

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page .....	i
Abstract .....	ii
Declaration .....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
List of acronyms .....	vi
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2: The origins and development of the WCC's struggle against apartheid: From Amsterdam to New Dehli .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Chapter 3: The creation of the Programme to Combat Racism, c. 1968–1969 .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Chapter 4: The PCR struggle against apartheid under the Uppsala mandate, 1970–1975 .....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Chapter 5: The PCR struggle against apartheid under the Nairobi mandate, 1975–1982 .....</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>Chapter 6: The PCR struggle against apartheid under the Vancouver mandate, 1983–1990 .....</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>Chapter 7: The PCR struggle against apartheid under the Canberra mandate, 1991–1994 .....</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>Chapter 8: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>List of Sources .....</b>	<b>263</b>

## List of acronyms

African Ministers Federation (AMF)  
African National Congress (ANC)  
All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)  
American Committee on Africa (ACOA)  
Amsterdam Rotterdam Bank (AMRO)  
Association of West European Parliamentarians for Action Against Apartheid (AWEPEAA)  
Black Consciousness Movement (BCM)  
British Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM)  
Christian Council of South Africa (CCSA)  
Christian Institute (CI)  
Commission on the Churches in International Affairs (CCIA)  
Credit Suisse (CS)  
Division of International Church Aid Refugees and World Service (DICARWS)  
Division of World Mission and Evangelism (DWME)  
Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)  
Ecumenical Development Cooperative Society (EDCS)  
Ecumenical Eminent Persons Group (EEPG)  
Ecumenical Monitoring Programme in South Africa (EMPSA).  
Eminent Church Persons' Group (ECPG)  
End Loans to Southern Africa (ELTSA)  
European–American Banking Corporation (EABC)  
German Evangelical Church (EKD)  
Interfaith Centre on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR)  
International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF)  
International Missionary Council (IMC)  
National Party (NP)  
Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)  
Programme to Combat Racism (PRC)  
Roman Catholic Church (RCC)  
Shipping Research Bureau (SRB)  
South African Bureau of Race Affairs (SABRA)  
South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU)  
South African Council of Churches (SACC)  
Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC).  
Staff Coordinating Committee on Racism (SCCR)  
Staff Executive Group (SEG)  
Swiss Bank Corporation (SBC)  
Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility (TCCR)  
Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS)  
United Nations (UN)  
Washington Office on Africa (WOA)  
World Council of Churches (WCC)

# Chapter One

## Introduction

### Background

The world faced a challenge when the National Party government in South Africa legally sanctioned a policy of racial segregation known as apartheid. This policy, justified by its planners on biblical grounds, was implemented remorselessly from 1948 until 1993. The apartheid government denied the majority of black citizens their basic human rights and access to wealth in the country. For decades, the subject of racial injustice in South Africa became the focus of intense resistance from all corners of the globe. The biblical justification of apartheid caught the attention of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Pauline Webb, a prominent Christian leader pointed out how burdensome South Africa was on the conscience and integrity of the world church.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the involvement of the WCC in South African politics remained controversial within the ecumenical Christian community.<sup>2</sup> During the 46-year period from 1948 to 1994, the WCC progressed from offering mere rhetorical protest against apartheid into a proactive, highly motivated expression of its abhorrence of racism – the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR). It moved from pronouncements to material support of the armed struggle.

The WCC had a long connection with South Africa going back to the establishment of mission societies in the nineteenth century. Gradually they developed ecumenical alliances through their respective imperial links and by 1910 had formed the International Missionary Conference which eventually grew into the WCC after the Second World War.<sup>3</sup> The WCC maintained ties with the Christian Council of South Africa which later became the South African Council of Churches.<sup>4</sup> This relationship became more and more important after 1948 as apartheid drew international criticism and as human rights and racism increasingly occupied centre stage in many global forums.

The PCR was a focused campaign by the WCC to mobilize international opinion and diplomatic influence against racial domination in southern Africa, including South West Africa (Namibia), Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Mozambique and South

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1. P. Webb, 'Introduction', in P. Webb, ed., *A Long Struggle: The Involvement of the World Council of Churches in South Africa* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), p. x.
  2. K. Raiser, 'Foreword', in Webb, ed., *A Long Struggle*, p. vii.
  3. R. Elphick, 'The Benevolent Empire and the Social Gospel: Missionaries and South African Christians in the Age of Segregation', in R. Elphick and R. Davenport, eds, *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (Oxford and Cape Town: James Currey and David Philip, 1997), pp. 347–369.
  4. E. Strassberger, *Ecumenism in South Africa 1936–1960* (Johannesburg: South African Council of Churches, 1974), pp.132–180.

Africa.<sup>5</sup> It was set up in 1969 and became a significant enterprise in concentrating world attention on social and political injustice under neo-colonial rule. In the process its transnational nature and ecumenical spirit brought political and religious lobbies into a potent relationship that turned moral disapproval into decisive activism through legal, legislative, diplomatic, military and political means until democratic elections were held in South Africa in 1994. This twenty-five year fight against apartheid represents a profoundly important part of the emerging picture of liberation in the African subcontinent.

The role of the PCR in the global anti-apartheid movement shows the emergence of a 'global civil society' through solidarity movements. As Håkan Thörn has argued, most research on liberation movements has concentrated on 'national' aspects without fully appreciating the influence of transnational agencies in harnessing extensive networks that suggest political globalization. He goes on to conceptualize 'transnational political action' in an essay on new social movements and the postcolonial condition.<sup>6</sup> There is therefore a growing understanding of the need to research the wider reach of the anti-apartheid campaign through organizations such as the WCC. This study of the PCR offers a focused documentary case study that attempts to show how a religious body used its ecumenical constituency to heighten moral opprobrium against apartheid, offer a platform for debate, marshal resources for liberation movements, issue statements of condemnation and articulate with other anti-racist impulses to contribute to the larger assault on the South African government between the late 1960s and the early 1990s.

Philip Wogaman has asserted that 'people are incurably religious and also unavoidably political'. He found the intersection between religion and politics 'endlessly fascinating'. He believed that 'Christians can think about politics and make their contribution to the civil society of which they are part'.<sup>7</sup> His assertion is relevant in this research on South African politics and the WCC, a religious agency of global civil society. This study offers an historical account of this intersection and echoes the trend towards researching religion in historical studies by looking at its links with politics. In this sense, it agrees with George Eley that 'politics matters', notwithstanding the flourishes of cultural history, and it tries to examine the part played by a religious institution in supporting political change by opposing apartheid oppression.<sup>8</sup>

This study aims to provide an historical account, based on archival research and a set of interviews, of the contribution of the WCC and its PCR in the anti-

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5. P. Roussouw, *Ecumenical Panorama: A Perspective from South Africa* (Roodepoort: Transo Press, 1989), pp.133–145.
  6. H. Thörn, 'Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society', in C. Saunders, ed., *Documenting Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa. Workshop Report* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2010), pp. 11–23.
  7. J.P. Wogaman, *Christian Perspectives on Politics* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2000), p. 3.
  8. G. Eley, 'Dilemmas and Challenges of Social History since the 1960s: What Comes after the Cultural Turn?', *South African Historical Journal*, 60, 3 (2008), pp. 310–322.

apartheid struggle from 1948 to 1994. The WCC is but one of the global church bodies within the ecumenical movement.<sup>9</sup> There are other bodies, such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, which operate differently from the WCC, and yet these organizations cooperate where necessary. The thesis considers the evolution of the PCR's approach to apartheid in South Africa against the broader ecumenical movement and its reaction to racial politics. The PCR provides an institutional lens through which to observe and assess the sentiments, debates, programmes and actions of a religious association in relation to the much bigger enterprise of national liberation. It also offers another point of entry to the history of political movements, such as the African National Congress (ANC).

Membership of the WCC is voluntary. From the total number of churches in the world in the period under consideration, there were 146 of these (from 44 different countries) which were represented at the WCC's first General Assembly in 1948. Of the churches in South Africa, there were five which chose to apply for membership of the WCC that year.<sup>10</sup> As a body of the ecumenical movement, the WCC promotes the unity of diverse Christian churches and groups. It consists of churches such as the Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist, Lutheran, Moravian and many others which take various forms, ranging from state, national and provincial churches. Some are rich and others poor. The diversity extends to doctrine, worship, lifestyle, cultural background, language and political persuasion. What binds them is the commitment to work together in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>11</sup>

The constitution of the WCC stipulates that it is made up of individual churches which retain their autonomy.<sup>12</sup> The rationale behind this is that the WCC does not see itself as a 'super church' imposing majority decisions on its members. This is the specific quality which makes the WCC radically different from the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>13</sup> The WCC handles its affairs professionally and puts emphasis on knowledge and education. It enlists eminent scholars in different parts of the world to examine various global problems. In areas of disagreement, the WCC instigates studies to maximize united action by its member churches.<sup>14</sup> This study is not specifically about the relationship between the WCC and its SACC associate members against apartheid; rather, it is a focused examination of one of the WCC's significant projects that challenged racism in South Africa in the given period. It examines how the PCR became a space in which a range of liberal and left radical interests were able to encounter each other and a

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9. The ecumenical movement is a research topic on its own and is beyond the scope of this study.

10. D.P. Gaines, *The WCC: A Study of its Background and History* (Peterborough: Richard R. Smith & Co., 1966), pp. 225, 229.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 374–379.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 369.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 374–379.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 241, 348; P. Bock, *In Search of a Responsible World Society: The Teachings of the World Council of Churches* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), p. 24.

facilitator of debates among exiled South Africans, international human rights activists, ANC representatives and progressive, religiously inclined advocates of democracy in South Africa and from the region. Exiles, insiders and international activists could therefore meet and discuss South Africa's predicament in ways that were not possible in political venues.

The WCC has a structure indicative of the many problems the world community faces. It consists of various units and departments categorized according to themes and programmes. These change over time as the world confronts new challenges. For example, the WCC had a unit for Justice and Service. This unit had a number of world programmes which concentrated on problem areas such as refugees, development, international affairs and racism. It also had other units with different responsibilities. All these divisions were an integral part of the WCC.

Although the WCC represents a distinct global Church organization, it does not hold a homogeneous Christian view on the problems of the world. Within the WCC itself there were different opinions on how to deal with the various challenges it faced, including that of racism. There were also those voices outside the WCC that disagreed with the formation and the activities of the PCR and were critical of the WCC's agenda in southern Africa.

In essence, this study is about the involvement of the WCC and its PCR in South Africa, detached from other global ecumenical players such as the Roman Catholic Church. It focuses on the initiatives by the WCC and PCR against the apartheid government – initiatives undertaken both with and without the cooperation of the South African member churches. It revolves around the voices within the structures of the WCC and PCR in the fight against apartheid. Accordingly, the PCR is placed at the epicentre of the enquiry. It is the primary focus of analysis in the central question posed: To what extent was this inclusive, but diverse, Christian institution – a transnational agency and part of global civil society – effective in defeating apartheid?

This research on the PCR is complementary to other studies of the efforts by the world anti-apartheid movement to bring social transformation to South Africa.<sup>15</sup> It articulates with other scholarly examinations of liberation and consequently aims to incorporate the micro-level involvement of the WCC and PCR into the meta-narrative of the global anti-apartheid struggle.

This is, however, not an intellectual history or theological study and for that reason does not evaluate the theological positions or discourses of the WCC and PCR during the campaign to end apartheid. Darril Hudson, a political scientist at California State University, distinguished the PCR as 'a non-spiritual entity, a

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15. C. Saunders, 'Issues in Writing on Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa', in C. Saunders, ed., *Documenting Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa. Workshop Report* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2010), pp. 59–65.

very practical organization in the perception of many Christians and non-Christians alike'.<sup>16</sup> Such a characterization captures the wide appeal of the WCC, as well as the non-sectarian and profoundly political nature of the PCR's work and explains its capacity to attract a broad audience of international interests, at the same time as it professed a moral stance based on Christian principles.

The Christian Church preaches equality of man before God. Since its establishment, the WCC has protested against racism. As an ecumenical Christian body with a strong Christian mandate to foster unity and peace in the world as a transnational agency of global civil society and a political interest group, the WCC's constituency embraced the oppressor and oppressed; the powerful and powerless; the perpetrator and victim; the exploiter and exploited; the black and white; the pacifist and activist; the rich and poor; the civilized and uncivilized; the Western and non-Western.

The problem with this inclusive, yet internally dissenting, 'family' is that it ignores the fact that the opposing elements among whom the WCC sought to foster unity were in essence a consequence of one or the other asserting dominance and self-interest at the expense of the other. The position therefore at best cultivates a false unity, existing side by side with inherent injustice in the interrelations between opposing elements. At worst, such a position would serve to perpetuate such injustices, nullifying reasons for any attempt at fighting the injustices that define interrelations between these diverse elements. Therefore it is important to ask to what extent the WCC (and thus the PCR) was effective in fighting racial discrimination and oppression prevalent under the apartheid government from 1948 until 1994? Did its internal divisions hinder decisive action, firm commitments and agreed agendas? Was its ecumenism and generally humanitarianism combined with secular preoccupations a weakness in resolute opposition to apartheid?

### **Focus areas**

This research is an investigation of four key areas: the WCC structures; the main interest groups that were represented; the apartheid government and its allies; and the political context and historical processes during the period 1948 to 1994.

The first area to be examined will be WCC structures. They were responsible for formulating and implementing the policies against the apartheid government. These included the general assemblies, the WCC Executive and Central Committees, the departments and units which focused on the issue of racism, such as the Church and Society department, Unit II on Justice and Service and Unit on Justice, Peace and Creation (in which the PCR was located), the PCR Executive Committee, the PCR staff and Commission, and the consultants that were appointed. The thesis pays attention to the dynamic relationships of the

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16. Hudson, *The World Council of Churches in International Affairs*, p. 17.

appointed members within and among the various structures on the approach the WCC adopted to apartheid. It also considered how the WCC and the PCR related to their constituencies, which were the member churches, the racially oppressed and the solidarity partners. The reports of the general assemblies, the minutes of the WCC Central and Executive Committees, the archival records of the PCR, the interviews conducted with the WCC and PCR practitioners and observers, and the publications produced by the WCC, are all copiously explored. These sources yield much information about the nature of WCC and PCR involvement in South Africa from 1948 until 1994. Most importantly, the original contribution the study makes are derived from the investigation of the WCC structures through its record in Geneva. This archival core is then linked to the insights in other sources, both primary and secondary.

