there has been a noticeable shift in the debate concerning Finnish policy to South Africa in the media and in the public statements of prominent politicians. Calls are now repeatedly heard to ease pressure as a reward to de Klerk and encourage further reforms.

Changes in the Eastern Bloc, and the increased contact between S.A. and that part of the world, have also made an impact. The Communist Party (12% of vote), which we could count on for strong support, has recently disbanded. The replacement Left Alliance appears less committed, some leaders privately expressing the view that they want to visit South Africa and meet all political forces to get a "balanced" view of the situation.

The Parliamentary Commission on Foreign Relations, on which all parties are represented, recently adopted a resolution calling on the government to reduce economic pressure and open a dialogue with the de Klerk regime.

3. Status of the ANC

With the unbanning of the ANC voices are being raised that it is no longer a liberation movement but a political party, one of several contesting the political terrain. This formulation, if accepted as policy, could result in:

- 3.1. Stopping of funding and possible closure of the ANC Office in Helsinki (funds for the SWAPO Office were stopped at the start of the implementation of resolution 435). NGOs would generally take their cue from government policy on this issue, as happened with SWAPO.

- 3.2. Increased contact between the Finnish government and NGOs with other forces: NP, Inkatha, PAC, etc.
- 3.3. Greater difficulty in raising material and political support for the ANC with some resources being diverted to other "parties".
- 3.4. Weakening of our international stature, influence, and pressure campaigns as more weight will be accorded to adversaries which oppose our foreign policies.

4. Anti-apartheid Movement

Since the opening of the office here two years ago, strenuous efforts have been made to lessen conflicts within the ranks of the AA movement largely stemming from rivalry related to ideological affiliation - particularly on the left. There is now a more harmonious relationship resulting in improved campaign work. The following campaigns were initiated, with the office playing the co-ordinating and mediating role:

- 4.1. A Nelson Mandela Reception Committee was set up which conducted a series of well-publicised activities during March, April, and May.
- 4.2. A campaign for the release of political prisoners, resulting in the setting up of a local IDAF Committee.
- 4.3. A campaign to raise direct and unconditional financial support for the ANC to assist in re-establishing itself legally.

The AA movement here is relatively small with at best a few dozen activists, mostly around Helsinki. Lack of resources prevent the campaigns from being more sustained and covering a wider area. Within the anti-apartheid ranks changes in mood and morale are perceptible. Activists are somewhat uncertain by the current situation and demoralised by the waning public interest in the apartheid issue.

They feel that AA movements should be better briefed by the ANC and be allowed to travel to South Africa freely to get an on-the-spot view of developments as this would boost their credibility and enhance their campaigns.

5. Information and Publicity

The lack of timely and in-depth information to the Mission has greatly hampered our task in informing the Finnish public of our point of view. It is embarrassing to continually meet journalists, politicians, and government officials who are better informed. de Klerk's propaganda machinery is becoming increasingly effective and finding receptive ears. We too need to raise our style of information work to a much more sophisticated and effective level.

The office produces a monthly newsletter in Finnish (circulation 2000) to counter the flood of well-written material now emanating from Pretoria's legation here. Of great concern is the lack of success from our side in countering the increasingly negative reporting of the news media - particularly on the question of so-called "black-on-black" violence.

There is a need for us to circulate widely a comprehensive position paper on crucial questions such as the need for an interim government and a constitutional assembly. This would help to mobilise the international community to show more sympathy for our negotiating position. At the moment major political forces are hiding behind the U.N. Declaration - it conveniently suits them in this instance! - in not committing themselves specifically on these issues. The standard refrain being that it is up to the negotiating partners to agree on transitional arrangements and the method of drawing up a new constitution.

6. Economic Sanctions

Finnish sanctions are quite strong at present. There are no Finnish-based companies in South Africa and the law forbids trade except for items such as medicines and printed matter. It is widely suspected however that trade continues via third countries and Finnish businessmen are increasingly visiting South Africa according to press reports.

With the erosion of sanctions around the world it is questionable whether we will be able to maintain the present level of sanctions for very long - particularly in view of the general apathy of the public, our principal means of applying pressure. The question of the future role of sanctions in our struggle now merits serious discussion by the whole Movement. We have to adapt on this issue and the other boycotts or run the risk of being marginalised and our international position severely damaged.

7. Boycotts

In line with the change in Nordic visa regulations, last summer saw the appearance here after a long time of a cultural group and several academics - none in any way identified with progressive structures. Our protests at the violation of the cultural and academic boycott were met with a lot of hostility in the mainstream press, the ANC being accused of undemocratically trying to control who should visit abroad and thus preventing the international community from having access to other forces and points of view in South Africa.

The Finnish government stood by the decision to issue the visas on the grounds that the visits contributed to the "process of democratisation" and there is now need to broaden contacts at all levels with South African society. The previous stringent visa rules made such visits virtually impossible.

