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WOLVES IN SHEEPS' CLOTHING

Religious groups and lobbyists in the service of apartheid

Part One. Within South Africa.

A Briefing paper

by Derrick Knight. February 1989.

'In the public square, truth has been brought to its knees,
honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and
whoever avoids evil is robbed.' (Isaiah 59 v14)

Introduction.

The Pretoria Government and its friends see themselves as the defenders of the last bastion of Christian western civilisation in Africa but there is little that is Christian or civilised about the methods used to defend it. They have imagined a 'total onslaught' on their country led by communists in which the whole world has been drawn into an unrestrained anti-apartheid campaign. This campaign, includes not only the armed liberation movement, exiles, the United Nations bureaucrats and a long list of unfriendly states but, they imagine, the world's press and TV, the mainstream churches, international sports bodies, trades unions and children.

In reply Pretoria has devised a total strategy to enable it to hold onto power. No holds are barred whether to organise covert military adventures against neighbouring governments seen as a threat to apartheid, or to mount armed attacks against its own people. It has imposed heavy restrictions on the reporting of events so that the truth of what is happening is hidden. Both the full apparatus of the police state and rigid control of access and publishing of information are used to conceal the true nature of South African politics and to confuse its own people and the world.

But as George Orwell convincingly imagined in '1984', the full weight of the repressive state may destroy the body but not the human spirit of resistance. The Pretoria Government may crush or imprison the bodies of those who oppose it but it cannot control their hearts and minds.

On the economic front the expenditure of large sums to boast about the strength of the South African economy in the foreign media has been combined with all sorts of disinformation about the futility of sanctions. This shows that Pretoria is terrified that mandatory sanctions may yet be applied which would force her to yield to world opinion just as Ian Smith yielded in Rhodesia. Every possible diplomatic or dirty trick is being employed to lessen the risk of sanctions and to split the forces which advocate them. In this Pretoria has been quite successful.

As part of this total strategy, Pretoria is once again putting muscle and possibly cash into a network of religious and political fronts in an effort to discredit personalities and arguments opposed to apartheid. Some of the same people and groups who were implicated in the scandal of the Secret Projects Fund organised by the Department of Information in the late '70s have surfaced again with new clothes and renewed energy. Other organisations have come forward to replace the casualties.

The suppression of the free press in South Africa and the silencing or imprisonment of most of those who would normally witness to and report the manipulation of events has left a vacuum which demands to be filled. Official statements get attention and assume an importance which they never had in a freer society. So do the messages of all sorts of 'privately' published pro-government newsletters and broadsheets which the system actively encourages. The effect is that of a dangerous virus at large without an antidote.

Paradoxically the proliferation of new-tech channels of information overseas - freesheets, special interest magazines, radio, TV satellites, videos, cheap sound tapes, has made deception and disinformation easier to

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broadcast and more difficult to detect. All these channels are hungry for new material. They rarely have time or expertise to question the source of a story which arrives claiming it is the truth or which has impudently assumed a mantle of objectivity and Christian virtue.

In South Africa itself these sources are useful in backing government thinking and in providing people to be quoted as authorities by the government media. There are no longer independent media outlets in which they would automatically be exposed and the public disabused. In the United Kingdom and all over the world, the national media are having to use all their energies to maintain even a trickle of reliable political news from South Africa and have too little time to investigate the means by which small or specialist journals receive their copy and how they use it. So 'dirty tricks' and many disinformation mailings scarcely attract attention or they may escape notice altogether.

South African Propaganda Machine in the '70s

The unmasking of the so-called Muldergate disinformation conspiracy or scandal by the concerned media in South Africa in the late '70s was only possible because of the press freedom which then existed. Since then there has been a concerted and successful attack on that freedom. The Steyn Commission of Inquiry into the Mass Media in 1981 recommended an urgent improvement of government information to make it more effective. It also sought to protect that cause from criticism and attack by what it regarded as 'irresponsible' journalists or church and political opposition.

Many of these recommendations were adopted in subsequent laws or decrees which severely restricted press freedom. If a similar conspiracy was uncovered today, it would be virtually impossible to expose because any enquiries into it would be seen as a breach of national security and therefore illegal. Today journalists who ask the right questions can be prosecuted, their files seized and suppressed.

Muldergate was a conspiracy that involved the unauthorised spending of R64 million of public funds, agreed secretly between the then Prime Minister John Vorster, the head of the Bureau for State Security (BOSS) General Van den Bergh and the Information Minister Connie Mulder. It involved a list of secret projects and operations to be financed. It was drawn up by Mulder's Director of Information, Eschel Rhoodie, and included buying into or buying up publishers, newspapers, magazines and TV news outlets overseas. The list also included lobbying groups, officials, newspaper staff, politicians, businessmen, academics and church leaders or theologians. The objective was to influence public opinion by presenting a softer image of apartheid while in reality it became more repressive. The conspiracy also involved the attempt to undermine opposition groups and especially the churches within South Africa and abroad by denigrating their leadership, their policies and their integrity.

One piece of research into the many branches of the South African disinformation effort was my own book 'Beyond The Pale'*. This focussed on the links that were created amongst a plethora of small Christian, racist and ultra right wing political groups who were keen to be seen to be of service to the cause. Many of them were in the UK, others in Europe, North

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America and in the former white dominions- Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The publication of 'Beyond The Pale' was attacked and delayed by elements of this loose network.

A few days before the launch and press conference, the publisher and author were faced with a co-ordinated legal effort by people and groups referred to in the book to stop it coming out. The grounds were the possibility of libel in the text. In Britain such threats cannot be taken lightly and are costly to defend. It was known that one of the secret projects was to finance legal fees for actions in defence of its beneficiaries. Legal opinion warned that such resources gave the book's attackers a great advantage and he recommended withdrawal of the book and out of court settlement. Later CARAF, a small ecumenical group with too few assets to attract further harassment, published the book without trouble and it became one of the instruments which the churches have used to expose Pretoria's campaign against them.

