



## Letter From Washington

by Samuel T. Francis

### To the Pretoria Station

Governments, Lenin once wrote, never fall unless they are first pushed. Whatever his faults, the old Bolshevik must have known something about how to get rid of unwanted regimes. In the Revolution of 1917, it was the Imperial German government that helped to push over what was left of the Russian state by dispatching Lenin and his friends from Swiss exile to St. Petersburg on the famous "sealed train." In the case of South Africa, the government of the United States is about to play a similar role.

In June and July, the U.S. Congress, against the wishes of the Reagan Administration, imposed economic sanctions on South Africa as an "incentive" to end apartheid. Those sanctions passed by the House were pretty stringent; those from the Senate, less so; but the differences will be adjudicated in conference between the two chambers, and the President probably will not veto the final bill. The enactment of these sanctions against a friendly country with which we transact a multimillion-dollar business, the government of which has generally supported the more controversial parts of our foreign policy and which has never harmed any American citizen, sets in motion a process that may well end in the destruction of the most civilized society on the African continent.

The violent agitation within South Africa is largely under the control of the Communist-dominated African National Congress and its front groups and agents. The Communists and their fellow travelers also play a significant role in mobilizing the anti-apartheid movement in the United States. Indeed, it is fair to say that the Communists and the extreme left set

the pace of this movement. Of course, many of them are not smart enough to be real Communists. Recently, Mayor Barry of Washington proposed that the name of Massachusetts Avenue, where the South African Embassy is located, be changed to "Nelson Mandela Avenue," after the Marxist revolutionary who is now serving a life sentence in South Africa for his role in a Communist-organized terrorist conspiracy of the 1960's. What the Communists and revolutionaries want is not "freedom" but the destruction of South African society and the imposition of their own tyrannical power.

Non-Communist elements predominate numerically in the anti-apartheid movement, and their motives are mixed. The puddingheads who arrange to have themselves arrested in front of the South African Embassy every day, while partly fascinated by the word "Liberation," are really more concerned to revive the civil rights movement as the base of a viable left-wing political coalition, something Jesse Jackson conspicuously failed to do in the last election. Then there are the establishment liberals who support sanctions on South Africa because they cannot operate in their social and political milieu without supporting them. Finally, there are moderates and some conservatives who, having committed themselves to the position that it is the proper business of the United States to foster democracy and free enterprise everywhere in the world, lack a firm philosophical basis for resisting the arguments against South Africa. It is not uncommon to hear such people claim that there is no difference between South Africa and the Soviet Union, for example, though few are courageous enough to propose serious sanctions against the Soviets and none have the cultural power to lead a mass movement for such sanctions.

The vanguard of the anti-apartheid movement, then, consists of the revolutionary left, and it is from the far left

that the demand for sanctions originated. The left will not be satisfied with measures that only "make a statement"; it wants sanctions that will cripple and destabilize the South African economy and government, and it will keep demanding such sanctions until they are passed. And who in the anti-apartheid coalition will resist their demands? Little Stevie Wonder, who accepted his 1985 Oscar in the name of Nelson Mandela? Jesse Jackson, one of whose top advisers is himself a former member of the Communist Party and a present member of the World Peace Council? Or perhaps the establishment liberals, who even now are inventing excuses for not helping anti-Communist forces in Asia, Africa, and Latin America? When, in their overextended and miserable careers, have these people ever resisted Communism effectively?

Nor will the moderates who supported the sanctions on South Africa provide an effective brake on the far left. Their foreign policy is based on the dubious premise that the United States must officially punish countries that do not conform to our institutions and traditions (and their interpretation of our institutions and traditions is itself dubious). Their feeble argument against tougher sanctions is simply that they would harm South African Blacks, just as their argument for aid to the Nicaraguan *contras* is that the Sandinistas are not good for democracy in Nicaragua. The national interest of the United States does not appear to be a significant element in their world view, and the soft sanctions legislation that they guided through the Senate contain provisions for harder measures if there is insufficient progress by the South Africans in ending "apartheid," which is not precisely defined in the bill.