8. Material support

Several NGOs conducted campaigns this year to raise funds to purchase material needs for the following departments:

135 000 FIM for the Dora Tamana Creche in Lusaka
170 000 FIM for the Dakawa Clinic
30 000 FIM for DAC
50 000 FIM for the Somafco Primary Division

(1 USD = 3.6 FIM)

In addition two NGOs are major donors of material and volunteer assistance to the furniture, garment, and leather factories at Mazimbu and Dakawa.

The Office initiated a campaign in September to raise unconditional financial support for the Movement to help in its re-establishment as a legal organisation. Together with the AA movement a special fund-raising committee has been set up. To date approx. 25 000 FIM has been raised with pledges for a further 10 000. This campaign is proving difficult as the public and NGOs prefer the more usual humanitarian/development projects in which the donor retains financial control. Another problem is that the major political forces, such as the Social Democrats and the newly formed Left Alliance, have not joined the campaign, citing the reason that their members are reluctant to give financial aid for administration and political organisation to "political parties" in other countries.

The Finnish Parliament annually votes a sum in the national budget for humanitarian assistance to "liberation-efforts in Southern Africa." From this we received six million FIM in 1990, nearly all earmarked for the projects in East Africa and assistance in kind. The budget for the Mission in Helsinki also comes from this frame. With changing perceptions of the status of the ANC and the impending return of exiles, these allocations could be affected in the future. There is also a growing view that resources should now be shifted into the country and not exclusively to the ANC, with the emphasis on projects of a humanitarian and developmental nature and those specifically designed to promote the "democratisation process" in a non-partisan way.

NORDIC REPORT

1. Present Nordic Policy towards South Africa

The present Nordic governments' policy is based on the 1988 Nordic Programme of Action against Apartheid which calls for pressure on the SA regime. The cornerstone of this pressure policy is the law that forbids loans to, investments in and trade with South Africa. This policy was re-affirmed at the Nordic Foreign Minister's meeting in Norway in September 1990.

However the Nordic countries have softened on visa regulations following the September 1990 meeting. The new ruling makes it easy for South Africans to attend conferences, cultural arrangements and sports events in the Nordic countries.

2. Political Climate

Since February there has been a noticeable shift in the debate concerning the policies of the Nordic countries to South Africa in the media and in the public statements of prominent politicians. Call for easing of pressure on the South African government are gaining momentum as encouragement for further reforms.

Changes in Eastern Europe and the increasing contact between South Africa and those countries are also contributing in the abovementioned tendency towards easing of pressure on South Africa. For example in Denmark what was previously called an Anti-Apartheid Fund is now a 'democracy' fund out of which the Eastern Europe countries will also benefit. Further Denmark has recently established full diplomatic relations with South Africa. In Sweden though there are no immediate plans to upgrade the present diplomatic relations, government officials have started to visit South Africa and automatically contact the South African government officials. In Finland and Denmark member of parliaments and government officials have already visited South Africa.

3. Status of the ANC

With the unbanning of the ANC leading questions are being asked as to whether ANC is still a liberation movement or has become a political party, one of several contesting the political terrain. This formulation, if accepted as policy, could result in:

- the reduction of funding for the ANC by governments and NGOs
- increased contact between the Nordic governments and NGOs on the one hand, and on the other hand with other forces like Democratic Party, PAC, Inkatha etc.
- weakening of our international stature, influence and pressure campaigns as more weight will be accorded to adversaries which oppose our foreign policy.

4. **Anti-Apartheid Movement**

The AAM in the Nordic countries have varied in strength from country to country. However, in each country the AAM has supported ANC campaigns and activities. The recent developments about some uncertainties regarding sanctions, isolation of South Africa, status of ANC as the liberation movement etc.

Some of the conflicting statements by the leadership on issues such as sanctions have exacerbated these uncertainties. Poor and at most times belated briefing by DIA worsens this situation.

5. **Information and Publicity**

The lack of timely and in-depth information for the Nordic missions has greatly hampered our tasks in informing the Nordic public of our point of view. It is embarrassing to continually meet journalists, politicians, and government officials who are better informed. The propaganda machinery of the regime is becoming increasingly effective. We too need to raise our style of information work to a much more sophisticated and effective level. To this end, the Nordic missions have extensive speech-making activities in their respective regions as well as distribution of available material from the ANC. There is however, a need for the missions to circulate widely position papers on issues such crucial as the need for an Interim Government and the Constitutional Assembly. These have to mobilise the public to show sympathy for our negotiating position.

It is in this light that the missions are let down by little and belated information and guidance by DIA in particular and HQ in general.

6. **Economic Sanctions**

With the erosion of economic sanctions around the world it is questionable whether the ANC will be able to maintain its present level of sanctions for very long - particularly in view of the general apathy of the public, our principal means of applying pressure. The conference must come out with a definite position on this issue.

7. **Boycotts**

Likewise, the movement must make its position clear on the issues of academic, cultural and sports boycotts so as to guide the AAM internationally.