The second key area of the approach is to pay attention to the interest groups reflected in the PCR's activities and forums, as well as the national and international formations which played a critical role in fighting apartheid. In South Africa these were the political organizations that were banned and operated in exile. Research was also conducted in the archives of other formations of civil society such as the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the United Democratic Front (UDF), the Azanian Peoples' Organization (AZAPO), and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Internationally, bodies such as the United Nations (UN), Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Commonwealth and the numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society anti-apartheid movements transacted with the PCR and their reports and published documents have also informed this study. The chapters examine some of the secondary literature on these groups to uncover linkages, contradictions, gaps, and contexts.

The South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) series, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, was particularly valuable in this regard, and represents a major scholarly assessment of the liberation struggles in southern Africa. Chris Saunders regards it as 'the single most important publishing project relating to the liberation struggle in South Africa to date'.<sup>17</sup> It is a formidable, collaborative multi-volume effort to document the many trajectories of the anti-apartheid project. The four volumes published thus far cover an array of forces which fought against apartheid from the 1960s until the 1980s. They offer a chronological analysis of the resistance waged in exile, in the public sphere, in church ranks, on the factory floor and in circles outside the political sphere. Volume three is dedicated to international solidarity in the struggle against apartheid. Thus far, volumes one and two have received some positive scholarly reviews. Saul Dubow, a professor of History at the University of Sussex made the following remarks:

The first volume of a planned four [this has now increased to six] – must have risked becoming a monumental exercise in courtly hagiography. In fact, it represents a serious-

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17. Saunders, 'Issues in Writing on Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa', p. 61.



mindful and valuable effort to record vital aspects of the history of resistance to apartheid. Led by Professor Ben Magubane with senior historians, the project deserves generous commendation. Judicious editorial decisions have ensured that this volume is not merely a paean of praise to the ANC, Pan-Africanism, the African People's Democratic Union, the National Committee of Liberation and the African Resistance Movement. The publication marks an important development in the literature of liberation. Fresh sources of information and a new generation of scholars supported by established academics are building significantly on earlier institution-based accounts.<sup>18</sup>

Tom Lodge, a Political Studies professor, is a pioneer in liberation struggle historiography. Although critical of some of the chapters, particularly the introduction by Ben Magubane in volume 1, his overall assessment of the first two volumes which appears in the *South African Historical Journal* is affirmative. He observes that in the first volume the 'chapters contain a mass of fresh detail, particularly as a consequence of the testimony offered to the researchers by veteran activists. The new evidence should indeed prompt interpretative shifts from earlier scholarship about anti-apartheid movements in the 1960s'.<sup>19</sup> He goes on to say of the second volume, that 'the SADET team offers a host of fresh insights, even though the 1970s are already the focus of extensive scholarship on resistance activities'.<sup>20</sup> Johann Tempelhoff is a historian specialising in transdisciplinary research methodologies at North-West University. He viewed the volumes as 'a significant breakthrough' in the 'official historiographical discourse' of the freedom struggle.<sup>21</sup>

This thesis has thus relied on the SADET volumes for information on interest groups and the national and international formations which played a significant anti-apartheid role and to provide the broad backdrop to the PCR's unfolding between 1969 and 1994.

The third key focus area investigated is the South African state between 1948 and 1994, particularly concentrating on how it reacted to the escalation of violence inside South Africa and heightened pressure from the international community in general – and specifically the actions of the PCR. The role of the churches, business and other sectors which supported the government locally, are examined, as were the governments, churches and businesses abroad which helped to sustain the apartheid government. Here, evidence was gleaned from secondary sources, with a heavy reliance on Dan O'Meara's authoritative, but

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18. S. Dubow, Review of SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1*, available at <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=157651143228611>, H-SAfrica, H-Net Reviews, February 2006.

19. T. Lodge, Review of SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1*, *South African Historical Journal*, 51 (2004), pp. 274–279.

20. T. Lodge, Review of SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2*, *South African Historical Journal*, 60, 1 (2008), pp. 157–162.

21. J.W.N. Tempelhoff, Review of SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa Volume 2*, *Die Beeld*, 21 May 2007, available at: [boeke@beeld.com](mailto:boeke@beeld.com)

often under-cited, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948–1994*.<sup>22</sup>

The fourth key focus area in approaching this study is the political environment and the intricate historical processes which prevailed from 1948 to 1994, such as the Cold War, the decolonization of Africa, the civil/human rights era, the collapse of communism and the emergence of new democracies. These are assessed by looking at how these currents affected the policies of the WCC against apartheid South Africa at different times.

The integrated evidence on the actions of the WCC and the PCR against apartheid in South Africa has therefore been derived from (i) a close study of the relevant literature and (ii) the investigation of the four key focus areas outlined above, namely the WCC structures; the interest groups; the apartheid state; and the global context. This yields a better understanding of the role of the WCC and its PCR in their efforts to resist apartheid.

### **Historiographical contours**

A review of the histories on the liberation struggles waged against the apartheid state shows scant recognition of the role the WCC and its PCR played. The sketchy information that exists is given in a sentence or two, or at the most, in a paragraph which refers to the WCC's meeting at Cottesloe in 1960; the formation of the PCR; its financial support to the liberation movements; its campaign for economic sanctions; and the publication of the ANC profile. This is evident in the latest 2010 publication on the role of faith institutions in the struggle. In his analysis, the author, Siphamandla Zondi, who holds a PhD in African History from Cambridge University, points out how the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 'ideologically challenged the churches', including the WCC, which led to the Cottesloe consultation. He shows how Cottesloe influenced the 'WCC conference in 1968 to resolve that racism was a scandal before God and urged its member churches to work against racial discrimination in a practical way'.<sup>23</sup> Although the Sharpeville massacre had only a remote impact on the eventual establishment of the PCR by 1969, the period between 1960 and 1968 was eventful as far as developments within the WCC were concerned and Sharpeville prompted it to take action against racism in South Africa and elsewhere. Afrikaner historians have also focused on the Cottesloe Consultation in considering the impact of the WCC.<sup>24</sup>

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22. D. O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948–1994* (Johannesburg: Ravan 1996).

23. S. Zondi, 'The Role of Faith Institutions in the Struggle', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 4 (1980–1990)* (Pretoria: Unisa Press 2010), pp. 1446–1447. See also F. Meli, *South Africa Belongs to Us: A History of the ANC* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1988), p. 188. Meli has a sentence on the Cottesloe consultation.

24. R.T.J. Lombard, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke en Rassepolitiek met Spesiale Verwysing na die Jare 1948-1961* (Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel Transvaal, 1981).

In the multi-volume series *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882–1990*, Thomas Karis and Gail Gerhart have a paragraph on the WCC and PCR in *Volume 5, Nadir and Resurgence, 1964–1979*. They comment on the WCC establishing ‘a global PCR and supporting financially, 19 organizations which included the banned South African ANC and PAC, for humanitarian and educational reasons’. They highlight the fact that the WCC applied the principle of a ‘just war’ by supporting organizations which used ‘violent means to combat racism, when other means had been exhausted’. They also noted how the South African churches reacted to the PCR activities in the 1970s.<sup>25</sup>

Jackie Grobler’s paragraph discusses the support the WCC gave to the ANC and the PAC, which were committed ‘to violence and had leaders with Marxist-Leninist leanings’ in the late 1960s. He identifies five significant issues about the WCC at the time. The first was that the WCC General Assembly in Uppsala identified the need for the PCR in 1968. The second is that the newly launched PCR ‘campaigned for the application of economic sanctions against South Africa and provided financial aid to movements which combated racism’. The third issue deals with the decision by the WCC to fund these movements and the fact that it ‘resulted in controversy in churches around the world, but with a few exceptions’. The fourth important matter was that the WCC published an ANC profile which painted a sympathetic picture in order to justify the aid it provided to the ANC. The fifth was that the representatives of the ANC continued to be present at major ecumenical gatherings.<sup>26</sup>

These historians recognize the significance and progressive contribution the WCC and PCR made in supporting the South African liberation movements. Their superficial analysis is aligned with that of this study which goes much further to establish the precise nature of PCR involvement through detailed empirical research, combing the extensive holdings of the WCC Archive in Geneva. Their insights are useful, however, because they insinuate that the PCR was influential, but they barely scratch the surface of the PCR’s activism which spanned over a quarter of a century. Interestingly, some scholars justifiably view the involvement of the WCC in South Africa from the perspective of the churches inside the country and as reactive to the liberation movements. This study provides an added perspective – that of the WCC’s involvement in South Africa. It reflects the internal views of the WCC and its adherents by examining its own statements, conference proceedings, private correspondence, published and unpublished reports, transcripts of interviews and official magazines.

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25. T.G. Karis and G.M. Gerhart, eds, *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882–1990, Volume 5, Nadir and Resurgence, 1964–1979* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 1997), pp. 81, 82, 83.

26. J.A. Grobler, *Decisive Clash: A Short History of Black Protest Politics in South Africa, 1875–1976* (Pretoria: Acacia, 1988), p. 147; and S.M. Ndlovu, ‘The ANC in Exile’, in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1 (1960–1970)* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), pp. 567–570. Ndlovu includes a few pages on the ANC’s connection with the WCC and its PCR during this period.

There is also a subtle attempt in some of the literature to portray the PCR as a South African-led intervention. For example, in her biography of Oliver Tambo, the social historian, Luli Callinicos, claims that he 'encouraged' the WCC to begin a programme in 1967 (sic), 'for all its members to combat racism.'<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the obituary of Masabalala Bonnie Yengwa declares (wrongly) that: 'He represented the ANC at the World Council of Churches' meeting in Geneva to draw up a Programme to Combat Racism.'<sup>28</sup>

In a publication about South Africans telling their struggle stories, the late Joe Matthews is reported to have said: 'In 1969, I went to the Notting Hill consultation in London, where I really put the case across for the armed struggle in South Africa. That led to the formation by the WCC of the programme against racism.'<sup>29</sup> Matthews' statement is reiterated in another publication by the historian Sifiso Ndlovu. Referring to the consultation the WCC initiated at Notting Hill in May 1969, the one that Matthews attended, Ndlovu claims that 'interventions by Matthews led directly to the WCC's formation of the programme against racism'.<sup>30</sup>

It is correct that the leaders of the exiled ANC, such as Tambo, Yengwa and Matthews contributed to the shaping of what became the worldwide PCR of the WCC. However, the WCC also sought advice from others at Notting Hill, where there was diverse representation from all over the world, on how to deal with the global problem of racism (and not solely in South Africa). The participants at Notting Hill included South African church leaders, academics and politicians, as well as others from all walks of life. Even more significant, the WCC underwent an internal transformation which started in the early 1960s and continued through to the mid 1960s, culminating in the establishment of the PCR in August 1969. Although the Notting Hill consultation in May 1969 was critical, it was only part of a nine-year process that led to the creation of the PCR. It was therefore an organic product of the WCC, and not the creation of South African exiles.<sup>31</sup>

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27. L. Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2004) p. 513.

28. M.B. Yengwa obituary, available at [www.anc.org.za](http://www.anc.org.za)

29. J.G. Matthews (for SADET), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa: South Africans Telling their Stories Volume 1* (Johannesburg: Mutloatse Arts Heritage Trust, 2008), p. 23.

30. S.M. Ndlovu, 'The ANC and the World', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 1*, p. 569.

31. Joe Matthews was present at Uppsala in 1968, where the WCC held its 4th assembly. He was invited because his father, Z.K. Matthews worked for the WCC before his untimely death in 1967. In Uppsala, Joe Matthews witnessed the WCC delegates' thoughts and sentiments on the issue of racism. The WCC invited him to participate at the International Consultation on Racism held in Notting Hill in May 1969. I spoke to him about the false impression created that he was in some way responsible for the formation of the PCR. He agreed with me that indeed, this was a distortion of the facts. Interview with Joe Matthews, Johannesburg, 12 May 2009.

Recent histories of resistance look at the role of international solidarity groups that acted against apartheid. They shed light on aspects of the external activities by the worldwide anti-apartheid movement. Many incorporate the contribution the WCC and PCR made to resist apartheid. Some of the solidarity groups were partners with the PCR in the various campaigns. Some received funding from the PCR for their activities against the South African government. Although these histories cast new light on the perceived role the WCC played in the anti-apartheid struggle, they still do not provide a complete picture. The former state president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, who endorsed the publication of these histories, expressed his regret that there was no specific focus on the WCC and PCR in the SADET collection.<sup>32</sup>

A prominent social historian, Philip Bonner, who has been active in the University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop project for more than thirty years, acknowledged that 'one field the History Workshop has conspicuously overlooked is religion and religious experiences'.<sup>33</sup> Fellow historians and other social scientists present at the 2009 colloquium concurred. Patrick Harries, an African history professor currently teaching at Bern University in Switzerland, told the audience that whilst teaching at the University of Cape Town, he and others in the Department of Historical Studies were not even aware of the kind of research their colleagues in the Religious Studies Department were doing.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, what there is in the way of information about the role the WCC and PCR played in the anti-apartheid struggle comes mainly from the Religious Studies field. This body of literature primarily covers the resistance waged by the South African churches, church-based institutions and church leaders against the apartheid state. It also refers to how the local churches, institutions and leaders reacted to the WCC and the PCR involvement in South Africa after 1969.

This is evident firstly in the records of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and those of member churches associated with the WCC. Such records indicate the reactions of individual member churches to the funding of the liberation movements and support for economic sanctions against South Africa by the WCC and PCR.<sup>35</sup> The reactions are important in so far as they provide insights about the relationship between the WCC and its SACC associate

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32. He expressed this regret to the researcher who asked him about the exclusion of the PCR, at the launch of SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3 International Solidarity* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008), held at the Presidential Guest House, Pretoria, 14 June 2008.

33. P. Bonner, 'Life after Thirty: The History Workshop', *African Studies*, 69, 1, April 2010, p. 26.

34. I was present at the colloquium.

35. University of the Witwatersrand, William Cullen Library (hereafter Wits), SACC Collection (AC 623), Church of the Province of South Africa (CPSA) Papers (ref. 20.7): SACC and the PCR, 1970 church and press reactions. See also full text of the resolution of the Provincial Synod of the CPSA held in Cape Town, 6–14 November 1970 on the WCC decision to support the liberation movements of southern Africa. For an example of the disinvestment debate see, WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 26th Meeting of WCC Central Committee (hereafter CC), Geneva, 22–29 August 1973, pp. 198–205.

member churches. The involvement of the PCR in South Africa was, however, more than its relationships with the SACC.