Meanwhile the Erasmus Commission enquiry - the South African equivalent of a Royal Commission - revealed even more detail of the extent to which secret funds were used to manipulate domestic and international political events. Its critical findings forced the resignation of the State President, John Vorster, ended the political career of Connie Mulder and propelled Eschel Rhoodie into defensive exile to avoid being made a convenient scapegoat for his senior colleagues.

In March 1980, the Star newspaper, among others, published details of 112 secret projects which were on the original list. The list was given to the paper by political hardliners in the Nationalist Party trying to clear the names of colleagues who had had to resign because of the revelations about the Department of Information. That same list contained 15 secret projects in Britain. Many of these remained concealed behind black ink until the press could verify the information independently. Several of them were bodies which had earlier threatened legal proceedings against the author and were later fully exposed as parts of the conspiracy. For the press in Britain with its much tougher legal laws than South Africa further investigation seemed to be a legal minefield. Public interest in the scandal dwindled as other stories competed for space. The scent was lost. The puzzle remained with important pieces missing.

This slice of recent history is worth remembering because many of the tactics and strategies of that time are being reburied and brought into play again. Many of the same people are also involved.

Dirty Tricks - Deadly Tricks

Various kinds of dirty trick have been used to denigrate anti-apartheid groups in South Africa. Under the emergency legislation the South African government has managed to suppress political parties and a wide range of community and regional opposition groups. It can arbitrarily close organisations down without explanation in terms of being a threat to national security. Every week sees some new banning or closure of an office or community group perceived as a threat by the security apparatus of the state.

'Beyond The Pale, The Christian Political Fringe' by Derrick Knight, published by CARAF Publications Ltd, 1982.

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The regime has not yet found a way of gagging the mainstream churches nor a number of voluntary bodies organised around single issues. It can however make their work more difficult and it can make the lives of their staff more uncomfortable and dangerous both at work and at home. There have been campaigns seeking to undermine the credibility of the opposition and there have been other campaigns using physical harassment or direct terrorist tactics against them.

* Peter Kerchhoff is the long established and highly committed organiser of the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA). Shortly before he and his wife left for a visit to the USA in September 1988, a carefully forged letter bearing the PACSA letterhead and a perfect forgery of Peter Kerchhoff's signature was sent to certain church partners and support groups in Europe and North America. The content was both racist and politically naive, calculated to harm relationships between PACSA and its supporters. At a meeting in London the Kerchhoffs made it clear that this was but one of a series of sometimes brutal attacks on PACSA or members of its staff with the aim of frightening them into closing down without having recourse to a banning order.

* On December 31 1987, a working document about the war in Namibia issued in the name of the Peace and War Committee of the South African Catholic Bishops Conference was fraudulently re-written and circulated to distort the opinions of the church. The forged papers referred to SWAPO as a communist and terrorist force and claimed that South Africa had greater legitimacy and authority in Namibia than SWAPO.

More chilling than these attempted forgeries have been the direct attempts on the lives or workplaces of prominent church and community leaders.

Some human rights activists have said that the mounting toll of deaths and disappearances of people who oppose apartheid amounts to a 'dirty war'. Attacks on prominent ANC leaders overseas and successful assassinations have increased. Offices have been bombed. In 1988 within South Africa, student leaders, trades union officials and community organisers have disappeared in patterns similar to that of El Salvador or the Philippines in which right-wing death squads work either with the cooperation or at least the constructive blindness of the security forces.

* Stanza Bopape who worked in the Community Resource and Information Centre (CRIC), was detained on June 9 1988 and disappeared.

* Elvis Rathogwa, the chairman of the Food and Allied Workers Union shop stewards council at Farmfare in Wynberg disappeared in May.

* Mathabathe Andries Seema, who organised the Pietersburg branch of the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union was last seen on March 31 accompanied by an identified security policeman.

There is evidence too that of counter-revolutionary manuals circulated by the CIA to security forces in Latin America and elsewhere have been made available to State Security personnel in South Africa.

Ordinary people are now terrified of going to court as witnesses of violence, says Peter Kerchhoff of PACSA, because they are in mortal danger doing so. There is a growing list of those shot or 'disappeared' before a

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case comes to trial in which they may be giving vital evidence.

* On January 24 1988 Sicelo Dhlomo, a young man who worked with the now restricted Detainees Parents Support Committee was mysteriously killed. He had been detained by the police several times and had subsequently talked about his experiences to Sharon Sopher for her TV documentary 'Witness to Apartheid'. Despite all efforts by his parents and friends, his killers are still at large.

* In July 1988 a hand grenade was delivered to the Soweto home of the mother of Rev Frank Chikane, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches. The foresight of the members of the family prevented a lethal explosion but the police enquiries produced no clues.

* On August 31 1988 an enormous bomb blast destroyed much of the Johannesburg headquarters of the South African Council of Churches, Khotso House. The building had been professionally undermined to create the maximum damage. It was declared unsafe for occupation; the many church and community services on which people in distress or in prison depended, were disrupted. It was, wrote the Independent, "virtually a carbon copy of the bomb attack last year on the nearby headquarters of the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)'. There were no arrests. There was even a crude attempt by the security forces to suggest that the explosion was caused by an arsenal being kept in Khotso House.

* On October 12 1988 arsonists set fire at night to the headquarters of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference in Pretoria. Empty petrol and paraffin cans were found. A number of staff who lived in the building narrowly escaped with their lives. Once again the police declared themselves mystified.

These and scores of other morally unacceptable activities are being employed daily in South Africa to try and maintain a solid front to the apartheid regime.

