

VETO OF H.R. 4868

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

TRANSMITTING

HIS VETO OF H.R. 4868, A BILL TO PROHIBIT LOANS TO, OTHER INVESTMENTS IN, AND CERTAIN OTHER ACTIVITIES WITH RESPECT TO, SOUTH AFRICA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES



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To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 4868, the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. Title III of this bill would seriously impede the prospects for a peaceful end to apartheid and the establishment of a free and open society for all in South Africa.

This Administration has no quarrel with the declared purpose of this measure. Indeed, we share that purpose: To send a clear signal to the South African Government that the American people view with abhorrence its codified system of racial segregation. Apartheid is an affront to human rights and human dignity. Normal and friendly relations cannot exist between the United States and South Africa until it becomes a dead policy. Americans are of one mind and one heart on this issue.

But while we vigorously support the purpose of this legislation, declaring economic warfare against the people of South Africa would be destructive not only of their efforts to peacefully end apartheid, but also of the opportunity to replace it with a free society.

The sweeping and punitive sanctions adopted by the Congress are targeted directly at the labor intensive industries upon which the victimized peoples of South Africa depend for their very survival. Black workers—the first victims of apartheid—would become the first victims of American sanctions.

Banning the import of sugar, for example, would threaten the livelihood of 23,000 black farmers. Banning the import of natural resources is a sanction targeted directly at the mining industries of South Africa, upon which more than half a million black laborers depend for their livelihood.

By prohibiting the importation of food and agricultural products, the measure would invite retaliation by South Africa, which since June has purchased over 160,000 tons of wheat from the United States. Denying basic foodstuffs to South Africa—much of which go to feed the black population—will only lead to privation, unrest, and violence. It will not advance the goals of peaceful change.

Are we truly helping the black people of South Africa—the lifelong victims of apartheid—when we throw them out of work and leave them and their families jobless and hungry in those segregated townships? Or are we simply assuming a moral posture at the expense of the people in whose name we presume to act?

This, then, is the first and foremost reason I cannot support this legislation. Punitive economic sanctions would contribute directly and measurably to the misery of people who already have suffered enough. Using America's power to deepen the economic crisis in this tortured country is not the way to reconciliation and peace. Black South Africans recognize that they would pay with their lives for the deprivation, chaos, and violence that would follow an

economic collapse. That is why millions of blacks and numerous black leaders in South Africa are as firm in their opposition to sanctions as in their abhorrence of apartheid.

The imposition of punitive sanctions would also deliver a devastating blow to the neighboring states in southern Africa that depend on Pretoria for transportation, energy, markets, and food. An estimated million-and-a-half foreign workers, legal and illegal, now live in South Africa. The number of people, women and children especially, outside South Africa who are dependent upon the remittances of these workers for their survival has been estimated to be over five million. Do we truly wish to be directly responsible for increased suffering, and perhaps starvation, in southern Africa? Do we truly wish our action to be the rationale Pretoria invokes for expelling these workers? Do we truly wish to trigger a cycle of economic sanctions and counter-sanctions that end up crippling the economy of South Africa and devastating the economies of the frontline states? What sense does it make to send aid to those impoverished countries with one hand while squeezing their economies with the other?

Disrupting the South African economy and creating more unemployment will only fuel the tragic cycle of violence and repression that has gripped that troubled country. Black unemployment in South Africa in some areas is over 50 percent—and adding to it will create more anger, more violence, and more competition among blacks struggling to survive. It will not improve prospects for negotiations.

Another feature of the bill would require the Administration to publicly identify within six months any and all nations that have chosen not to join us in observing the U.N. arms embargo against South Africa, “with a view of terminating United States military assistance to those countries.” But the United States will not revert to a single-minded policy of isolationism, with its vast and unforeseen effects on our international security relationships, that would be dictated by the unilateral decisions of our allies. No single issue, no matter how important, can be allowed to override in this way all other considerations in our foreign policy. Our military relationships must continue to be based upon a comprehensive assessment of our national defense needs and the security of the West.

Not only does this legislation contain sweeping punitive sanctions that would injure most the very people we seek to help, the legislation discards our economic leverage, constricts our diplomatic freedom, and ties the hands of the President of the United States in dealing with a gathering crisis in a critical subcontinent where the Soviet Bloc—with its mounting investment of men and arms—clearly sees historic opportunity. Therefore, I am also vetoing the bill because it contains provisions that infringe on the President’s constitutional prerogative to articulate the foreign policy of the United States.

There are, however, several features of the measure that the Administration supports. Title II of the bill, for example, mandates affirmative measures to eliminate apartheid and provide assistance to its victims, including support for black participation in business enterprises as owners, managers, and professionals. It authorizes

the President to take steps for the purpose of assisting firms to fight apartheid and extend equal opportunity to blacks in investment, management, and employment. The bill also contains a number of other useful and realistic provisions, such as those calling upon the African National Congress (ANC) to reexamine its Communist ties and mandating a report on the activities of the Communist Party in South Africa and the extent to which it has infiltrated South African political organizations. Still other portions of the bill call upon the ANC to condemn the practice of "necklacing" and terrorism and to state affirmatively that it will support a free and democratic post-apartheid South Africa. These provisions, as well as many others in the bill, reflect the agreement of the Congress and the Administration on important aspects of an overall anti-apartheid policy.

The Administration has been—and remains—prepared to work with the Congress to devise measures that manifest the American people's united opposition to apartheid—without injuring its victims. We remain ready to work with the Congress in framing measures that—like the 1962 U.S. embargo of military sales and the carefully targeted sanctions of my own Executive order of 1985—keep the United States at arms distance from the South African regime, while keeping America's beneficent influence at work bringing about constructive change within that troubled society and nation.

It remains my hope that the United States can work with its European allies to fashion a flexible and coordinated policy—consistent with their recent actions—for constructive change inside South Africa. I believe we should support their measures with similar executive actions of our own, and I will work with the Congress toward that goal. It remains my hope that, once again, Republicans and Democrats can come together on the common ground that, after all, we both share: An unyielding opposition both to the unacceptable doctrine of apartheid as well as the unacceptable alternative of Marxist tyranny—backed by the firm determination that the future of South Africa and southern Africa will belong to the free. To achieve that, we must stay and build, not cut and run.

That Americans should recoil at what their television screens bring them from South Africa—the violence, the repression, the terror—speaks well of us as a people. But the historic crisis in South Africa is not one from which the leading nation of the West can turn its back and walk away. For the outcome of that crisis has too great a bearing upon the future of Africa, the future of NATO, the future of the West.

Throughout the postwar era, we Americans have succeeded when we left our partisan differences at the water's edge—and perserved; as we did in the rebuilding of Europe and Japan, as we are doing today in El Salvador. We have failed when we permitted our exasperation and anger and impatience at present conditions to persuade us to forfeit the future to the enemies of freedom.

Let us not forget our purpose. It is not to damage or destroy any economy, but to help the black majority of South Africa and southern Africa enjoy a greater share of the material blessings and bounties of their labor has helped to produce—as they secure as well their legitimate political rights. That is why sweeping punitive

sanctions are the wrong course to follow, and increased American and Western investment—by firms that are breaking down apartheid by providing equal opportunity for the victims of official discrimination—it is the right course to pursue.

Our goal is a democratic system in which the rights of majorities, minorities, and individuals are protected by a bill of rights and firm constitutional guarantees.

RONALD REAGAN.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *September 26, 1986.*