The dominant reactions to the WCC and PCR are also evident in the publications by leading South African theologians, church historians and non-South African scholars. Their primary focus has been to examine opposition to apartheid by South African church organizations, institutions and religious leaders. Examples of these studies include those about the SACC; individual member churches, or denominations; the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC); the Christian Institute; Beyers Naudé; and Robert Selby Taylor. The authors are eminent scholars, including Charles Villa-Vicencio, John de Gruchy, Darryl Balia, David Thomas and Tristan Borer, which are referenced below.

In his investigation of the local English-speaking anti-apartheid churches, Villa-Vicencio examines how these churches refused to endorse the financial support provided to exiled freedom fighters and would not respond to the PCR's call for disinvestment in the country.<sup>36</sup> His prolific contributions on the relationship between the apartheid state and the church in South Africa offer valuable insight on the WCC's concerns about the situation in the country.<sup>37</sup> Apart from the extra information learnt about the WCC and PCR, he provides a broader context against which to view WCC and PCR involvement in South Africa.

John de Gruchy's research on the local church's struggle against apartheid provides information on some of the key events involving the WCC, including the three meetings in the late 1960s that radically transformed the WCC's approach to racism. The first was the consultation on church and society in 1966, attended by Beyers Naudé and Bill Burnett. The Christian Institute and the SACC consequently compiled 'A Message to the People of South Africa' which condemned apartheid as a false Christian belief. The second was the WCC General Assembly in 1968 and the third was the consultation at Notting Hill, where the process of creating the PCR crystallized. De Gruchy and Darryl Balia explained why the SACC Executive Committee responded negatively to the revolutionary statement on racism the WCC made after the Notting Hill consultation.<sup>38</sup>

In his examination of liberalism, ecumenism and race in South Africa, David Thomas informs us about the transformation that occurred in the attitude of the SACC towards the WCC and PCR. He details how the SACC changed from

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36. C. Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988), pp.109–117, 164, 222.

37. See also, C. Villa-Vicencio, 'When Violence Begets Violence', in M. Prozesky, ed., *Christianity amidst Apartheid: Selected Perspectives on the Church in South Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 200; C. Villa-Vicencio, 'The Church and Violence', in Webb, ed., *A Long Struggle* pp.102–114.

38. J.W. De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979), pp. 115–118, 127–129; D. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid: Ecumenism in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1989), pp. 48–49.

initially opposing the PCR to supporting its aims unreservedly.<sup>39</sup> His analysis, based mainly on exhaustive study of archives in the William Cullen Library at the University of the Witwatersrand, has informed the early chapters of this thesis. The study on the SACC and the SACBC by Tristan Borer offers additional information about the WCC and PCR because it assesses their involvement in South Africa. Significantly, her finding was that throughout the 1970s and 1980s these two religious organizations lagged behind the WCC in supporting the liberation movements as far as the economic sanctions against the apartheid government were concerned.<sup>40</sup> These scholars offer an interpretation of the reactions of South African churches to the activities of the WCC and PCR against apartheid which is crucial to understanding the impact of PCR decisions.

The instructive contributions by these theologians, church historians and other scholars offer an appreciation of the nature of the relationship between the South African churches and the WCC. Their specific angles contribute to a more comprehensive picture of religious commitment to social change and political protest in the years of high apartheid. Their methodological differences also add intellectual dimensions that enhance the complexity of research in this field. However, the concern the WCC and PCR had in South Africa went beyond their alliance or contest with local churches. The PCR played in a much bigger arena which is perhaps why it was often criticized for being more political than religious.

The studies that give serious consideration to the struggle that the WCC and PCR waged against apartheid include a doctoral thesis, a journal article, a book and chapters in various publications. At a time when the notion of a global civil society has gained much currency, a number of Western scholars have examined the WCC in this light. Some of them view the actions of the PCR in South Africa as the work a non-governmental organization, a political interest group, or as a transnational segment of civil society maintaining democracy within national states. They also see it as advocating human rights and as combating racism.

Darril Hudson looked at the diverse political, social and economic activities of the WCC. He was among the pioneers of the 1970s who explored the theoretical framework of the WCC's activities as those of an international non-governmental organization and a political interest group, 'with a divine mission to create Christian unity'.<sup>41</sup> One of his case studies focused on the WCC's struggle against racism worldwide, including the form of apartheid practised by South Africa. He traced the historical background of the WCC's concern about racism and

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39. D. Thomas, *Christ Divided: Liberalism, Ecumenism and Race in South Africa* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2002), pp. 212–213.

40. T.A. Borer, *Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa, 1980–1994* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), p. 152; T. Borer, 'Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa', *Journal of Church and State*, 35 (1993), pp. 299–334.

41. D. Hudson, *The World Council of Churches in International Affairs* (London: The Faith Press, 1977), pp. 17–20.

examined how this problem was tackled in its various structures such as the General Assembly, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs and the Central Committee. He argued that the founding of the PCR in 1969 was the most radical move the WCC took to combat racism. He was at the same time critical of the militancy the PCR adopted against the governments in southern Africa. He perceived the PCR as unreasonably confrontational and detrimental to conciliation in the region.<sup>42</sup> His research covered only the first five years (of 25 years) of the PCR's campaign against racism in South Africa. Nevertheless, this study relies heavily on his pioneering work, which remains one of the most important studies on the PCR.

In his doctoral thesis, the American Christian scholar, Kevin Warr, tested his hypothesis that the effectiveness of civil society is noticeable in certain religious organizations, by focusing on the WCC. He considered the WCC's ecumenical Christian organization as part of the global civil society which contributed to South Africa's transition to democracy. He paid special attention to the activities of the PCR against apartheid. These included, in his words, 'the manipulation of the world capitalist economy'. This refers to the stance the PCR took to support economic sanctions against the South African government. He examined how the PCR raised consciousness in South Africa and internationally about the injustice in the apartheid system. He also argued that the 'PCR succeeded to strengthen the South African civil society by fostering mutual trust, imparting norms of ethical behaviour and encouraging social networks, because the WCC as an ecumenical movement, celebrated diversity, strove for unity and worked for justice'. His evidence included the PCR archival records, oral interviews with the 'South African religious elites directly involved with the activities of the PCR' and secondary sources dealing with theories on civil society and on South African liberation history.<sup>43</sup> His research influenced this study to view the WCC not just as a religious institution but also as an important part of global civil society.

In a journal article, Claude E. Welch Jr, a professor of political science at the State University of New York and a director of the Human Rights Centre, tested his hypothesis that the PCR was an agent of global civil society. In showing how the PCR mobilized morality on behalf of human rights, he examined its resources, organization, leadership, and the implementation of its strategies, in order to gain a clearer sense of how the WCC operated as a transnational advocacy network. Welch's finding was that:

despite the modest resources allocated to the PCR and its staff complement, the PCR exerted an influence much beyond its size against apartheid. This was made possible by the ability of the WCC as an ecumenical Christian fellowship and an international non-governmental organization, to implement programmes through its member councils and denominations. These bodies were willing to join in the fight for equal human rights for

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42. *Ibid.*, pp. 126–127.

43. K. Warr, 'The Normative Promise of Global Civil Society: The Role of the World Council of Churches in the Transition to and Maintenance of Democracy in South Africa' (PhD thesis, American University, 1998), pp. 2, 31–44, 384–405.



all South Africans. This resulted in a massive mobilization of international public opinion of human rights in global civil society.<sup>44</sup>

In similar vein to Kevin Warr, Welch looked at the primary evidence of the PCR activities such as the Special Fund grants and the research the PCR undertook to raise awareness and isolate the apartheid state. In addition, he conducted oral interviews with some of the WCC and PCR staff and used secondary literature that included notions of 'symbolic politics', 'information politics' and 'leverage politics', all of which helped to frame his article and support his hypothesis.<sup>45</sup> His research influenced this study to view the WCC as a transnational agency that wielded 'symbolic' power by virtue of its religious and moral identity which allowed it to 'leverage' international resources – human and material – to discredit an illegitimate apartheid government. The PCR's publicity campaign marshalled its 'information politics' to achieve worldwide knowledge of South African racism.

The first director of the PCR, sociologist Baldwin Sjollema, contributed two chapters in an internal publication which recorded the involvement of the WCC in South Africa. His first chapter dealt with the initial challenges the WCC faced in relation to racism. The enactment of apartheid in the late 1940s to early 1950s; the Sharpeville massacre of 1960; the refusal to issue a passport to the South African WCC president, Bishop Alpheus Zulu to attend the church and society consultation in 1966; the alleged foul play (as yet unproved) in the death of Chief Albert Luthuli in 1967; and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr, in 1968, all had a significant impact on the WCC. Sjollema's second chapter detailed what he described as the 'eloquent action' the WCC and PCR undertook to fight racism in South Africa (and elsewhere). 'Eloquent action' included the financial support given to organizations that were combating racism; breaking contracts with banks that were lending to the apartheid government; discouraging white migration to southern Africa; and embarking on a process of liberating both the oppressed and the oppressor in South Africa. For the most part, Sjollema relied on his memory to discuss what the PCR did to fight apartheid. He also used the minutes of both the Central and Executive Committees of the WCC which are readily available at the WCC's Geneva library, as well as secondary literature on the period after he had left the PCR.<sup>46</sup> He thus did not use PCR primary documentation and ran the risk of allowing subjectivity to creep into his study. It is therefore not surprising that his modesty tends to mask the true and radical impact of the PCR's fight against apartheid and his remarkable role.

Andries Gous and Zolile Mbali are among the South African writers who have paid scholarly attention to the WCC and PCR, are Andries Gous and Zolile Mbali.

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44. C.E. Welch, Jr, 'Mobilizing Morality: The World Council of Churches and its Program to Combat Racism, 1969–1994', in *Human Rights Quarterly*, 23, 4, (November 2001), pp.908–909.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 863–910.

46. B. Sjollema, in Webb, ed., *A Long Struggle*, chapters 1 and 2.

Although the work of these two authors is mentioned here in the same paragraph, they by no means shared the same analysis of the WCC and the PCR. Gous's study in Afrikaans concentrated on the ecumenical relationship between the Dutch Reformed Church and the WCC from 1948 until 1994.<sup>47</sup> He addressed the breakdown in relations in 1961 and the mending of this contact from the 1990s onwards. He argued that the WCC's militant approach via the PCR succeeded in putting political pressure on the apartheid government, but failed to change the attitude of the DRC. His finding was that both the WCC and the DRC 'sanctioned violence theologically'. While the WCC sanctioned 'terrorist violence of the freedom fighters', the DRC sanctioned the 'structural violence of apartheid'.<sup>48</sup> Mbali, an Anglican priest, was inspired by the PCR actions against racism which in his view challenged the South African churches to act against the apartheid system. His book focuses on the aims of the PCR; its actions during its first decade from 1970 until 1980; and the reactions of the churches nationally and internationally to the WCC and its PCR. His evidence was mainly gleaned from PCR publications and did not include the PCR archival records.<sup>49</sup>

The emerging picture from this review of scholarship is that in the mainstream historiography of South Africa there has been a surprising lack of interest in the involvement of the WCC in the anti-apartheid struggle. A little more attention has come from non-historians and non-South Africans. Richard Elphick, a professor of history in the United States of America, has expressed concern about the 'failure to situate Christianity in the broad, political, social and economic context of South African history'.<sup>50</sup> This thesis attempts to recover the importance of religious agency, at least institutionally, in historical investigation by inserting a detailed documentary account on the nature of the WCC/PCR contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle into the broad political narrative of South African history. It draws on the insights gained from established theories about the WCC and PCR in the existing literature to give it greater analytical depth and move its conventional chronology towards an interpretation based on change over time in the life of the WCC from 1948 to 1994. This is intended to broaden the view of the WCC so that it is no longer seen as merely a conventional church institution, but as a political interest group, an integral part of global civil society, a transnational agency and a militant religious lobby.

There is very little reference to the primary records of the WCC and PCR in the literature reviewed. This is a serious gap that this thesis intends filling. The archival records of the WCC are located in Geneva. Two extensive research trips to Geneva were undertaken in 2006 and 2008 and represent the cornerstone of

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47. A.G.S. Gous, 'Die Ekumeniese Verhouding tussen die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk en die Wereldraad van Kerke vanaf 1948–1994' (PhD thesis, Pretoria University 1995).

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 391–392.

49. Z. Mbali, *The Churches and Racism: A Black South African Perspective* (London: SCM Press, 1987), pp.15–20.

50. R. Elphick and T.R.H. Davenport, eds, *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1997), p. 1.

this research. An archivist,<sup>51</sup> together with the chief librarian, part-time librarian and intern, as well as an officer responsible for scanning the PCR paper archival records into microfilms, helped to familiarize the researcher with the WCC holdings and the inner workings of the repository. The minutes of the WCC Central and Executive Committees as well as those of the PCR Commission yielded a comprehensive picture of what the WCC and the PCR were about. As for WCC and PCR records in South Africa, most of those in the National Archives (housed in the Cape Archives Depot) were classified by the apartheid state as 'objectionable literature'. They include publications by Zolile Mbali, *The Churches and Racism: A Black South African Perspective*<sup>52</sup> and by Sol Jacob and Oswald Mtshali, *Refugees and Exiles: Challenges to the Churches*.<sup>53</sup> The SACC collection, housed in the William Cullen Library at the University of Witwatersrand, also provided valuable information about the WCC and the PCR.

Another important documentary source for this study was the Aluka digital library of scholarly resources from and about Africa. One of its assets is the 'Collection of Struggles for Freedom in southern Africa'. This 'archive' can be accessed online at [www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za](http://www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za) and contains important resources related to the liberation movements in South Africa.

Although some of the WCC and PCR practitioners who were active in the campaign against apartheid live in South Africa, many others reside in different parts of the world. Conducting interviews was therefore difficult. Some interviews were conducted personally while others were electronic or by telephone. The interviews not only corroborated personal opinions and events connected with the anti-apartheid struggle, but also uncovered information that was not available in the documents on the decisions that the WCC and the PCR took at different times in their involvement in South Africa. There was always contestation among the members of the WCC about how apartheid was to be fought. Some of the direct questions posed to the interviewees about the people, events and decisions the WCC and the PCR took at different times, were simply sidestepped, or 'off the record'.