It is no surprise to South African church leaders that in the violent political atmosphere of South Africa such criminal acts can succeed without anyone being brought to justice. There have long been suspicions that elements of the security forces are behind the attacks or at least turning a blind eye to whoever is carrying them out.

The remaining strongholds of opposition to apartheid are at the present time protected from outright bans by their international prestige and support but almost every public act of defiance is now a form of treason.

The barrage of hate mail, broadsheets, leaflets, condemnation on the government controlled TV, radio and press is just short of an official ban and has created what one churchman has called 'a pathology of violence'. With such encouragement and identification of the state's enemies it might easily seem to certain kinds of extremists that it was their duty to rid the country of these turbulent priests as soon as possible.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

The End Conscription Campaign (ECC) which lobbied in South Africa for alternatives to compulsory military service, became a serious embarrassment to the South African Defence Force (SADF) in the mid-80s.

The choice for young white men in South Africa today is stark. It is conscription for two years and regular part-time military service thereafter until the age of 55. As conscripts they are increasingly used to serve on one side of 'a civil war' whose goals they may not share. The alternatives are four years in jail or permanent exile.

South African courts do not recognise a plea of conscientious objection on other than religious grounds. A Board of Religious Objection has been instructed to take the most restricted view of what this can mean.

As a result more and more young men defied the call-up system. The ECC campaign attracted much support and fed on evidence of the brutal training of conscripts and of their deployment in the military occupation of townships or in other often brutal operations within the country.

In 1987 elements of the SADF were unmasked running a covert programme against ECC. This involved using vehicles with false number plates, distributing phoney leaflets with false addresses. Leaflets were also dropped from a helicopter over Cape Town suburbs on the day of an ECC fete which accused ECC members of being cowardly and homosexual.

As the reporting of legal actions against members of SADF is covered by a blanket of Emergency Regulations, the story might never have appeared, but in a legal process more like 'Alice in Wonderland' than a police state it seems that official court records are exempt from this rule. In a case brought by the ECC, a certain Colonel Clausen, head of SADF's Communication Operation section at Cape Town Castle, was asked to give evidence. He had to admit that SADF had manufactured posters, pamphlets and tee-shirts that appeared in Cape Town in 1987 discrediting the ECC. Details of the hiring of a helicopter to leaflet the fete were also revealed.

Another South African body which has attacked the ECC in the recent past is the National Students Federation, a right wing group which operates on the mainly white, predominantly English language university campuses through local bodies like the Moderate Students Alliance. It produces a glossy newsletter called The Sentinel, which calls UNITA and RENAMO 'freedom fighters'. It praises the bravery of the South African Forces and attacks a gamut of targets often chosen by the right - SWAPO, the ANC, Archbishop Tutu, sanctions, terrorism.

The NSF turned its attention on the ECC in 1985 and began a vigorous propaganda campaign through leaflets and publications. They claimed that the ECC was indirectly controlled from Moscow and produced bizarre charts tracing ECC's lineage through bodies like the British CND all the way back to Lenin. The NSF has developed close links with ultra right wing student organisations in Britain such as the former Federation of Conservative Students and the bodies to which its activists have gravitated like Western Goals, the International Freedom Foundation and the International Society for Human Rights.

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In July 1985 the NSF staged a 'Youth for Freedom' conference in Johannesburg at an estimated cost of half a million Rand. Delegates came from UNITA and the Afghan rebel groups as well as from the USA, Europe and Latin America. The South African police were there and too part. A message of support came from President Botha.

A while later the credibility of the NSF as an independent body was dented badly when its founding president Russel Crystal was found to be on the payroll of the government secret services. An earlier magazine called the National Student was found to have been financed by BOSS.

In August 1988 the Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok, banned the ECC. Then he issued a banning order against the national secretary Alistair Teeling-Smith, stopping him from seeing journalists or preparing materials for publication. These actions were, it seems, a direct response to the July declaration by 143 white men of conscription age that they rejected service in South Africa's 'racist army' and demanded 'a peaceful alternative service'. Despite these campaigns and imprisonment of individual protesters, the anti-conscription movement continues to gain support.

Before the final banning, the ECC had been the target of many other white and so-called 'patriotic' or Christian organisations. Several of them had thinly disguised links with government or the security forces.

'Women for South Africa' has printed a number of leaflets to act as conversation guides for 'our women and our young people'. 'The crisis in our country', was a sample 'conversation between the housewife and her domestic help' in which the white madam tackles her black maid on the true definition of the "Comrades". 'they teach the children all kinds of ugly things - such as stealing, throwing stones, burning down places and even killing people'.. 'the army, they protect the people against foreign enemies. South African soldiers are on the borders to stop terrorists coming into the country and planting landmines... these terrorists have no regard for anybody's life'.

Another of the 'Women for South Africa' leaflets was called 'The Dangerous Game' (of the End Conscription). It was 'a cunning fraud of a hidden agenda to weaken the SADF so that the Marxists can bring about the country's downfall... The idea came from the South African Council of Churches... from the Black Sash and supported by the SA Catholic Bishops Conference and the student movement NUSAS. Funding comes, mainly from the SACC, the WCC and other foreign organisations and churches'. The leaflet went on to link ECC with the ANC, the Communist Party, the UDF and SWAPO. It concludes - 'Believe in the just case for SA - by Divine Grace we are already on the way to a solution... Support the Security Forces - Invite school principals to invite speakers to address your children.. ask your ministers to preach biblical justification for defending one's country'.

Veterans for Victory, a privately funded body with close links to the SADF, was one of the most prominent campaigners against the ECC. The Cape Times reported on April 13 1988, the publishing by the organisation of an anti-ECC booklet called 'The Rape of Peace'. The Veterans however were not confined to that target.