In South Africa itself, reforms undertaken by the ruling National Party in the last few years have gone far to dismantle apartheid, a term that is seldom used there today. Naïfs in

South Africa thought these reforms would satisfy "legitimate" Black demands and undercut the appeal of the far left. In fact, the reforms have simply raised expectations of further reforms that cannot realistically or immediately be granted and have played into the hands of the violent left. Everyone knows what happens when unrealistic expectations are raised. As Daniel Bell puts it, writing of the civil rights movement in the United States:

The classic illustration of the trajectory of expectations, first

laid down by de Tocqueville and repeated tediously since then by social scientists, tells us that no society which promises justice and, having admitted the legitimacy of the claims, slowly begins to open the way, can then expect to ride out the whirlwind in a comfortable fashion.

The irony of the sanctions is that, intended by their moderate sponsors to accelerate the abandonment of apartheid, they will, in fact, frustrate expect-

tations even more, if their effect is to lower Black living standards and encourage more violence and discontent. This, in turn, will help the left in South Africa and offer an opportunity for its American comrades to press for tougher sanctions in the United States. There is no part of the anti-apartheid coalition that can or will resist the concerted imperatives of the far left. None of the other components of this movement has the will or the principles to resist effectively, and once the premise that we should enact sanctions against apartheid is granted, there is no logical stopping place on the long march to revolution. America may not provide a sealed train for the revolutionaries, but it is certainly helping to build the track on which the train will travel. cc

Samuel Francis is on the staff of Senator John P. East. His most recent book is *Power and History* (University Press of America).

## REVISIONS

### *The Adulteries of Art*

Edward Banfield cannot seem to stay out of trouble. When he suggested (in *The Unheavenly City*) that the problems of urban Blacks were not so much the result of discrimination as their socioeconomic class, he was branded a racist and virtually hounded out of his chair at Penn. More recently he is being called a philistine for his gentle proposal that the government has no business funding the arts.

In *The Democratic Muse: Visual Arts and the Public Interest* (Basic Books; New York) Banfield makes a compelling case that the arts do not serve the public interest in a manner that entitles them to public support. What is more, all this funding, teaching, and collecting of *objets* distorts the true purpose and function of the arts, which Banfield conceives of as a sort of aesthetic entertainment. Banfield may not know much about art, but he knows what he doesn't like: the precious snobbery of collectors, curators, and art historians who turn what might have been a pleasure into a ritual of acquisition and a cult of the original.

The worst abuses in public arts policies are found, inevitably, at the Federal level, especially at the National Endowment for the Arts. The idea of a national foundation was already kicking around Washington in the 1950's. It was only a matter of time before it was picked

up by the well-schooled and well-heeled groupies that clustered around Jack Kennedy. Like most of Kennedy's more damaging notions, it took the heavy hand of LBJ to make it a reality.

Why should tax money support the visual arts? Banfield is at some pains to document the answers: it will improve our image abroad, it will enrich our lives, and—here's the best—it will ease tensions in the inner cities (which obviously explain why our cities are so free of crime). It must be said that Adam Clayton Powell, who supported the idea of the NEA, didn't buy that argument. About the only prominent politician to question the constitutionality of arts funding was Strom Thurmond, when he was young enough to be reactionary.

In other countries, at other times, Banfield's arguments might not apply (Athens in the age of Pericles, Constantinople in the reign of Justinian), but in America we used to have a fairly limited idea of what government could do. Perhaps it was not the best idea, but—as he concludes—the principle of limited government "has made America what it is." The past 30 years (at least) have given us a taste of what sort of America the managers, artists, and intellectuals would use our money to create. Frankly, most of us could find a more harmless way of wasting our money. cc

## Letter From College

by T. Harvey Holt

The much-ballyhooed young conservative movement of the early 1980's may soon come to an inglorious and grinding halt. While the early 80's were marked by a certain gusto on the part of conservatives fighting to overthrow entrenched liberals, the middle 80's are a time of unwarranted complacency. One can almost hear cries of "Reagan is in and all's well!" throughout the land. But the hard fact is that while we have a conservative White House, the Congress (not to mention most state houses) is still in the hands of the old establishment.

This unwarranted complacency, what I call "unsecure security," has its most devastating effects on college campuses, the breeding ground of activism. Those who started the latest wave of campus conservatism, the people who founded at least 70 conservative newspapers and hundreds of conservative forum groups in the early 1980's, have all since graduated. They are no longer around to guide and rally their campus troops. The new campus leaders were just entering high school when Ronald Reagan was first elected