### **Some reflectivity**

In some traditions of doctoral research it is fashionable to disclose the personal motives that produced the research and to declare one's 'positionality' in relation to the topic. In the spirit of this trend it seems appropriate to admit that this study has been undertaken to fulfil an earnest desire to address the inadequacies of the limited education I received during and after the apartheid years. The academic environment at the time at Vista University (where I completed my undergraduate studies in the mid 1980s) and at the University of Cape Town,

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51. The archivist was on sick leave during the second trip.

52. National Archives of South Africa (hereafter NASA), Cape Archives Depot, IDP, volume 3/226, Ref. P88/2/70.

53. NASA, Cape Archives Depot, IDP, volume 3/211, Ref P87/813.

where I did my postgraduate studies in the early 1990s, left me with a yearning for personal growth as a scholar of history.

Moreover, the nature of my topic on the emotive subject of racism, took me to the battlefield where scholars carry on a lively debate and argue about their ideological orientations and disciplines. Contributions made by various scholars in knowledge production have either not been respected or recognized or have been endorsed as 'orthodox' or 'classic'. Taking on a contentious topic such as this present study has therefore required intellectual courage.

Several previous attempts to embark on doctoral studies proved unsuccessful for various unforeseen reasons.<sup>54</sup> Persistence proved important until the PCR emerged as a possible area of study once its substantial archival collection promised productive research. There was, however, a scepticism about the topic that lingered because I am not a religious person. Furthermore, I do not have a background in church history. The first place I looked for information on the PCR was in the secondary literature focusing on the anti-apartheid struggle.<sup>55</sup> What I obtained was skeletal, but at least it served as an encouragement to dig for more, eventually leading me to Geneva and the beginning of a long research road to unlocking the achievements of the WCC and PCR in their campaigns against racism.

## Chapter outline

The chapters are arranged chronologically according to the WCC general assemblies. The assemblies are the most authoritative policy-making forums which speak for the WCC.<sup>56</sup> They are opportunities for the entire international membership to meet, reflect, plan, strategize and chart the way forward. The delegates meet every six or seven years. The statements that the WCC issues on global problems (such as racism, development, HIV/AIDS and so on) are the outcome of serious study and discussions by its member churches during the conferences.<sup>57</sup> They reflect the considered opinion of the members. They are however never adopted immediately; instead they are approved for distribution to member churches.<sup>58</sup> In the interim between the assemblies the WCC Central and

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54. My attempt to investigate the economic policy making process during President Nelson Mandela's era ended when Professor Guy Mhone, who was supervising the study, died suddenly. Another attempt to explore a scholarly biography of Oliver Tambo did not receive favourable support from the potential supervisor, because this coincided with the publication of a popular biography of Oliver Tambo. It was my determination to grow which led me to the WCC and the PCR.

55. The first natural stop as a history student was reviewing the literature that historians and other social scientists had produced. It was thereafter that I also looked at what the theologians wrote about the PCR.

56. Bock, *In Search of a Responsible World Society*, p. 23; AJ. van der Bent, *Handbook of Member Churches of the World Council of Churches in South Africa* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), p. 2.

57. Bock, *In Search of a Responsible World Society*, p. 24.

58. *Ibid.*

Executive Committees, together with the WCC employees, carry out the necessary work.<sup>59</sup> Such executive action represents the continuation of the spirit of the preceding assembly and is meant to give substance to the declared pronouncements endorsed by a majority at their deliberations.

Chapter 2 traces the origins and evolution of this struggle against discrimination and racism in the period preceding the formation of the PCR. It covers the first three WCC general assemblies, from Amsterdam to New Delhi, which spanned more than nineteen years from 1948 to 1967. During its Amsterdam mandate, from 1948 until 1953, the WCC declared racial segregation a disgrace and unacceptable within the body of the Christian Church. At the time, the WCC was finding its feet and consolidating its relationship with its South African member churches. During the second mandate, that from Evanston in 1954 to 1960, the WCC pronounced racial segregation as contrary to the Gospel, and called for decisive action against and condemnation of apartheid. The Sharpeville killings forced the WCC to confront two major challenges: to consolidate its relationship with its associate member churches; and to address the racial injustice in the country. The WCC renewed its commitment to the cause against racial injustice at the New Delhi assembly. This mandate was in effect from 1961 to 1967.

Chapter 3 covers the fourth general assembly, held in Uppsala in 1968, and the process that led to the formation of the PCR in 1969. This period marked a departure from an approach of moral persuasion and negotiations, which were not yielding positive results, to one that was activist in nature. Chapter 4 tackles the five years of the Uppsala mandate, from 1970 until 1975. It concentrates on the activities of the PCR and assesses how effective the WCC was in challenging apartheid during these years. The style and substance differ from that of the period before the PCR.

Chapter 5 focuses on the fifth general assembly in Nairobi in 1975, and discusses the renewal of the PCR mandate to campaign against racism from 1975 until 1982. An evaluation is provided on how effective the WCC and the PCR were in challenging apartheid in these years. Chapter 6 deals with the sixth assembly held in Vancouver in 1983 and the PCR mandate to put southern Africa firmly back as its major focus in the campaign against racism from 1983 to 1990. It evaluates the effectiveness of the WCC and PCR in challenging apartheid during this eight-year period. Chapter 7 deals with the seventh General Assembly in Canberra in 1991 and the involvement of the PCR in South Africa until May 1994. Chapter 8 is the conclusion.

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59. *Ibid.*

## Chapter Two

### The origins and development of the WCC's struggle against apartheid: From Amsterdam to New Delhi

#### Introduction

The WCC was concerned about racism from the outset. As a Christian organization, it believed in peaceful methods to bring about social change in society. This was despite the violent nature of racism, particularly that of the apartheid system in South Africa. This chapter traces the origins and development of the WCC's passive struggle against apartheid in the 19 years from 1948 to 1967. It provides background and analysis on how the WCC addressed the problem of apartheid during this period and paved the way for the setting up of the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR), the primary focus of this study. The inauguration of the WCC coincided with the coming to power of the National Party (NP) government in South Africa and the emergence of the apartheid system. This overlap influenced the nature of the WCC's approach to the problem of apartheid during this period, and was the reason for the shift, after 20 years, to the establishment of the PCR.

The chapter is structured around the first three General Assemblies held in Amsterdam (1948–1953), Evanston (1954–1960), and New Delhi (1961–1967) in which the WCC's policy towards apartheid was formulated and developed. It covers the various forums which focused their efforts on examining apartheid, namely the General Assemblies; the annual and bi-annual Central and Executive Committee meetings; consultations with church leaders; and a range of other participants with expertise on race relations. The statements and communiqués against racism which emerged from these forums organized by the WCC were rhetorically impressive. However, this rhetoric did not translate into specific action against apartheid and efforts to transform the South African society remained insignificant.

Apartheid itself was not a monolithic entity. <sup>1</sup> The evolution of the WCC's policy against the system was itself influenced by variations in the conceptualization of apartheid. There were forms of racial segregation, for example that could be described as 'positive' and 'negative' apartheid.<sup>2</sup> The former envisaged equal, yet totally separate development of racially diverse

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1. This point is made in their introduction, by P. Bonner, P. Delius and D. Posel, eds, *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935–1962* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993), pp. 1–35.
  2. Both were forms of racial segregation. The NP government exploited aspects of 'positive' apartheid for political gain. John Lazar refers to these variants as 'vertical and horizontal apartheid'. See J. Lazar, 'Verwoerd versus the Visionaries: The South African Bureau of Racial Affairs (SABRA) and Apartheid, 1948–1961', in Bonner *et al.*, *Apartheid's Genesis*, pp. 364–365.

communities which the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) supported, but which never materialized.<sup>3</sup> The latter was the inhumane underdevelopment and exploitation of black population groups that the NP government implemented in the pursuit of preserving the privileges and power of white South Africans. The WCC interacted with its South African associate churches and members and thus were able to keep abreast of developments and listen to their views on apartheid.

The apartheid regime's first term in office in the last years of the 1940s and early 1950s saw the rolling out of racist laws to restructure South African society. In his analysis of the phenomenon of racism, Paul Maylam distinguished the racism of this period as the 'formalization and institutionalization of racial differentiation and discrimination driven by the state and enforced by law'.<sup>4</sup> This racism drew both passive and active reaction from various quarters across the world. The politics of the Cold War also influenced how various countries responded to the South African situation and thereby prolonged the survival of apartheid. From the mid 1950s until 1960, the NP government implemented the measures it had enacted to consolidate 'negative' apartheid in all spheres of South African society. Those who were amenable to so-called 'positive' apartheid still harboured the hope of improvement for the 'non-whites' in the country. Some remained passive whilst others actively opposed the apartheid system. This chapter suggests that the WCC was passive towards the apartheid government until mid March 1960.

It took the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960 to expose the violence entrenched in the apartheid system; the world, including the WCC, was forced to look squarely at the political crisis in South Africa. Nevertheless, despite a decidedly marred reputation following the Sharpeville massacre, the NP government forged ahead with more repressive measures and silenced opposition in its pursuit to advance its 'negative' apartheid policy. However, reaction grew stronger. The world began to see more clearly the dimensions of the exploitative apartheid system.<sup>5</sup> The decade of the 1960s was itself characterized by socio-political and economic conflicts which intensified in many parts of the world.<sup>6</sup> These tensions also influenced the WCC, for it changed from silent to open criticism of apartheid, from 1961 onwards. This chapter contends that the WCC nonetheless retained its belief in passive methods to bring about social change in society.

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3. J. Kinghorn, 'The Theology of Separate Equality: A Critical Outline of the DRC's Position on Apartheid', in M. Prozesky, ed., *Christianity amidst Apartheid* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 65–67.
  4. P. Maylam, *South Africa's Racial Past: The History and Historiography of Racism, Segregation and Apartheid* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 7–9.
  5. W. Beinart and S. Dubow, eds, *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 13.
  6. M. Nash, 'Beyers Naudé and the Christian Institute', in Beyers Naudé Centre Series on Public Theology, *The Legacy of Beyers Naude* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2005), p. 35.

There is a wealth of information on the anti-apartheid struggle as a whole. For its part, this study primarily concentrates on the role the WCC played in its struggle, which has not received adequate scholarly attention. The study employs a narrative approach and engages with the broader existing literature on the global anti-apartheid struggle to arrive at a critical analysis and interpretation of the WCC's approach to apartheid during this time.

The founding of the WCC in 1948 did not mark the beginning of the ecumenical Christian concern regarding racism; this concern emerged far earlier. The International Missionary Council (IMC) and the Oxford World Conference on Life and Work made the following declarations in 1928 and 1937 respectively:

Any discrimination against human beings on the grounds of race or colour, any selfish exploitation and any oppression of man by man, is a denial of the teaching of Jesus.<sup>7</sup>

Any assumption by any race or nation of supreme blood or destiny must be emphatically denied by Christians as without foundation in fact, and wholly alien to the heart of the Gospel.<sup>8</sup>

The IMC and the World Conference on Life and Work were the earlier ecumenical church bodies. They and others finally merged and formed the WCC in 1948. The idea behind establishing the WCC originated ten years earlier. The outbreak of the Second World War, however, put this on hold.<sup>9</sup>

During the war, Christians viewed the persecution of Jews by the Nazis as a religious matter. They were concerned about racism broadly. As a result churches in several nations conducted studies on racial justice and human rights. They also addressed other problems in an effort to contribute towards reconstructing the global society after the war. More importantly, the churches played an active role in the emergence of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1946. The Commission on the Churches in International Affairs (CCIA), in particular, assisted the United Nations (UN) to produce the best possible bill of human rights. The CCIA further educated the churches to support the UN bill.<sup>10</sup> These efforts characterized the involvement of the Christian ecumenical movement towards a more articulated position on human rights and the global elimination of racism after the war.

Accordingly, the victims of racism and human rights violations worldwide demanded justice, equality and freedom. Black South Africans participated in the

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7. This is cited by B. Sjollema, 'The Initial Challenge', in P. Webb, ed., *A Long Struggle: The Involvement of the WCC in South Africa* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), p. 1.

8. P. Bock, *In Search of a Responsible World Society: The Teachings of the WCC* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), p. 159.

9. D.G. Austin, *World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism*, Conflict Studies, no. 105 (London: Institute for the Study of Conflict, 1979), p. 3; D. Thomas, *Christ Divided: Liberalism, Ecumenism and Race in South Africa* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2002), p. 18.

10. Bock, *Responsible World Society*, p. 162; D. Hudson, *The WCC in International Affairs* (London: Faith Press, 1977), p. 62.



war, which liberated Europe from Nazi Germany and returned home with heightened expectations of securing their own freedom from white rule.<sup>11</sup> The African National Congress (ANC), which represented the aspirations of the large majority of black South Africans, embraced the declaration of the Atlantic Charter of 1941 to its own situation. The ANC formulated political demands on the abolition of discrimination based on race and also demanded that all adults, regardless of race, be given the right to vote and be elected to parliament and other representative institutions.<sup>12</sup>

This tone and content of political resistance is evident in the activities of political activists of the time. Raymond Mhlaba's introduction to the anti-apartheid struggle provides a window on this period and his life experience sheds light on the kind of resistance South Africans put up against the scourge of racism from the 1940s onwards. Mhlaba was a migrant worker from the rural village of Fort Beaufort. In 1942, he found employment in Port Elizabeth (PE) in order to support his parents and siblings. He stayed in Sidwell, a mixed area where Coloured, Indian, white and African people lived together as residents. He worked with Coloured women at the Nannucci Dry Cleaning and Launderers. These women recruited him to join the Non-European Laundry Workers Union in 1943. The following year he joined the PE local branch of the Communist Party in which all the racial groups openly discussed national and international politics as equals. This, Mhlaba professed, exposed him to true brotherhood and sisterhood which was preached but not practised by many Christians. He also became a member of the ANC and its Youth League and worked closely with the ANC Women's League. Mhlaba became part of the 'new blood' which radicalized a moribund ANC from the mid 1940s onwards.<sup>13</sup>

Mhlaba's urban life experience led him to intermingle with a wide range of South African citizens. He cooperated with Coloured women on a labour and gender front; he networked with communists on a non-racial political party front. He played an active role in the ANC which was the symbol and embodiment of Africans' will to present a united national front against all forms of oppression.<sup>14</sup> As a young person, he was a member of the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) and worked as a team with the ANC Women's League as well as churches in Port Elizabeth.<sup>15</sup> Mhlaba's experience was not uncommon.<sup>16</sup> His active life in the

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11. L.W.F. Grundlingh, *The Participation of South African Blacks in the Second World War* (PhD thesis, Rand Afrikaans University, 1986), p. 2.