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The organisation's chairman is Rob Brown, once a military mercenary, now missionary and born-again Christian. In October 1987 Rob Brown was one of four missionaries from South Africa, all carrying British passports, who were arrested in Zambia on their way into Malawi and contact with the rebel Mozambique National Resistance (MNR) inside Mozambique itself. They were, they said "carrying humanitarian supplies."

Rob Brown became a missionary after, he claims, a varied career as a soldier and a mercenary in Cambodia, Korea, Northern Ireland, Rhodesia and Namibia. He is at home with soldiers. He boasts of travelling by motorcycle over thousands of kilometres of border country in the operational zones of SADF, UNITA and the MNR preaching and distributing bibles. Back home in the cities Veterans for Victory has carried out extensive mailings and taken advertising space in the South African press praising SADF, SWATF (its Namibian equivalent) and attacking the ECC, liberation movements, 'communist leaning professors' and so on. The ECC is a 'smelly conglomerate of left wing revolutionary minded nitwits', it wrote.

In Namibia it has written praising the security forces which are 'protecting the local population from the tyranny of SWAPO'. The Council of Churches in Namibia is concerned that Veterans for Victory and the similar Frontline Fellowship have been given a free rein to propagandise the troops politically and have even lectured against the dangers of a free press in the present State of Emergency. They distribute large numbers of leaflets by sister organisations like the Aida Parker Newsletter.

At the time of his arrest in Zambia, Rob Brown was working for the similar Frontline Fellowship. Its director, Rev Peter Hammond, was one of the three other missionaries arrested. Frontline Fellowship calls itself 'a group of evangelical Christians who are dedicated to an intensive prayer ministry for, and missionary outreach to, resistant or neglected areas and groups in southern Africa'. On the whole though it seems to have confined itself to providing missionary services to the South African 'troopies' on the frontier and to the surrogate forces of UNITA in Angola and the MNR in Mozambique with their South African trainers. It believes in the threat of a total onslaught and works closely with SADF with whom it shares a similar outlook.

Peter Hammond has written newsletters with accounts of clandestine journeys inside Mozambique with extravagantly false witness of atrocities against Christian congregations there supposedly committed by the Marxist government forces. These newsletters have been reprinted and circulated by the Moderate Students Movement (MSM) in South Africa and by the International Society for Human Rights in West Germany, Britain and others. They serve the purpose of painting all Marxists as villains and are typical of all Frontline Fellowship writings and meetings.

Peter Hammond spoke at a meeting in London on March 29 1988 under the auspices of the International Society for Human Rights. He concentrated on the situation in Mozambique where he maintained that the Marxist government had lost the trust of the people and was persecuting Christians, committing atrocities against them, burning churches and pretending its own forces were the MNR. In his view the latter were genuine freedom fighters struggling to return the country to democracy and justice. He described his imprisonment in Zambia as one of constant torture and filth.

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He did not once mention the South African involvement in the region, nor that he could only have travelled with the MNR if provided with illegal access either through Malawi or across the South African border by the South African authorities. He did not say either that he had twice been the guest of the Christian Council of Mozambique in Maputo where according to its General Secretary, the Rev. Felipe Banze, he had obtained hospitality from them on false pretences and left without paying the bill. He repaid their hand of friendship by writing a scurrilous piece about Christianity in Mozambique for a German magazine. In his London talk he also ignored the lifting of all restraints on the work of the churches in Mozambique as a result of church-state dialogue and agreement in the early 80s. He passed over the testimony of church leaders who said that the persecution about which he wrote, came not from the government side, but from the brutal activities of the MNR who were South African-backed.

My own experience from a trip to Mozambique in November 1987 as a guest of that country's Christian Council, is that I was unable to reconcile any element of the picture Hammond painted for his audience or to match his stories of church burnings and killing of congregations with the facts.

The Hammond lies were finally exposed in May 1988 when the US State Department published the findings of their consultant Robert Gersony based on hundreds of interviews with Mozambican refugees in many neighbouring countries. The overwhelming evidence he had gathered was that it was the MNR that indulged in cruel and inhuman killings and brutalities against the civilian Mozambican people and were the cause of the flood of refugees and displaced people as well as of the destruction of the economy.

Veterans for Victory and Frontier Fellowship are both members of a mainly white Christian network, United Christian Action.

United Christian Action - Network or Umbrella?

It was Ed Cain of UCA who first articulated in the South African press white citizens' outrage at the arrest of their people in Zambia. He firmly linked the concern of his organisation, umbrella, network or whatever, with their plight.

The UCA closely resembles the network that developed around the Christian League of Southern Africa (CLSA) in the 70s. The CLSA was later revealed as a Department of Information front and was coordinating a string of pro-apartheid Christians of different churches and sects within South Africa and far beyond. The similarities are not a matter of chance.

To start with, Ed Cain, the Director of UCA, was the former head of publications of the CLSA and sometime editor of its newspaper Encounter. Encounter received secret government funds separately from the CLSA to enable it to be distributed free and globally to a large mailing list of clergy compiled from suitable year books. It used the cheap mailing arm of KLM in Amsterdam for its distribution in Europe. Encounter died when the CLSA was exposed and its director the Rev Fred Shaw was publicly disgraced.

Now Ed Cain, Shaw's former co-worker, has re-emerged to edit a newsletter for UCA and he has also created another body - Signposts Publications, for the production of booklets. Ed Cain's UCA has been active as unofficial

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bellman on church affairs for the government just as Shaw's CLSA was in the past. Similarly it uses every opportunity of attacking the SACC and Archbishop Desmond Tutu in the media.

For example, according to a story in the Scotsman and credited to a Reuter report on June 16 1988, the UCA was urging the arrest of Archbishop Tutu on his return from a visit to the Soviet Union on account of his treason because he had publicly thanked the Soviet people for helping the black population of South Africa. According to the same report, the executive secretary of the UCA, Gunnar Wiebalck, said that the UCA was a privately funded umbrella organisation for 14 black and white church groups who condemned Marxism.

