

Statement of Dr. Jean Sindab*

Jean Sindab (Washington Office on Africa)

I feel quite privileged and very honored to be asked to serve as the co-chair of ACAS. It is an organization which I have long admired and whose members have been particularly important in my intellectual, professional and personal development. Their commitment to the cause of peace and justice in southern Africa has been particularly heartening and encouraging to me and so many others over the years.

This is quite an exciting time for those of us who have struggled so hard, for so long, to bring an end to apartheid and U.S. support for that racist system. Last year, we saw a tremendous leap forward, both in the struggle inside South Africa and in this country. With the Free South Africa Movement building on years of anti-apartheid grassroots activity, it became the catalyst for igniting the spark of mass opposition to apartheid which has swept this country. Those loud protests succeeded in raising the visibility of the apartheid issue to force the international community to intensify its opposition to the Botha regime. Here in the U.S. we have dealt a death blow to the policy of constructive engagement by forcing Reagan to sign the Executive Order - no matter how weak - imposing sanctions on South Africa. Clearly, it is not enough, and we must go much, much further. Because of our success, our enemies have recognized our strength and our power and they are fighting back.

In fact, they are fighting back harder than ever.

However, the coming year offers us some of the best opportunities to keep the apartheid issue before the public despite attempts to put it on the back burner. Several important anniversaries will be observed this year: the 10th anniversary of the

Soweto massacre, in which close to a thousand school children were murdered, the 20th anniversary of South Africa's illegal control over Namibia and the 25th anniversary of the launching of the armed struggle by the African National Congress (ANC). We must use these anniversaries to further mobilize and educate the American people.

This also promises to be a very significant year for the struggle in southern Africa for other reasons as well. If 1985 was a pivotal time for South Africa, then 1986 will be even more of a watershed year. The formation of the Congress of South Africa Trade Unions (COSATU) is an exciting development which will precipitate important events. Already the new federation has announced that it will call for the burning of pass-books in the middle of this year. Bishop Tutu also has announced that the churches will call for an economic boycott. What this means, of course, is that the struggle will intensify even further.

When these events happen, we must be prepared to take immediate action in support of our brothers and sisters in South Africa. This is where an organization like ACAS can make a valuable contribution. One of the major tactics the racist regime and their U.S. allies will attempt is to obfuscate the real issues in the southern Africa region in order to gain support for apartheid. The activist-scholar community can play a critical role in providing the information necessary to refute the South African propaganda machine. We must be in the vanguard of exposing the lies and misinformation that will be presented to the American public.

We must take the lead in focusing attention on how apartheid is affecting the entire southern Africa region. We must expose the continued exploitation and oppression in Namibia, the hunger in southern Africa and the activities of the "contras" in Angola and Mozambique. Most importantly, we must help shift the focus in this country back to apartheid

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terrorism as opposed to Soviet expansionism as the root cause for problems in southern Africa.

Jonas Savimbi's visit to the U.S. leaves us with a task to be done. We must intensify our lobbying efforts to defeat congressional bills to fund UNITA and to prevent covert aid as well. Our campaign cry must be "funding for UNITA is funding for South Africa." We must lobby for the passage of the Namibia bill introduced by Pat Schroeder and we must go back to push for stronger sanctions against South Africa. A comprehensive economic sanctions bill is the only viable option given the present level of the struggle inside South Africa.

We must seize this historic moment to make our contribution to the final phase of the struggle for justice in South Africa. The time is now. The task is at hand. The challenge is ours and I know that we will not fail. Onward to victory!

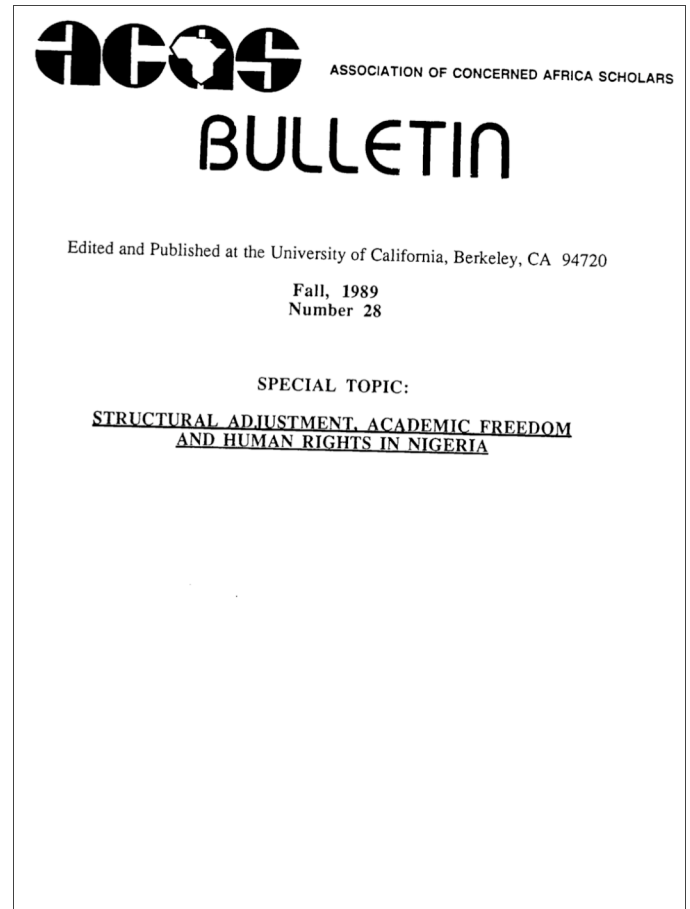


IMAGE: COVER, ACAS BULLETIN 28 (1989)