12. G. Mbeki, *The Struggle for Liberation in South Africa: A Short History* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1992), p. 59; E.S. Reddy, 'The United Nations and the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa', in South African Democratic Education Trust (SADET), *The Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 43.

13. T. Mufamadi, *Raymond Mhlaba's Personal Memoirs: Reminiscing from Rwanda and Uganda* (Cape Town: HSRC and Robben Island Museum, 2001), Parts 1 and 2.

14. F. Meli, *South Africa Belongs to Us: The History of The ANC* (Harare: Harare Publishing House, 1987), p. 110.

15. Mufamadi, *Raymond Mhlaba's Personal Memoirs*, Parts 1 and 2.

16. Mhlaba's life history exemplified thousands of other Africans who suffered under discriminatory measures such as the Natives' Land Act, the Betterment and Rehabilitation

labour and liberation movements gives insight into the level of political activism and militancy which built up during the 1940s. His experience symbolized the cooperative efforts by Africans, Coloureds and Indians against racial and economic injustice in the country. This was the political atmosphere prevalent in South Africa by the time the next white general election was held in May 1948. The WCC was launched in August of the same year.

At its meeting a year earlier, the IMC had drawn attention to the extent of racial feeling in South Africa. It noted, on the one hand, the resurgence of pride of nation, race and culture among those long kept in subjugation. On the other, it witnessed the desire of some to maintain superiority for economic reasons, which they felt were under threat.<sup>17</sup> The IMC's observations were certainly justified; black South Africans were making increased demands for liberation from white rule. The NP, representing a white constituency, was contesting the general election on the platform of racial segregation to preserve white superiority. These were the circumstances in South Africa which preceded the inauguration of the WCC in 1948. It was at this juncture that the WCC was launched.

This backdrop illustrates the global movement towards greater equality. Explicit racial domination had lost its legitimacy by this time. Pertinently, the electoral victory of the NP in South Africa had become a burden on the conscience of the world church and presented a very real challenge to its integrity.<sup>18</sup> At its General Assemblies, the meetings of the Central and Executive Committees and its consultations, the WCC began to deliberate and make pronouncements on apartheid.

## **Amsterdam**

An international delegation of ecumenical Christians assembled in Amsterdam in August 1948, three months after the victory of the NP in the whites-only election in South Africa. Delegates were remorseful that patently, racism was still rife in various parts of the world. The following is a reported statement they made at this assembly:

Within our divided churches, there is much which we confess with penitence before the Lord of the Church, for it is in our estrangement from Him that all sin has its origin. It is because of this that the evils of the world have so deeply penetrated our churches, so that amongst us too there are worldly standards of success, class division, economic rivalry, a secular mind. Even where there are no differences of theology, language or

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Scheme etc., imposed by the white minority government. The material conditions in African families necessitated that the youth stopped their schooling and worked to help support their families. In contrast, their white counterparts carried on with their normal and prosperous lives. The racial injustice that successive white governments perpetrated cost black South Africans immeasurable human harm.

17. Bock, *Responsible World Society*, pp. 162–163.

18. P. Webb, ed., *A Long Struggle: The Involvement of the World Council of Churches in South Africa* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), p. x.

liturgy, there exist churches segregated by race and colour, a scandal within the Body of Christ. We are in danger of being salt that has lost its savour and is fit for nothing.<sup>19</sup>

This was how the Christians who officially set up the WCC expressed themselves at the first General Assembly. Many of them had witnessed first-hand the damage the Nazi doctrine of Aryan racial superiority had caused after the Second World War. The delegates singled out the racial segregation tolerated in South African (and American) churches for particular condemnation.<sup>20</sup>

Delegates from South Africa included G.B. Gerdener, F.H. Kirkby, T. Frederick, J. Dreyer, A. Kerr and J. Hunter, who represented the various denominations affiliated to the WCC. They were all white and represented churches segregated by race. In terms of South African law, they were also part of the white electorate and had participated in the exclusive general election that saw the NP victorious and ready to execute its racial segregation policy. However, despite their common race and eligibility to vote, they did not necessarily share the same views on race relations as the apartheid government. Nor was there agreement among them on the issue of race. As individual Christians present at this gathering, the deliberations jolted their consciences and spurred them on in the hope of addressing the disgrace of racial segregation in their country. More importantly, in protesting against discrimination, the assembly urged the churches in every country to work against segregation and above all, to observe such principles in their own membership and life.<sup>21</sup> Richard Ambrose Reeves was appointed to the Executive Committee of the newly formed WCC.<sup>22</sup> Although he had come from England to attend the assembly, he became the Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg the following year.<sup>23</sup>

The message from Amsterdam was clear: the WCC rejected racism. This signalled the beginning of a collision course between the WCC and the newly formed apartheid regime. There were no lines of communication established between the two, because both institutions were new. The responsibility of communicating the WCC's rejection of racism in South Africa fell to the ecumenical Christians. The general tendency was that resolutions taken by representatives at global gatherings of churches were not readily endorsed and implemented in their home environments.<sup>24</sup>

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19. Bock, *Responsible World Society*, p. 163.

20. S.J.E. Duff, *The Social Thought of the World Council of Churches* (London: Longmans, 1956), p. 241.

21. WCC Main Library, Reference Section, Geneva (hereafter WCCRS), Minutes and reports, 3rd meeting of Central Committee (hereafter CC) of WCC, Toronto, 9–15 July 1950, p. 29.

22. D.P. Gaines, *The WCC: A Study of its Background and History* (Peterborough: Richard R. Smith & Co., 1966), p. 357.

23. F.D. Phillips, 'Richard Ambrose Reeves: Bishop of Johannesburg, 1949–1961' (MA dissertation, UNISA, 1995), p. 2.

24. A. Frochtling *et al.*, eds, *Wolfram Kistner: Justice and Righteousness Like a Never-ending Stream: Essays, Reflections and Discussion Documents* (Johannesburg: SACC, 2008), p. 177.

The WCC, like the rest of the world, witnessed how the new NP government wasted no time in overhauling South African society along rigid racial lines in its zeal to deliver on its pre-election promises. It began with a flurry of bigoted legislation to secure social separation. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality Act of 1950 signalled the end of interracial marriages and forbade sexual relations between black and white South Africans. For the couples already married, the new law made their marriages invalid. The intention was to keep the blood of white South Africans 'pure'.<sup>25</sup>

The entry point for the WCC in South Africa was via its associate member churches. David Thomas explains the South African member churches as the Ecumenical and Dutch Reformed blocs. Both blocs were predominantly white English and Afrikaans-speaking churches, even though they also had black adherents. Churches from the Ecumenical bloc were members of the Christian Council of South Africa (CCSA) and they identified with liberal views aligned against the apartheid state. Churches from the Dutch Reformed bloc were descendants of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands and their members supported the NP.<sup>26</sup> They believed that they were chosen by God to preserve white civilization. They therefore embraced apartheid to maintain their identity and to guarantee their future.<sup>27</sup>

The Ecumenical bloc opposed the new racist laws and offered trusteeship as an alternative to resolve the race question in the country.<sup>28</sup> Trusteeship implied that white representatives would act as a voice for non-voting black South Africans. During this period, Reeves was in touch with the WCC general secretary, W.A. Visser't Hooft. At this time, Reeves's initial impression of South Africa was that it was not racism but the pattern of industrialization that was the burning problem.<sup>29</sup> The Dutch Reformed bloc saw the practical need for apartheid because it believed that whites and blacks were not equally 'civilized'. It therefore embraced the concept of apartheid.<sup>30</sup> What it had in mind was 'positive' apartheid, where each racial group would have what Johann Kinghorn refers to as 'separate freedoms'. This meant equal development for all racial groups to affirm human dignity.<sup>31</sup> Gerdener, who was present at Amsterdam, was among the brains behind the notion of 'positive' apartheid in Afrikaner NP ranks. He was the chairman of the South African Bureau of Race Affairs (SABRA) which served as

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25. Bonner *et al.*, *Apartheid's Genesis*, p. 29.

26. Thomas, *Christ Divided*, pp. xviii–xxii.

27. B.M. du Toit, 'The Far Right in Current South African Politics', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 29, 4 (December 1991), pp. 665–666; T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: California Press, 1975), pp. 238, 239, 248.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 176; Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, p. 65.

29. J.S. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1973), p. 84.

30. Thomas, *Christ Divided*, pp. xxi–xxiv.

31. Kinghorn, 'Theology of Separate Equality', p. 68.

a think-tank for the NP government.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, 'positive' apartheid was at odds with the NP government.

The WCC did not have direct contact with black churches and their representatives at this point. Nor did it relate to the ANC's immediate adoption of a militant programme of action devised by the ANCYL to fight the apartheid government. Some of the Youth League members, such as Raymond Mhlaba, even entertained the thought of taking up arms against the new apartheid government.<sup>33</sup> More pertinently, the Interdenominational African Ministers Federation (AMF) supported the ANC and its programmes. The AMF believed that Christianity compelled it to fight for the social and political rights of the oppressed and suffering masses.<sup>34</sup> It was perhaps too early for the WCC to be influenced by an activist view against apartheid, outside its own member church constituency. The following is the statement the WCC issued in 1949:

The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting at Chichester, is deeply disturbed by the increasing hindrances which many of its member churches encounter in giving witness to Jesus Christ. Revolutionary movements are on foot and their end no man can foresee. The Churches themselves must bear no small part of the blame for the resentments among the underprivileged masses of the world, since their own effort to realize the brotherhood of man has been so weak. But justice in human society is not to be won by totalitarian methods. The totalitarian doctrine is a false doctrine. It teaches that in order to gain a social or political end, anything is permitted. It maintains the complete self-sufficiency of man. It sets political power in the place of God. ... We call statesmen and all men in every nation to seek social justice to consider this truth: a peaceful and stable order can only be built upon foundations of righteousness, of right relations between man and God and between man and man. Only recognition that man has ends and loyalties beyond the State will ensure true justice to the human person. ... We warn the Churches in all lands against the danger of being exploited for worldly ends.<sup>35</sup>

The WCC's warning to politicians about the imminent failure of apartheid to bring justice in South Africa, was based on serious consideration. Some of those who drafted the statement had fresh first hand experience of the dangers of totalitarianism as was seen with the persecution of the Jews during the Second World War.<sup>36</sup> The WCC was in a way appealing to the white South African electorate to re-consider its commitment to apartheid. Furthermore, even though the statement ostensibly corroborated Raymond Mhlaba's experience of realizing brotherhood from the Communist Party rather than from the Christian Church, the WCC warned against communism.

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32. Lazar, 'Verwoerd versus the Visionaries', pp. 365, 367, 369, 370.

33. L. Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 198; Mufamadi, *Raymond Mhlaba's Personal Memoirs*, pp. 56–57.

34. P. Walshe, *Prophetic Christianity and the Liberation Movement in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1995), p. 73; Thomas, *Christ Divided*, p. 139.

35. Gaines, *The WCC: Background and History*, pp. 371–372.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 381–383.

The plea for a review of apartheid by the WCC fell on deaf ears. Furthermore, the apartheid government rolled on, imposing a series of restrictive laws aimed at entrenching the separation of racial groups. Among these were laws dealing with the suppression of communism; a system of population registration; setting up Bantu Authorities; providing an inferior Bantu Education system; the removal of the Coloured voters from the common voters' roll; and the separation of public transport amenities.<sup>37</sup> The government's obsession with enforcing racial segregation did not include the economic sphere, because black labour (which was cheap, and purposely kept low) was sorely needed in some sectors of the post-war economy, notably the mining industry. But the flow of Africans to urban areas was tightly controlled, for example through the Black Building Workers Act of 1951, the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1952 and the Native Labour Act in 1953. These measures prevented blacks from performing skilled work in the building industry in white urban areas. Furthermore, blacks were required to carry reference books and were not allowed to reside in urban areas unless they had been born and raised there for at least 15 years. Despite the tight control of the flow of Africans into urban areas, the government made sure that there was a supply of black labour for mining.<sup>38</sup> As these racist laws were unfolding, the WCC kept in touch with its South African member churches to remain fully apprised of the situation.

In 1950, Dr J.C. Hoekendijk, a WCC staff member, attended the Bloemfontein 'People's Conference', which the Federated Mission Council of the DRC had organized. Hoekendijk was there to explore the kind of assistance the ecumenical movement could give to the churches towards resolving the problem of apartheid.<sup>39</sup> The purpose of this meeting was to give Afrikaners countrywide an opportunity to examine their stand on apartheid. The invitation was also extended to the CCSA and the WCC, but excluded Africans who were (it argued) after all under discussion at the conference. The rationale was that the DRC intended to communicate its resolution on apartheid with 'suitable' Africans only when it was ready. The meeting dealt with all aspects affecting Africans in South Africa. Finally, the DRC delegates gave favourable consideration to the idea of separate and equal development of 'nations' in the country, expressing preparedness to undertake the unskilled and service work done by blacks in areas designated for exclusive white residence.<sup>40</sup> Gustav Gerdener played an active role in driving this conference.<sup>41</sup>

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37. A. Stadler, *The Political Economy of Modern South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987), p. 75.

38. S. Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2002), pp. 334–335; M. Coleman, *A Crime against Humanity: Analysing the Repression of the Apartheid State* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1997), pp. 147–148.

39. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 3rd meeting of CC of WCC, Toronto, 1950, p. 28.

40. Kinghorn, 'Theology of Separate Equality', pp. 63–69.

41. Thomas, *Christ Divided*, p. 173.

Hoekendijk reported back to the WCC authorities, expressing his reservations about what he had heard and observed in Bloemfontein. Although Africans had been excluded, he had taken the opportunity to consult with them and had recorded his impressions in his secret diary.<sup>42</sup> His account of the situation in South Africa caused great concern in the WCC.<sup>43</sup> Hoekendijk's own previous experience influenced his reading of the South African situation; he had hidden Jewish children from the Nazis during the war, and had been arrested and sent to a death camp in Germany.<sup>44</sup> With this background, it is little wonder that he had such misgivings about apartheid in South Africa.