Such protest groups can and do organise 'media' events against Desmond Tutu. When Tutu goes abroad nowadays he is met on his return by prepared demonstrations at the airport by people who oppose his views especially those on sanctions. He wrote in an open Christmas letter in 1988, 'Almost all the opposition I have for my sanctions call comes from whites or blacks who work within the apartheid system and blacks who have been paid to demonstrate against me, as was proved by those who do so at airports holding up placards with slogans they could not even read. That I think is an obscene exploitation of our people'. Further evidence that these demonstrations are encouraged by the authorities is that when Tutu changes flights or arrival times to elude such groups, the demonstrators still know about his arrival. Only security police have such advance information.

United Christian Action claims to be made up of the following groups. Lists in different newsletters vary but this was the position in the summer of 1988.

Association of Christians for Partnership Instead of Violence.
Christian Resistance Group
Christian Mission International of South Africa
Frontline Fellowship
German-South Africa Friendship Association (AK Langenselbold)
Gospel Defence League
Reformed Independent Churches Association (RICA)
Rhodesia Christian Group
SA Catholic Defence League
Signpost Publications and Research Centre
The Aida Parker Newsletter
Victims against Terrorism
Veterans for Victory
Vox Africana.

Each of these organisations is small and states it is only funded by individual subscriptions, sponsorship or occasional donations from backers, usually described as 'businessmen'. This description may or may not conceal secret government funding. Businessmen were a cover for funding from the secret slush fund of the Muldergate period of activity. Then 'businessmen' were used openly or secretly as conduits for covert government funding just as private foundations are similarly used for political ends in the United

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States. For examples of such interlocking interests the reader is referred to 'Beyond the Pale', op cit. p110-114.

All these groups run angry media protests against the mainstream churches opposed to apartheid. The variety of UCA affiliates gives an impression of a wide spectrum of opinion. Several of the noisiest groups are however made up of only one or two persons. Sometimes one individual is behind several so-called groups operating from the same address. It is simply a matter of changing hats. For instance Dorothea Scarborough is both the Gospel Defence League and Vox Africana; Ed Cain is both UCA spokesman and Signposts Publications. In this way, a small number of Christian political activists can use several labels and claim to represent a wider band of public opinion than is the case.

When coordinated, they are capable of extraordinary outrage against the church leaders who oppose apartheid or to protest some international interference in the affairs of white South Africa. Other Christian targets are or have been, liberation theology, the End Conscription Campaign, the Kairos Document, the South African Council of Churches and all its component parts, the Catholic Church and the outspoken leadership of both church bodies as well as the black causes that they support.

All attack what they see as the Marxist influence in these organisations, giving encouragement to 'the enemy within' as they like to portray black resistance to apartheid. The fear of Soviet penetration and the threat of the godless atheism of Communism with a capital C are visions of the Antichrist all the more potent because they are utterly mythical bogeys.

The influence of all these groups with their intemperate beliefs is magnified considerably by the pro-government press, radio and TV who see the UCA as a source of moderate concerned Christians prepared to give opinions untainted by Marxism. The government press, like the Citizen newspaper, quote them with approval. Several of their newsletters are, it seems, selectively added to official mailings from time to time. While this does not constitute direct government funding, there are ambiguities about such close political involvement which needs further scrutiny.

One example is that of Bishop Mokoena of the Reformed Independent Churches, the only black organisation in UCA and a key element of the South African Government counter-attack against Archbishop Desmond Tutu. He is promoted as an authentic black church leader who denies the existence of black support in the country for sanctions and pooh-poohs the strength of black opinion behind Archbishop Tutu.

Bishop Mokoena - man of peace!

When Bishop Isaac Mokoena stepped onto the platform at a public meeting in Glasgow in February 1987 to speak to the student supporters who had nominated him for the Rectorship of the University, he was virtually unknown in Britain. He was not a bishop of any mainstream church. Why then should a stranger to Britain lend himself to a role in a contest in a constituency so far away from home? The answer was that pro-apartheid

forces (and they included official South African representatives) felt it necessary to run a strong black South African candidate against Mrs Winnie Mandela who was the favourite. Isaac Mokoena was a most unlikely candidate for what looked like an exercise of political kneecapping.

In South Africa however, he was at the time enjoying a period of attention and approval from the government and state-run media. He was useful to them because he set himself up as an authentic black Christian challenger to the anti-apartheid views expressed by the mainstream English-speaking churches.

He was therefore a possible alternative black church leader to set against Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Bishop Mokoena was also the main figure in the launch of the United Christian Conciliation Party (UCCP) which, because it suited the government's purpose, was allowed to promote itself as a party opposed to sanctions and disinvestment. He was widely publicised as the leader and spokesperson of the Reformed Independent Churches (RICA) which was said to have some 4.5 million black churchgoers opposed to sanctions. He assumed the title 'Bishop of Soweto' because he lived there! He preached against 'faceless radical elements' and the 'degraded' methods of the UDF and the ANC. A few weeks before he flew to Scotland he became the first black politician ever to be given the Decoration for Meritorious Service, an award made personally by President Botha.

Unfortunately for the apartheid regime these qualifications are too easily challenged. As a role model for black Christians, the Bishop's earlier career offers little in the way of a good example.

The UCCP was in fact a hollow shell. The party was launched as a counter-weight to the UDF before that widely supported mass movement was banned. UCCP support came mainly from township councillors who had proved biddable to the regime and were commonly described as Pretoria's stooges. Behind Bishop Mokoena, Thamsanqa Linda a former mayor of Ibhayi and Edward Kunene mayor of Soweto who were the three black politicians said to control the party, was a shadowy group of whites with government connections. UCCP supporters, claimed by it to be around 15 million, was only measurable, said the South African press, in hundreds.