The WCC had other views to consider before formulating its policy towards apartheid; its Central Committee meetings provided a platform to debate apartheid. Two Afrikaner intellectuals from the Dutch Reformed bloc, Professors Gerdener and Ben Marais had the opportunity at different times to elaborate and defend the feasibility of 'positive' apartheid. Gerdener believed that if the contribution of every racial group was to be guaranteed in the country, the way of separation and not integration, was the correct one.<sup>45</sup> Marais also considered 'total territorial segregation' as the only real solution in South Africa, although he criticized the biblical justification of apartheid.<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, the WCC authorities contemplated the DRC's viewpoint in their effort to formulate the Council's policy towards apartheid.

Reeves also participated in these meetings. He provided the WCC authorities with his own perspective on developments in South Africa. With the increasing amount of discriminatory legislation, he changed his initial perception that industrialization and urbanization were at the root of the problem, as opposed to racism. He strongly objected to the laws passed for the suppression of communism; the racial categorization of population registration; the separate representation of voters; the removal of the Coloured electorate from the common roll; and the inferior education offered to black children.<sup>47</sup> Notably, Reeves's activist views against apartheid were those of a minority section within the Ecumenical bloc. Although the CCSA was opposed to apartheid, its white and liberal dominated leadership did not support resistance to this discriminatory

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42. WCCRS, Programme to Combat Racism Collection (hereafter PCR Collection): Box 4223.0.01, J.C. Hoekendijk, 'A Confidential Copy of an Informal Travel Diary', no. 2, Amsterdam to Johannesburg, 4–6 April 1950, pp. 1–5.

43. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 3rd meeting of the CC of WCC, Toronto, 1950, p. 28.

44. D.W. Fowlkes, 'Developing a Church Planting Movement in India' (PhD thesis, University of Free State, 2004), p. 24, footnote 12; E. Meijers, 'White Brothers, Black Strangers: Dutch Churches and Apartheid in South Africa', *Exchange*, 38, 4 (2009), p. 368.

45. G.B.A. Gerdener, 'The DRC and the Racial Situation in South Africa', *Race Relations*, 17 (1950), pp. 1–2.

46. B. Marais, *Colour: Unsolved Problem of the West* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1952).

47. Phillips, 'Richard Ambrose Reeves', pp. 18, 77, 111, 112; Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, chapter 5; D.M. Paton, *Church and Race in South Africa: Papers from South Africa, 1952–1954 Illustrating the Churches' Search for the Will of God* (London: SCM Press, 1958), pp. 18–19.

system.<sup>48</sup> This issue is elaborated by Charles Villa Vicencio in his chapter 'Protest without Resistance', in *Trapped in Apartheid*.<sup>49</sup>

The Central Committee had the benefit of considering the options of 'positive' apartheid, trusteeship and a minority activist position to influence the WCC policy towards the apartheid state. These options came directly from its mainly white South African partners. There was a glaring absence of a black voice because the WCC did not have direct contact with black representatives from its South African member churches. Yet Chief Albert Luthuli was associated with the CCSA since 1938 and later became its vice president.<sup>50</sup> David Thomas noted that the CCSA was silent on Luthuli's association with the ANC. It is plausible that the WCC might have taken its cue from the CCSA in not acknowledging Luthuli's political role in the fight against apartheid. It is also likely that both the CCSA and the WCC wanted to separate the church and the political realms and therefore did not entertain Luthuli's political views in resolving the problems apartheid posed.

Luthuli was in the leadership of the ANC, which marshalled mass support and embarked on a Defiance Campaign against the apartheid government in 1952. The ANC initiated the campaign in cooperation with the South African Indian Congress (SAIC). The African Ministers' Federation, representing African churches threw its weight behind the ANC and called for national Day of Prayer.<sup>51</sup> The WCC was not alive to the African churches' unequivocal support for direct political action against apartheid. Further, political formations among the Coloured and white groups emerged during this period and collaborated with the ANC and the SAIC. The result was a Congress Alliance of Africans, Indians, Coloureds and whites, which embarked upon stronger resistance against the NP government.<sup>52</sup>

Z.K. Matthews was the provincial president of the ANC in the Cape.<sup>53</sup> Raised in a religious family, he was himself a Christian.<sup>54</sup> In 1924 he became the first African on record to graduate in South Africa.<sup>55</sup> It was his idea to call a Congress of the People (COP) which drew up the Freedom Charter that espoused a vision for the democratic South Africa of the future.<sup>56</sup> More importantly, the source and support

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48. Thomas, *Christ Divided*, pp. 136–139.

49. C. Villa Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988), pp. 98–103.

50. Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom for My People: The Autobiography of Z.K. Matthews, Southern Africa 1901 to 1968* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1981), p. 87; Thomas, *Christ Divided*, pp. 136–138.

51. Walshe, *Prophetic Christianity*, p. 18; Thomas, *Christ Divided*, p. 139; L. Kuper, *Passive Resistance in South Africa* (London: Camelot Press, 1956), pp. 131–132.

52. R. Fine with D. Davis, *Beyond Apartheid, Labour and Liberation in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1990), p. 131.

53. Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, p. 168.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

55. F.B. Matthews, *Remembrances*, Mayibuye History and Literature Series, no. 54 (Belville: Mayibuye Books, 1995), p. 13.

56. Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, pp. 173–176.



of this vision originated from two devout African Christian leaders, Matthews and Luthuli. But their vision did not influence the formulation of the WCC's policy on apartheid, largely because it did not trickle into the WCC Central Committee, which lacked black representation at the time.

There were also other views from non-South Africans that the WCC took into consideration when formulating its policy on apartheid. One such opinion came from Sir Kenneth Grubb who had historical links with South Africa. Grubb was involved in setting up the CCSA.<sup>57</sup> He presided over the WCC's Commission on Churches in International Affairs. He also had international business interests and devoted half his time to business and the other half to his church activities.<sup>58</sup> He therefore had a great deal of influence and power within the WCC, probably also within the CCSA and the global business sector.

Kenneth Grubb cautioned the WCC against criticizing apartheid and instead advised making positive suggestions on the resolution of the problem in South Africa. He suggested that the WCC seek the advice of local churches and councils on apartheid and the distribution of ecumenical pronouncements on race relations. He also recommended that the WCC send a delegation to the churches in South Africa.<sup>59</sup> This implied that the WCC would limit its consideration of how to handle apartheid only to those options advanced by the predominantly white leaders of South African associate churches and Christian councils. The three distinct options from South Africa were 'positive' apartheid; trusteeship; and an activist approach by individuals who were in the minority within the Ecumenical and the Dutch Reformed blocs. The fourth option of a non-racial democratic South Africa that Luthuli's political organization advocated was simply not under consideration by the WCC. It was possibly too political for the liking of the WCC.

Ben Marais had told the WCC Central Committee members that it was the communists who supported the political movement against apartheid in South Africa. The African American, Benjamin Mays who was one of the Central Committee members, challenged Marais' categorical assumption that only communists opposed apartheid. He tried to speak on behalf of black South Africans and encouraged the Christian forces to oppose apartheid.<sup>60</sup> This was an indication that there were no uniform thoughts within the Central Committee on the direction to follow towards formulating the WCC policy on apartheid. The views of the powerful and influential, such as Grubb, prevailed.

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57. Thomas, *Christ Divided*, pp. 65–66, 92.

58. WCC Archive, Geneva, Individual Files: Sir Kenneth Grubb (profile from the Muhlenberg College Archives, Allentown, undated).

59. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 3rd meeting of Central Committee of WCC, Toronto, 1950, pp. 27–28.

60. *Ibid.*

The WCC Central Committee ultimately proposed to send a multiracial delegation to consult with its South African member churches.<sup>61</sup> This meant that the WCC intended to resolve the problem of apartheid within the ecumenical church environment and not directly with the South African government and broader civil society. The WCC believed in the power of mobilizing the limited ecumenical Christian Church constituency to resolve the apartheid issue. The non-Christian sectors were inevitably excluded from this approach. This was understandable given that both the WCC and the NP government were new formations. It is plausible that the gravity of the situation in apartheid South Africa had not been adequately grasped, particularly by those in the WCC who were not exposed directly to the apartheid system. It is also possible that the WCC and the NP government concluded from different vantage points that moral suasion and Christian denominational orientation had very little purchase on the question of political power.

The South African member churches were divided on receiving the anticipated multiracial delegation from the WCC. The Ecumenical bloc responded favourably but thought it imprudent to have the delegation come at that time. The Dutch Reformed bloc preferred a whites-only delegation.<sup>62</sup> Instead of contradicting its South African member churches, the WCC opted to send its general secretary, Visser't Hooft, to the country.<sup>63</sup> In other words, a white Dutch emissary engaged with mainly white Afrikaans and English-speaking South Africans on the discrimination against the black majority. This approach was doomed to fail because it had limited meaningful engagement with the real stake-holders.

In his report to the WCC executive, Visser't Hooft ranked his visit to South Africa as the most difficult assignment he had ever undertaken. He regretted the lack of contact between black and white South Africans and described the South African problem as beyond political discrimination. For him, the problem included the real difference between the 'civilized' white minority and the 'uncivilized' black majority. He advocated an ecclesiastical rather than political intervention by the WCC in South Africa. He proposed that the WCC begin by resolving racism within the churches before speaking out and engaging with the political realm.<sup>64</sup>

Visser't Hooft also cited Luthuli as an outstanding African Christian but this did not translate into a favourable consideration of Luthuli's views for a non-racial democratic South Africa as a viable option to the apartheid system. Instead, he was critical of Luthuli's ANC 'for not doing enough constructive work in the field of systematic political education'. He doubted the ANC's effectiveness in making

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61. WCCRS, W.A. Visser't Hooft, Report to CC of WCC on a visit to South African churches in April and May 1952, p. 1, in Minutes and reports, 5th meeting of Central Committee of WCC, Lucknow, India, 31 December 1952 to 8 January 1953.

62. 'Information on Visser't Hooft's, Visit to South Africa', in *Ecumenical Review*, 5 (1953), pp. 174–182.

63. WCCRS, Minutes, meeting of Executive Committee of the WCC, 1950, p. 10.

64. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 5th Meeting of CC of WCC, Lucknow, 1952/1953, p. 18; 'Information on Visser't Hooft's, Visit to South Africa', pp. 174–182.

the African masses politically conscious. Nonetheless, he thought that in the longer term Africans would arrive at greater political maturity and predicted that they would outgrow passive resistance as expressed in the Defiance Campaign of 1952. He remained anxious about the future of South Africa.<sup>65</sup>

Visser't Hooft's stance on South Africa was that the WCC should confine itself to the business of the Church and not be involved in politics. This differed markedly from Luthuli's view; he believed that orthodox Christian teachings could be called 'politics', particularly in South Africa. Luthuli wondered how it was possible to apply Christian principles to the lives led by South Africans without talking 'politics'.<sup>66</sup> This message was lost on Visser't Hooft, who as the general secretary had the power to influence the direction the WCC took when deciding on its anti-apartheid policy. His primary aim was to build unity among the churches when confronting the political problems Luthuli outlined. Significantly, his position mirrored that of the Dutch churches who were attempting to draw the Afrikaner churches into the international church community to prevent their isolation.<sup>67</sup>

In 1953, the DRC convened an ecumenical conference to debate the theological foundation of apartheid. Norman Goodall, a leading figure in both the WCC and the IMC<sup>68</sup> attended on behalf of the WCC. For the WCC the priority at the time was to strengthen its new relationship with its South African member churches. The visits by its consultants were therefore necessary to develop intelligent cooperation to foster an understanding of its aims and policies to all its member churches. It was important for the WCC to develop its channels of communication with individual member churches so that the WCC could speak and act with confidence on their behalf.<sup>69</sup>

The WCC's priority to build and consolidate its relationship with all its global member churches at this time was understandable. However, the problem was that with South Africa experiencing institutionalized racism, the WCC was connecting with a narrow section of the population at the cost of a more meaningful relationship that embraced the majority who were suffering immeasurable injustice. It is for this reason that it seems incomprehensible today that after five years of its life, the WCC authorities believed that their attempts to deal with the problem of apartheid by sending an individual Dutch emissary to South Africa would produce the desired results. Such steps were a far cry from the sentiments expressed by the delegates at Amsterdam, who categorically rejected racism and were insistent the WCC's actions thus far would not bring about the desired changes. To some observers, notably the apartheid state and

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65. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 5th meeting of CC of WCC, Lucknow, 1952/53, p. 18.

66. A. Luthuli, *Let My People Go: An Autobiography of Chief Albert Luthuli* (London: Collins, 1962), pp. 124–125.

67. Meijers, 'White Brothers, Black Strangers', p. 368.

68. N. Goodall, 'WCC and IMC Relationship: Some Underlying Issues', *Ecumenical Review*, 9, 4 (2010), p. 395.

69. Gaines, *The WCC: Background and History*, p. 369.

its sympathizers, the delegates' proactive attitude constituted severe interference in South Africa's domestic affairs.

Towards the end of the term of the Amsterdam mandate, the Executive Committees of the WCC and its CCIA met to review the South African case. They had had six years of pondering on this subject. There were two clashing opinions. One view wanted the WCC to speak out against the sin of apartheid as the conscience of Christendom. The proponents of this radical view were mainly Christians from India, America and Czechoslovakia, many of whom were not white. They urged the WCC to guide and warn member churches about the danger posed by apartheid in South Africa. It was not surprising that the Indian committee members were in this camp for their own country had achieved its independence from Britain in 1947. Notably, it was India that drew the world's attention to South Africa's racial policies at the UN.<sup>70</sup>

The other camp preferred the view that the WCC should work with the South African churches in addressing the problem of racism. This meant that the WCC would consult with predominantly white English and Afrikaans representatives on the apartheid question. The proponents of this view put their trust in a few associate churches to transform South African society and government. Those who advocated this moderate view were mainly Europeans, especially the Dutch, French, Germans and those from the USA. In the end, the WCC had not protested against the apartheid system because the moderate voice of its mainly European and American constituency had won the day.<sup>71</sup>

The resolution that the WCC Central Committee finally adopted, condemned racism in general. It did not, however, single out institutionalized racism as practised in South Africa. The Committee nonetheless adhered strongly to the convictions expressed by the delegates in Amsterdam. It affirmed that all political, social and economic discrimination based on race, wherever they existed, were contrary to the Will of God as expressed in the Christian Gospel. More importantly, the WCC Central Committee called upon the member churches to engage in the Christian ministry of reconciliation. It asked its member churches to do everything in their power to end such discrimination. The Committee recognized that existing racial discrimination continued to increase bitterness and tension in various parts of the world.<sup>72</sup>

What was even more revealing was the report the general secretary wrote when the WCC executive made an overall assessment of how the Council had fared in dealing with the global problems it faced. This report covered apartheid in South Africa; the war in Korea; the relationship of the Eastern churches with Moscow; and the struggles in East Germany. Visser't Hooft recorded that:

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70. V. Gupta, 'Solidarity: India and South Africa', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 125.

71. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 5th meeting of CC of WCC, Lucknow, 1952/53.

72. *Ibid.*

As far as the statement on South Africa was concerned, the reaction on the whole seemed to have been good, particularly that the World Council had not spoken until after having ascertained the facts. At the same time, it was necessary to point out that politically, the situation had deteriorated.<sup>73</sup>

Visser't Hooft's report clearly encapsulated the equivocation between the WCC's position on and actions against apartheid. It echoed Grubb's earlier opinion. The WCC resolved not to overtly reject the apartheid system. The information it gathered from its South African member churches and its own observations did not warrant any dramatic action against apartheid. Even though the WCC conceded to the bad political conditions in South Africa, that was not its realm and it refrained from a forthright attack on the political dispensation. Its intervention was confined to the Church. Thus, the apartheid government had absolutely nothing to fear from the WCC. Luthuli had this to say about the churches who submitted to the secular state:

The Churches have simply submitted to the secular state for too long. Some have supported apartheid. While it is not too late for white Christians to look at the Gospel and redefine their allegiance, I warn those who care for Christianity, who care to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, that in South Africa the opportunity is three hundred years old. It will not last forever. Time is running out.<sup>74</sup>

Matthews had spent his 1952–1953 academic year as a visiting professor at the Union Theological Seminary for outstanding Christian leaders, in New York. He interacted extensively with various groups including churches, which were interested to know more about apartheid and the Defiance Campaign. This created problems for him back home because the apartheid government refused to extend his passport; he was unable to attend the Church conference in Switzerland, which was concerned with planning the WCC Assembly in Evanston in 1954.<sup>75</sup> He criticized the WCC for prevaricating on the serious racial injustice developing in South Africa. He warned that Africans would not be happy with the attitude of appeasement.<sup>76</sup> Regrettably, the views of both Luthuli and Matthews failed to draw the attention of the dominant group of WCC authorities. As already mentioned above, Luthuli's political views did not preoccupy the WCC's discussions on apartheid. As for Matthews, he was unable to travel to Switzerland to address the WCC leadership without a passport.

The WCC, under the dominant influence of the British, Europeans and Americans was not convinced that the 'uncivilized' majority of Africans could govern South Africa and do so independently of communist influence. The white electorate, including the South Africans in the member churches of the WCC,

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73. WCCRS, Minutes, meeting of Executive Committee of WCC, Lucknow, 29–31 December 1952 and 8 January 1953, p. 2.

74. Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, p. 119.

75. Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, pp. 158–167.

76. Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, p. 71.

voted for the NP and gave it its second election victory in 1953; the apartheid state was thus able to move ahead and consolidate its rigid apartheid policy.

The Cold War determined global relations. In his analysis of Cold War geopolitics, Thomas Borstelmann argued that for the US administration, the anti-communist apartheid state with its wealth of strategic minerals and long-standing ties to Great Britain, became increasingly vital. That was the reason why the Truman administration worked hard to neutralize the chorus of global criticism of South Africa.<sup>77</sup> The WCC was 'neutral' towards the apartheid government and therefore fell on the side of the West in the Cold War debate. This was plausibly a natural choice for the influential Grubb, whose international business interests were safer under an anti-communist and pro-capitalist apartheid regime.

## Evanston

The WCC held its second General Assembly at Evanston in the USA in 1954. It was another two weeks of intense reflection on world problems and in planning the way forward to address these issues. There were delegates from more South African member churches at Evanston than there had been at Amsterdam. The Bantu Presbyterian Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Cape Town had applied for membership and had been duly accepted,<sup>78</sup> despite the fact that they had racially segregated congregations. The WCC had not barred membership and that is why it could oppose segregation and yet admit racially segregated member churches from South Africa. This move was also seen as a demonstration that the WCC was determined to leave questions of faith and the ecclesiastical order to the decisions of member churches.<sup>79</sup>

The South Africans present included A. Reeves, B.J.M. Lehlohonolo,<sup>80</sup> A. Paton, M. Webb, B. Marais<sup>81</sup> and C.B. Brink, who was on the staff of the Finance Sub-Committee of the WCC Central Committee.<sup>82</sup> Joost de Blank, who later went to reside in South Africa, also attended.<sup>83</sup> No record could be found of the identity of the African representatives from the Bantu Presbyterian Church. It is not known whether they wished to attend and what part they took, if any, in the deliberations.

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77. T. Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle: The US and Southern Africa* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 81–83. See also M. Caplan, 'Coercion and Dissent: Case Studies in McCarthyism in the USA, 1953' (MA dissertation, UNISA, 2006), pp. 6–8.

78. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 7th meeting, CC of the WCC, Evanston, 27 and 31 August, 1–2 September 1954, pp. 48–49.

79. Duff, *Social Thought of the WCC*, p. 241, footnote 3.

80. He was brought to the Assembly by Reeves. See Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, p. 145.

81. World Council of Churches, *Who's Who? Second Assembly of the WCC, Northwestern University, Evanston, 15–31 August 1954* (Geneva: WCC, 1954), p. 107.

82. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 7th meeting, CC of the WCC, Evanston, 1954, p. 28.

83. M. de Blank, *Joost de Blank: A Personal Memoir* (Ipswich: Boydell Press, 1977), p. 81.

The problem of race relations was on the agenda and was discussed at some length in a session on inter-group relations. The WCC Executive Committee assigned this particular section the task of addressing the following key questions and coming up with solutions:

a) How can the message of Gospel be presented so as to effect the deep springs of race prejudice? (b) How should the Christian Church deal with it within its own membership? What import should the Church attach to questions affecting racial and ethnic homogeneity within the churches? How can the Church in the congregation, in the nation, and in the world so exemplify Christian conviction concerning race as to contribute towards the alleviation of injustice? (c) How may the Christian community utilize and co-operate with government and other secular agencies in the alleviation of injustices?<sup>84</sup>

Marais, Brink and Paton participated in this debate. The dominant opinion expressed was that the Church could no longer make excuses to justify exclusion on the grounds of cultural differences or mores. The delegates wanted the Church to educate its members on their responsibilities to support those who were challenging the conscience of society. They wanted the Church to withhold its approval of all discriminatory legislation affecting the educational, occupational, civic or marital opportunities based on race. They took resolutions that called for action against segregation; action in favour of civil rights; the establishment of a Secretariat on Racial and Ethnic Relations to be jointly sponsored by the WCC and the International Mission Council; and a condemnation of anti-Semitism.<sup>85</sup> More significantly, the entire assembly reinforced and adopted the resolutions. The WCC thus declared that:

Any form of segregation based on race, colour or ethnic origin is contrary to the Gospel and is incompatible with the Christian doctrine of man and with the nature of the Church of Christ.<sup>86</sup>

The message from Evanston was unequivocal. The WCC disapproved of racial segregation. This included the apartheid system practised in South Africa. By implication, those eligible to vote in South Africa from both the Ecumenical and Dutch Reformed blocs, were discouraged from giving their vote to the ruling National Party. Instead, they were expected to be actively involved in fighting the apartheid system in their country. Significantly, Luthuli was pleased that the WCC condemned apartheid at this general assembly.<sup>87</sup>

The DRC delegates did not agree to adopt the resolution against segregation. They would not commit to opposing apartheid back at home. However, they did not try to amend the assembly's resolutions against segregation and were keen

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84. Duff. *Social Thought of the WCC*, p. 242.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 243.

86. SCM, *The Evanston Report* (London: SCM Press, 1955), p. 158.

87. S. Couper, *Albert Luthuli: Bound by Faith* (Scottsville: KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010), p. 68.

to retain contact with the WCC.<sup>88</sup> They were staunch supporters of the NP which was already consolidating its power in government, but also wished to keep their links with the international church community. More importantly, the majority of white voters, including those present at Evanston, were apparently determined not to commit national suicide by integrating with 'uncivilized' black South Africans. They were therefore willing to fight for self-preservation by guaranteeing the NP its landslide victory at the general elections.

Darril Hudson was suspicious of the DRC's motives; it had rejected the resolution to denounce apartheid but was still keen to keep contact with the WCC. He was worried that if the DRC stayed in contact, this would strengthen the moderates within the WCC. He saw this as the kind of situation which had the potential to serve as an excuse to do nothing about the consequences of apartheid. He believed that as long as dialogue between the WCC and its DRC member churches continued, the chances were that the dominant moderate voice within the WCC executive would prevail.<sup>89</sup> His views were significant because they predicted the outcome of the WCC's passive involvement in South Africa at the time.

Although the WCC was concerned about the political situation in South Africa, it had faith that its local associate member churches would strive and succeed to find justice for all. At that time 'negative' apartheid was on the rise. The NP government was in its second year of its second general-election victory. It concentrated on implementing the measures it had enacted previously to accelerate the pace of racial segregation in many spheres of South African life. It tightened the pass laws to control the flow of African labour and to contain the growth of the urban proletariat. It introduced the Criminal Law Amendment Act to expand the powers of the police; and the Public Safety Act to discourage civil disobedience.<sup>90</sup> It carried out a remorseless resettlement scheme which saw black South Africans forcefully removed from white residential areas and relocated in small, impoverished and separate areas.<sup>91</sup>

H.F. Verwoerd, at the time the minister of education, had already warned of controlling the education of Africans through the Ministry of Native Affairs. The intention was to legalize the inferiority of black education. W.W.M. Eiselen, the mastermind behind the Bantu Education system, advanced it on the grounds of strong biblical foundation.<sup>92</sup> In a policy speech in the Union senate held on 7

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88. Bock, *Responsible World Society*, p. 168; Duff, *Social Thought of the WCC*, p. 244; Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, pp. 75–77.

89. Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, p. 76.

90. Stadler, *Political Economy*, p. 75.

91. L. Platzky. and C. Walker, *The Surplus People: Forced Removals in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985), pp. 99–100; D. van Tonder, 'First Win the War, then Clear the Slums: The Genesis of the Western Areas Removal Scheme, 1940–1949', in Bonner *et al.*, *Apartheid's Genesis*, p. 316.

92. C. Kros, *The Seeds of Separate Development: Origins of Bantu Education* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010), pp. 22–24, 116.



June 1954, he declared publicly that 'The Bantu must be guided to serve his community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour'.<sup>93</sup>

The church administered missionary education to Africans and therefore Verwoerd's statement had a direct bearing on it. Indeed, the issue was clearly of mutual interest to the WCC and its South African member churches. The WCC was guided on this matter by the predominantly white representatives of its local associate churches. Marais, from the DRC bloc, gave credit to the apartheid government and the white minority for their willingness to educate the African majority. He argued that even though the education budget for Africans was far less than that of whites, it was still better when compared with what other Africans in the continent were getting from their respective governments.<sup>94</sup> Alexander Kerr was the principal of Fort Hare College in the Eastern Cape, and an opponent of apartheid. Yet he held an appeasing view on the Bantu education system, believing that more African children would benefit from education in state schools than could be taught in mission schools. His primary concern was the potential loss of mission 'spiritual values' in state schools rather than in the 'unhurried development' of mission educated blacks, as Charles Villa Vicencio put it.<sup>95</sup> Similar views enjoyed the support of many others within the DRC and the Ecumenical bloc. The significance of this is that the opinions of these South African ecumenists, wittingly or otherwise, violated the Evanston resolution, which called on them to disapprove of all discriminatory legislation, including the Bantu Education Act.

Exceptional individuals such as Ambrose Reeves and Trevor Huddleston fiercely resisted the Bantu Education system for Africans.<sup>96</sup> Luthuli lamented Verwoerd's secularization of all black education. He was equally critical of the role of the churches except 'the lone stand made by Reeves'.<sup>97</sup> He commended Reeves for refusing to 'hire church buildings out to Verwoerd for serfdom, almost nothing'.<sup>98</sup> The ANC also boycotted the Bantu education system even though the act eliminated all alternatives for Africans.<sup>99</sup>

What were indeed within the scope of the WCC leadership for consideration, were the views of the Dutch Reformed and the Ecumenical blocs and the stand-alone view taken by Reeves. As has been shown, neither the Afrikaans nor English-speaking churches resisted the Bantu Education Act. When compared to

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93. Quoted in P. Kallaway, ed., *Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984), p. 173.

94. B. Marais, *The Two Faces of Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter, 1964), pp. 23–24.

95. Villa Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid*, p. 99.

96. Peart-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, chapter 7; Phillips, 'Richard Ambrose Reeves', pp. 134–140; Villa Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid*, pp. 97–103; T. Huddleston, *Naught for your Comfort* (London: Collins, 1956), pp. 171–172.

97. Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, p. 124.

98. *Ibid.*

99. Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, pp. 178–180.

the isolated yet powerful voice of Reeves, their combined clamour carried more weight in the WCC. The opinions of African Christian leaders such as Luthuli and Matthews on Bantu Education are nowhere to be found in the records of the WCC leadership's discussion on apartheid.<sup>100</sup>

A few months after the Evanston General Assembly declared its disapproval of apartheid, the WCC sent Goodall to a multiracial conference that the South African member churches had convened in Johannesburg. Participants from the DRC and Ecumenical blocs were satisfied that they were cooperating and communicating their dissatisfaction with 'negative' apartheid in the life of the Christian community. After all, they argued, they shared a common concern for the welfare of black South Africans. Accordingly, they requested the apartheid government to provide more money for the educational, social, economic and industrial development of black South Africans. This was still an expression of 'positive' apartheid. The participants did not examine and reflect on the Evanston report which had focused specifically on racial and ethnic tensions. By insisting on 'positive' apartheid, the participants were flouting the Evanston resolution which rejected excuses justifying racial exclusion by the churches.