The Decoration for Meritorious Service, far from being an honour, was usually given for services to the apartheid regime. Bishop Mokoena shared it with the President's wife and the widow of the late President Jon Vorster. It confirmed the Bishop's adherence to the status quo. To all in opposition to apartheid it singled out the Bishop as a potential enemy.

The 4.5 million membership claimed by RICA was another fiction quickly exposed. It was a figure conjured up to balance the long list of churches and congregations who were quoted as underpinning the South African Council of Churches and to show that RICA was more representative of Christian opinion than the SACC.

One prestigious university specialist in the growth of black churches, Professor G.C.Oosthuizen stated publicly that RICA had at most a few thousand followers.

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The umbrella body which represented the bulk of South Africa's Independent Churches (CAIC) dissociated itself emphatically from Bishop Mokoena's claim to speak for 4.5 million black churchgoers. It was, said the CAIC press statement 'a fraudulent and blatant untruth'. Despite these authoritative denials, the figure has been often used in South African Government propaganda, in the broadsheets of pro-apartheid support groups and out of the mouths of friendly British politicians whose words are then echoed by a gullible or mischievous press.

Over and above the 'fraudulent' claims being made on behalf of RICA, there was a more tangled background to the affairs of the church.

According to a paper written for the Division of International Affairs of the British Council of Churches, when Bishop Mokoena lost his executive position in the African Independent Churches Association (AICA) in the late 60s he sought publicly to vilify the Christian Institute staff members who had established AICA. These Christian Institute leaders (Dr Beyers Naude and the Rev Danie van Zyl) did not bother to institute any action in response to the unsubstantiated, hurtful and false allegations made.

Despite the past troubles the board of the South African Council of Churches, in what retrospectively seems to have been a moment of naivete, hired Bishop Mokoena in 1978 as Director of Church Development to help independent churches to register with the government and generally to become more professional. He left the job in 1979 after admitting to the SACC that he had forged an undefined number of cheques. It was after this episode that he tried to join forces with the Dutch Reformed Church and was briefly linked with the Christian League for Southern Africa at a time when the latter was getting large sums from the Secret Project Fund of the DOI.

A CLSA leaflet dated December 20 1981 says that RICA and its theological college SATCIC had affiliated themselves to the League. Some of CLSA's North American supporters were approached to support SATCIC and did so. One interpretation of these events is that the CLSA's director Rev Fred Shaw was attempting to use Bishop Mokoena to find fresh financial support for the organisation now that the secret funds were ending. In September 1981 a press article about Connie Mulder joining the newly launched National Conservative Party at its Third Annual Conference reported that Fred Shaw also shared the platform.

According to an article in March 1988 Penthouse entitled 'How U.S. Evangelicals Bless Apartheid', Bishop Mokoena was also implicated 'in an imbroglio involving sex and money in 1979. Mokoena was accused of financial mismanagement and committing 'unnatural sex acts' in papers submitted to the Supreme Court in Johannesburg in an attempt to bar him from running the theological college SATCIC which he had founded and chaired.' 52 of the young student theologians at the school' said the article, 'signed a petition charging him with a multitude of malfeasances'.

It was in this period that the state-controlled SABCTV began to use Bishop Mokoena as a regular speaker who expressed a 'moderate' opinion opposed to sanctions and was a keen supporter of President Reagan's 'constructive engagement' policy. He began to tour Europe and North America arguing the same issues and at the same time labelling Bishop Tutu as a fraud. One does not know who paid his fares and travel expenses but on one or more

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of his trips to West Germany he was hosted by the Hennendorfer Public Relations firm in Frankfurt, one of whose clients was the South African Government. Wherever he went his hosts repeated the claim that Mokoena represented 4.5 million black Christians and was also the spokesperson for an important block of black opinion in his country. These claims were wildly exaggerated.

The election fiasco in Glasgow is described in Part Two of this paper.

The Aida Parker Newsletter (APN)

Aida Parker was already actively supporting apartheid causes during the Muldergate period. She made her name in the 70s as a hard-hitting feature-writer for the Citizen, the nationalist newspaper which was later exposed as a government front receiving secret funds. Some of the headlines of pieces she wrote then give an indication of her interests. 'Clerics Reap the Whirlwind' in 1980, was about the persecution(sic) of the churches in Mozambique. 'WCC's Terror Politics Take a Beating', was about the WCC's alleged support of terrorist causes.

The Aida Parker Newsletter was launched in 1983 and called itself a 'non-profit making organisation dedicated to presenting a viewpoint of the South African dilemma alternative to that normally presented by the "liberal" South African and international media'.

Parker claims to run the newsletter on gifts and subscriptions. In frequent special issues she lists the larger donors such as 'Americans sympathetic to the South African cause', or 'R5000 from a family who normally give it to the Catholic Church but this year diverted it to APN as a protest against the militantly anti-South African stance of our hierarchy'.

The Newsletter is not a religious publication but Parker tends to devote a lot of effort to attacking anti-apartheid churches because she sees herself as fighting in defence of western Christian civilisation against a Satanic enemy. Special Issue 117 in early 1988 was entitled 'Comrade Jesus and the SA Revolution' and contains angry tirades against all the well-known religious leaders who are anti-apartheid as well as making crude attacks on liberation theology and the work of the SACC, the English-speaking churches and the international bodies which support them.

An earlier 'bumper' newsletter of April 8 1986 was given over entirely to an expose of the End Conscription Campaign. According to the Weekly Mail of November 7 1986, the articles tried to link the ECC to a 'Soviet-inspired apparatus' and made untrue allegations about individual members. Despite this it was used as evidence in affidavits to oppose an application in the Supreme Court for the release of detained ECC members. The ECC made a formal complaint to the Media Council which is the press watchdog, on the grounds that the newsletter seriously breached its code of conduct. The Council eventually ruled that Parker had indeed failed to report news truthfully and accurately or in a balanced manner. Like most newsletters of its type however, it was not a member of the Newspaper Press Union and did not have to accept the ruling of the Media Council.

The Aida Parker Newsletter has a subscription list of some five to six thousand, many in Europe and in the US. But it is also circulated by other groups in the United Christian Action network and often by individuals

within government. Veterans for Victory helped distribute the ECC leaflet because the ECC is for them ' a smelly conglomerate of left wing revolutionary minded nitwits'. The same leaflet has been distributed amongst the troops and white schoolchildren. Some 2000 copies of the Special Issue on the churches were distributed by Christian Action in Namibia. Christian Action is not part of UCA but, according to the Namibian of July 8 1988, 'a local right wing organisation which uses Christianity as a visiting card. It calls the SACC a pro-revolutionary political club whose counterpart in Namibia is the Council of Churches of Namibia'.

Two of the people involved in Christian Action during 1988 were Colonel Desmond Radmore of the SWA Territory Force's bomb disposal squad and George Yates, a local businessman. Several affiliates of the United Christian Action group keep close contact with Christian Action. In the same period both Veterans for Victory and Frontline Fellowship were present in Namibia and used local organisations to spread their message. Whether their activities were openly encouraged by the SA government is unconfirmable.

According to the American researcher Larry Jones, Parker has strong links with US evangelicals like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and bodies like the Christian Broadcasting Network, the Heritage Broadcasting Corporation in Florida, the Christian Anti-Communist Campaign and Open Doors.

In Parker's mind the US desperately needs re-educating as its leaders have already fallen victims to the version of South African events which sees the violence in the area as due to a terrorist state. Parker sees this as an undermining of its moral foundations.

A press release from the SACC dated 18 May 1988 warned that the churches' issue of the Aida Parker Newsletter was 'an indication of the upsurge of right wing religious groups and literature against the prophetic stance of the church against apartheid'. It continues, 'Aida Parker's attack is a classical example of a conscious and deliberate use in ideological constructs in defence of racist structures and institutions of domination, particularly the heretical apartheid system which negates in substance, the very gospel of Jesus Christ'.

Like all right wing religious literature (e.g. The Gospel Defence League, Signposts etc) it is a crude form of distortion, falsification and misrepresentation of the concrete reality of the South African situation and the related prophetic ministry of the church. For instance it tries to depict the prophets and disciples of justice and peace, like Archbishop Tutu, Archbishop D Hurley, Dr A Boesak, Dr B Naude, Dr W Kistner, Rev S Mogaba and others as disciples of violence and anarchy whilst lamenting the ending of tyrannical and brutally violent Somoza (Nicaragua), Duvalier (Haiti) and the Marcos (Philippines) regimes... Her 25 February 1987 special 32 page Defence Issue which salutes the SADF, talks about 'the war we must win' and 'the enemy we fight', and the 'sinews of war'. It demonstrates the hypocrisy of right wing religious groups who oppose oppression as violent, bloodthirsty and murderous when they, on the other hand, glorify war and violence in defence of this system.

The Catholic Defence League

This body was founded in 1977 to influence Catholics in South Africa against their own bishops and to sway public opinion overseas with a message that concern for social justice was equated with a communist or

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Marxist commitment. In doing so it condones apartheid and remains silent in the face of the outrages committed in its name.

As a body it has no standing in the church and has been repeatedly repudiated by its leaders. It breaks canon law by using the word 'catholic' in its title without the Bishops' consent.

In the 70s it worked alongside the CLSA, attacking the SACC and the SA Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC).

One of the League's mainsprings has been what it has seen as the clergy's participation in the political life of South Africa. It has tried very hard to identify itself as a widespread grassroots movement of Catholic laity (which it isn't) with a mandate to urge the bishops 'to confine themselves to the Gospel of Jesus Christ'. In reality its publications reveal a fanatical anti-communism and uncritical support for the SADF.

In the same mould, though not a UCA affiliate, is the South African branch of Tradition-Family-Property (TFP). TFP is an old-established and wealthy Brazilian foundation which is ultra-conservative and Catholic. It is strongly opposed to any liberal influences in the church and has developed a global programme to combat them.

The South African affiliate of TFP is called Young South Africans for a Christian Civilisation. They have campaigned against the ECC, SWAPO and similar targets with glossy free-distribution booklets. In 1987 they published 'The New Nation and Liberation Theology', a violent attack on the Catholic paper's stand in favour of the black revolutionary struggle in southern Africa and on the latter's evil influence in the erosion of a traditional faith. It echoed exactly the sentiments of many members of the UCA network and was widely distributed by them.

On October 22 1988 it bought a full page advert in The Citizen newspaper to attack the Catholic Bishops Conference and to ask black South Africans to vote in the forthcoming local elections.

The Gospel Defence League

Gospel Defence League is the label Dorothea Scarborough gives herself. She is a German migrant who has lived in South Africa for at least the last 20 years. She edits Vox Africana, a journal aimed at West German Christians. Scarborough has a long history in right wing religious movements. She organised the Cape Town end of Fred Shaw's CLSA in the mid-70s. (See Beyond the Pale, op.cit. p19). When the Muldergate investigations exposed CLSA's links with the secret projects fund, several of its outposts seemed to be able to survive in a more modest form. They went on attacking the same ecumenical organisations and promoting the same themes as before. Dorothea Scarborough focusses on any anti-government statements or comment by South African church groups and attempts to put the opposite arguments. She is said to work closely with young American missionaries who are more and more active in South Africa.

(Note the Conservative US Evangelical outreach in the 80s following the election of President Reagan was deliberate and well-funded. It has been the subject of several papers by US researcher Larry Jones. Further research is being done by Jones and others)

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One example of the Scarborough style is her March 1988 newsletter. It attacks the Clergy March on Parliament - they provoked their own persecution: the Lusaka Statement: liberation theology - the false church which encourages violence and condones murder: the SACC links with the ANC; Frank Chikane: the Kairos Document.

Gospel Defence League material is distributed by other affiliates in the UCA and by other sympathetic groups. One of these is Operation Africa, a South African based body which specialises in booklets to help readers engage in 'spiritual warfare'. Sample titles include 'The Threat is Red', 'The Warfare with Satan', 'Born for Battle'. A copy of the Defence League's leaflet 'What does the Bible say about justice', an attack on the SACC was slotted into all copies of 'The Threat is Red'. It has also been included in the mailings of the Christian Affirmation Campaign in Britain.

Rhodesia Christian Group

This was one of the original members of the CLSA and of the South African backed International Christian Network - an attempt to launch a global body which could compete with the World Council of Churches. Its founder was Father Arthur Lewis, an Anglican priest and missionary in Rhodesia, a senator in one of Ian Smith's UDI governments and an exile after liberation. He had run a long and lonely campaign 'countering', he wrote, 'the torrent of falsehood about Rhodesia' (RCG newsletter Jan 79) and his newsletters during the war of independence were circulated and reproduced by sympathetic groups and journals in South Africa and Europe. He was an energetic public speaker using the forensic skills of a tabloid journalist to paint word pictures of 'the red tide', or 'the flood of returning barbarians' - his description of the liberation armies.

He was an irrepressible opponent of the World Council of Churches and its affiliate churches who, he said, were openly encouraging 'the tactics of terrorism'. He popularised the poisoned phrase 'guns for guerrillas' and pinned it on organised international Christian support for the black populations and liberation struggles in southern Africa and even to special efforts on behalf of refugees in the area. Like all his fellow activists defending white rule, he clothed his arguments in the armour of a Christian crusade against communism - to him, the power of darkness, the Anti-Christ.

So he was taken up as a hero and luminary by extreme right wing groups in many parts of the world who shared his paranoia.

When Zimbabwe became independent, Father Arthur Lewis retreated to South Africa and continued to speak and write against the new government before finally retiring to Britain. But he hasn't given up. From his home in the Midlands and a new mailing address in Chingford, Essex, a new generation of Rhodesia Christian Group newsletters are now being despatched. The first issue was headed typically 'Victims of Communism - Massacre in Zimbabwe'. There is also a story about the treatment of white political prisoners in Zimbabwe and a pro-RENAMO piece about Mozambique. The same newsletter announces the launch of another Christian circle called the 'Good Hope Christian Group' whose objective is 'to counter bad press and hostile TV coverage of South Africa'.

Accompanying the same mailing was a leaflet with features attacking the churches preferential option for the poor, demolishing the views of Archbishop Tutu and an A4 sheet entitled 'How to refute liberation theology from the Bible'. The same leaflet was included in a Christian Affirmation Campaign mailing. The spread of such material may not be very great or influential but Father Lewis' new platform has enabled him to write letters to the press and to place an extremist view of the sanctions debate on the main feature page the Birmingham Post of October 12 1988.

Signposts Publications and Research Centre

Ed Cain, as well as coordinating United Christian Action, has his own personal organisation and newsletter. Cain has a long history of involvement in Christian groups working with the apartheid system. He is a former Baptist missionary who worked in Mozambique before independence. Later he was an administrator in Rev Fred Shaw's CLSA and edited 'Encounter' newspaper at the time Muldergate was being exposed. He also worked for Christian Mission International, an American group which sees Communism obsessively as Christianity's principal enemy.

The Signposts newsletter seeks to cover the same ground and attract the same readership as the defunct Encounter. Cain claims to have 10,000 subscribers and, like other elements of the UCA, also solicits larger individual or corporate donations. A sample issue carried articles against Archbishop Tutu by Ed Cain himself and another on the same subject by Father Lewis. There was a roundup of protest actions by UCA affiliates.

Ed Cain cultivates close relations with many US evangelicals. They are very active in South Africa and exercise considerable influence on the agenda of the affiliates of UCA.

Victims Against Terrorism

This is a small organisation purporting to represent victims of ANC and SWAPO operations. Its main activity is picketing both inside South Africa and overseas. In early 1987 a group of pickets was flown to London from South Africa to demonstrate outside the ANC and SWAPO offices. Despite enormous expense, the pickets had no effect and gained little media coverage. If they have been active recently we have no reports about it.

Christian Mission International

This is a well-financed US body with an office in Johannesburg. Its main role seems to be the production of leaflets and broadsheets. It is said to produce some five million pamphlets a year all attacking communism or the liberal clergy. It distributes material to the troops through a network of army chaplains.

The CMI broadside against the Kairos Document was headed 'When God is Replaced'. It condemned the paper as anti-Christian and Satanic and demanded a government ban. US researcher Larry Jones who visited CMI on one of his visits to South Africa, says that they make much use of quotations from well-known American evangelical writers and leaders. Some of its pamphlets are aimed directly at persuading powerful government cadres to act. Leaflets call for full-scale investigation and a hunt for subversives.

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This paper covers a very limited field in terms of lobbies, missions and religious groups in the service of apartheid. Not all these groups originate in South Africa. Many have their source and inspiration in Britain, Europe and especially the USA. Other researchers such as Paul Gifford in 'The Religious Right in Southern Africa', Baobab Books 1988, the Concerned Evangelicals who produced the document 'Evangelical Witness in South Africa' Regnum Books and the Evangelical Alliance (UK) 1986 and others including Larry Jones in the United States have explored aspects of this phenomenon. In the second part of my report I shall only be able to touch on some of this work. The readers will be given sufficient hints to be able to follow up the elements which interest them most.

End of Part One.

Part Two deals with groups serving apartheid in Britain and with the North American connection.

Derrick Knight.1989.

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