In addition, the participants praised the WCC for the way it had thus far treated the South African case. This was evident in what Samuel McCrea Cavert conveyed to the WCC executive:

We have special reason also to be grateful for the unhurried visits to South Africa made by Dr Visser't Hooft and Dr Goodall in the last years. As a result of their visits and the spirit in which they were made, relations of mutual understanding and helpfulness have been established which afford a strong foundation on which to build.<sup>101</sup>

The WCC executive duly received this message in a positive light. Visser't Hooft recommended to the executive that rather than offering criticism from outside, the WCC should continue to show interest and concern.<sup>102</sup> In other words, he did not want the WCC executive to disrupt his cordial relationship with the white South African partners by loudly preaching that apartheid was wrong. They were rather to be encouraged to cooperate and reconcile with fellow black South Africans from their racially segregated locations.

The DRC of the Transvaal and the Cape organized the conference and it was their representatives who had refused to adopt the WCC's resolution against segregation. Thus the encouragement of 'positive' apartheid from the WCC authorities was baffling to say the least. More importantly, it was a far cry from what the delegates at Evanston had called for. There was certainly a major

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100. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 7th meeting, CC of the WCC, Evanston, 1954; WCCRS, Minutes, meetings of WCC Executive Committee (1956–1962) (Ref. 280.38).

101. WCCRS, Minutes, meetings of WCC Executive Committee (1956–1962) (Ref. 280.38): S. McCrea Carvet, 'Report to the Executive Committee of the WCC', p. 6; Johannesburg Conference, Appendix A.

102. WCCRS, Minutes, meetings of WCC Executive Committee (1956–1962) (Ref. 280.38), p. 5.

disjuncture between the clear mandate to reject segregation of all kinds by the delegates at the assembly and what the leadership did subsequently in terms of implementing this important WCC decision.

Other formations, such as the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW), also emerged during this period. They too threw their weight behind the Congress Alliance to wage a political struggle against the apartheid system.<sup>103</sup> This combined effort culminated in the launch of the Freedom Charter in 1955 at Kliptown. The Charter called for equal rights for all racial groups in South Africa.<sup>104</sup> Neither of the two foremost Christian leaders, Luthuli and Matthews, whose brainchild the Charter had been, was able to attend the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting on the eve of the launch of the Freedom Charter. Luthuli was immobilized by his ban,<sup>105</sup> which prohibited him from interacting with his constituency as the president-general of the ANC, while Matthews, who had been appointed acting principal of the University College of Fort Hare, was preoccupied with challenges his institution faced at the time.<sup>106</sup>

There was a qualitative difference between the multiracial conference convened by the South African member churches of the WCC in 1954 and the Congress of the People which launched the Freedom Charter the following year. The former was about white Christian ecumenists who were in a position of power and privilege. They sought improvement for their fellow blacks from the government, within the framework of the apartheid system. The Congress of the People was about the wishes of the majority of South Africans; all had been given an equal opportunity to make their voices heard on what they wanted or wished for in a non-racial, democratic South Africa.

The launch of the Freedom Charter at Kliptown received international blessing from dignitaries as far flung as the president of the Indian National Congress, U.N. Dhebar, and the prime minister of the People's Republic of China, Chou En-Lai.<sup>107</sup> But the event failed to win the attention of the WCC. It was also during this period that the African American, Rosa Parks, became an overnight international icon of resistance to racial segregation when she refused to relinquish her bus seat to a white passenger.<sup>108</sup>

Individuals such as Alan Paton and Ambrose Reeves nonetheless remained faithful to the message of Evanston. Reeves expected active involvement in

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103. Fine and Davis, *Beyond Apartheid*, pp. 131, 135.

104. See R. Suttner and J. Cronin, *Fifty Years of the Freedom Charter* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, Pretoria, 2007).

105. T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985), p. 71.

106. Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, pp. 177, 181.

107. J. Grobler, *A Decisive Clash: A Short History of Black Protest in South Africa, 1875–1976* (Pretoria: Acacia Books, 1988), p. 110.

108. Rosa Parks, see Wikipedia at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa\\_Parks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_Parks)

fighting the apartheid system by South Africans. Paton had already founded the Liberal Party which had black and white membership and resolved to fight against apartheid legislation. He had published the popular *Cry the Beloved Country* which warned of rising tensions in South Africa due to the forces of industrialization and urbanization. He was also worried about the moral damage black migration caused to the black population.<sup>109</sup> Reeves continued to be a thorn in the side of the apartheid regime. He repeatedly condemned the government for denying blacks their human rights through racist legislation such as the Native Laws Amendment Act.<sup>110</sup> Paton and Reeves were actively challenging the conscience of South African society, albeit from a liberal standpoint.

The thinking within the WCC Central Committee was that the South African case demanded careful understanding of the position the churches in the Dutch Reformed and Ecumenical blocs had taken on apartheid. Even though it was evident that the South African churches did not agree on apartheid, the WCC did not see this as a satisfactory reason to refuse them the status of membership. Pertinently, the WCC was uncertain whether to take 'action or protest as an act of social justice, or whether prudential consideration of the likelihood of protest hardening resistance was to be given weight'.<sup>111</sup>

The WCC authorities were still cagey. Firstly, they expected the divided South African member churches to guide them on the stand the WCC had to take on the problem of apartheid. Secondly, they were fence-sitting, not committing to act against apartheid. This approach echoed that of Grubb, from whom the prevailing thought had come, and from the CCIA report he had headed.<sup>112</sup> He had indeed encouraged complicity with apartheid.

The WCC general secretary wrote to its South African associates to find out what their views were on developments in the country. By that time, the apartheid state had banned many leading proponents of non-racial democracy in South Africa. It alleged that the Freedom Charter was an act of treason inspired by communism. Luthuli and Matthews were among those arrested.<sup>113</sup> The WCC records do not provide specific details on the responses the WCC received from South African member churches. There is only mention of 'interesting documentation and statements received in reply, clarifying the position of these churches'. The arrest of Matthews and Luthuli were discussed, but nothing tangible was said on the WCC's reaction to this news.<sup>114</sup>

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109. Alan Paton Centre and Struggle Archives, University of KZ-N, Pietermaritzburg, Liberal Party of South Africa Collection; and Wikipedia at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan\\_Paton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Paton)

110. Phillips, 'Richard Ambrose Reeves', p. 112.

111. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 8th meeting, CC of the WCC, Davos, Switzerland, 2–8 August 1955, p. 90.

112. *Ibid.*

113. Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, p. 145; Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, pp.175–176.

114. WCCRS, Minutes, meetings of Executive Committee of the WCC (1956–1962) (Ref. 280.38).

Two years had passed since the delegates at Evanston had proposed the setting up of a Secretariat on Race and Ethnic Relations. The WCC authorities had not made any provision to follow up this specific recommendation. It was only in 1957 that the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA loaned the services of Dr Oscar Lee to the WCC for a period of three months. Lee was to visit a small number of centres of racial tension, consult specialists and then draw up a plan of action for the WCC, especially in the fields of interchange of information and the sharing of experience. This plan was to be checked by a small conference of experts in 1957 and would then come before the Central Committee.<sup>115</sup> This was the kind of weapon the WCC had in mind to fight the intransigent apartheid system. Coincidentally, Pauline Webb, a British Christian woman had experienced apartheid first-hand while on an international voyage to India via South Africa in 1956. She and others had made news when they staged a protest on the quayside, refusing to go on a planned day-trip, ashore, in solidarity with Indian friends who were discriminated against.<sup>116</sup>

Lee visited some African and Asian countries during the three-month period. What he envisaged was for the WCC to have a consultant service which would be available to national church organizations and national Christian councils on a short-term basis. The consultant was to be a field worker who would spend most of the available time visiting a small number of areas. This could be from three to six times in a two-year period, in response to invitations received. The primary responsibility was to assist the churches concerned to make their own provision for dedicated work to address the issue of apartheid. The field worker was also to be available for consultation with the staff of the WCC and other ecumenical agencies. He or she was to be particularly interested in helping them to see how the concerns of racial and ethnic relations could be integrated into every relevant aspect of their programmes. The field worker had to have experience in theology and sociology, especially in the field of racial and ethnic relations and in the methods of developing group action.<sup>117</sup> In the South African case, this meant that a WCC consultant might visit perhaps six times in two years. The person concerned was to spend time helping the churches in various parts of the country with social tools to overcome apartheid. To black South Africans who had endured ongoing racial discrimination, this proposal did not inspire confidence. They saw it as an extremely toothless plan to halt advancing apartheid. At the same time, due regard is granted to the views of those of a different persuasion and with a different outlook on the potential of this particular WCC plan.

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115. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 9th meeting of CC of the WCC, Galyateto, Hungary, 28 July–5 August 1956, pp. 29–30.

116. P. Webb, *The Worldwide Webb: Memoirs of a Life in the Universal Church* (Norwich and London: Canterbury Press, 2006), p. 19.

117. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 10th meeting, CC of the WCC, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, 30 July–7 August 1957.

It was apparent to all who wished to see – including the WCC – that apartheid had not only been enforced but was on the ascendancy in South Africa. The white electorate gave the NP its third landslide victory in the 1958 (whites-only) general elections. Those who voted the NP into power (or at least were able to cast a vote) included worshippers from the Dutch Reformed and Ecumenical blocs, both still associated with the WCC. In 1958, H.F. Verwoerd succeeded J.G. Strijdom as prime minister and he duly hardened the NP's apartheid policy.

Verwoerd introduced a bill with a 'church clause' which legally sanctioned racial segregation in worship services in the churches. This affected the WCC directly because this apartheid bill entered the realm of the Church. The bill prevented the South African member churches from engaging in the Christian ministry of reconciliation, which the WCC encouraged under an apartheid system; it attracted various reactions from the ecumenical member churches.

The Bantu Presbyterian Church, which was a member of the CCSA, protested against this 'church clause'. It lamented the prohibition of Africans from attending church services in the white urban areas where they worked. The Reverend D.V. Sikutshwa argued that Africans would believe that there were separate Gods for whites and black people and appealed to the minister not to go ahead with this bill.<sup>118</sup> De Blank was far more outspoken. He attacked the apartheid government and the churches in South Africa, accusing all churches of failing to form a South African society compatible with the Gospel. He strongly criticized whites for believing that South Africa was a white paradise over which they were entitled to maintain control. He singled out the DRC for supporting apartheid and justifying the policy on biblical grounds; he predicted that apartheid would prove to be a suicidal policy.<sup>119</sup>

Brink defended the DRC's support of apartheid:

...The Church does have due regard to the responsibility of the state and its own responsibility towards 12 million non-Europeans to whom our democratic system of government must seem one great riddle, as the vast majority of them do not know their right hand from their left when it comes to parliamentary democracy. It is neither their fault nor their shame, but it is a fact to be taken into account by any person who wishes to start public agitation.<sup>120</sup>

Both Brink and De Blank were present at Evanston in 1954 where the WCC stated publicly that:

It is not enough that Christians should seek peace for themselves. They must seek justice for others. ... Millions of men and women are suffering segregation and discrimination on the ground of race. Is your church willing to declare, as this Assembly has declared, that this is contrary to the will of God and to act on that declaration? Do

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118. Paton, *Church and Race*, pp. 110–111.

119. Walshe, *Prophetic Christianity*, pp. 48-49

120. *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51.

you pray regularly for those who suffer unjust discrimination on grounds of race, religion or political conviction?<sup>121</sup>

It was not surprising that Brink was confident in loudly defending his failed 'positive' apartheid. The WCC authorities had fully entertained and even encouraged this illusion from its Dutch Reformed bloc – at the expense of black South Africans who suffered racial injustice. They were at the same time short-changing the rest of the WCC constituency that De Blank represented, which remained true to the Evanston declaration on racism.

Marais discussed his concerns on the 'church clause' with the prime minister, but Verwoerd was of the view that the English churches deliberately arranged multiracial services to spite the government. He assured Marais that the new law would be applied with circumspection.<sup>122</sup> Marais meanwhile informed the WCC general secretary of his attempt to convince the government to change the bill.<sup>123</sup>

It had been almost a decade since the WCC leadership had been receptive to the illusion of 'positive' apartheid of its DRC bloc member churches. People such as Gerdener, Marais and Brink had consistently defended this stance on platforms the WCC had provided at the meetings of the CCIA and the highest decision making bodies, the Central and Executive Committees. Some of them were key players in the NP policy-making process. Gerdener was active at SABRA which was involved with the Tomlinson Commission of Inquiry into the socio-economic conditions of the 'native' reserves. He and others in the DRC persisted in their belief that the NP government would consider favourably the economic development of the reserves. He was among those who wanted the withdrawal of African labour from white areas and the disbandment of the migrant labour system.<sup>124</sup> Although a critic of the biblical justification of apartheid, Marais was able not only to have an audience but also to persuade Verwoerd to reconsider barring blacks from attending church services in white areas. At that point it was clear that the illusion of 'positive' apartheid was failing dismally. Yet the WCC authorities failed to recognize this; they were blinded by their desire to retain the WCC's contact with the DRC bloc member churches.

Four years after Evanston, the WCC had still not been able to appoint the consultant who (in terms of the recommendation made at Evanston) would help its South African church associates to tackle apartheid's racial tensions. This was because the WCC was unwilling to make its own funds available to pay for the

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121. Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, pp. 76–77.

122. C. Ryan, *Beyers Naudé: Pilgrimage of Faith* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990), p. 46.

123. WCCRS, Minutes, meetings of WCC Executive Committee (1956–1962) (Ref. 280.38), p. 5. The records of the WCC Executive Committee do not include the correspondence from Marais. There is only reference to his letter to Visser't Hooft commenting on the new law, how he made representation to the prime minister and his belief that the proposed law would be difficult to apply.

124. Lazar, 'Verwoerd versus the Visionaries', p. 367.

consultant.<sup>125</sup> It is important to remember that Brink was a staff member in the Finance Sub-Committee of the WCC Central Committee. It was to his advantage not to support an effort designed to challenge a system of which he was a beneficiary.

The prevailing feeling in the Central Committee was that if the WCC desired to resolve problems and wanted to be an instrument of reconciliation, it should choose the 'quiet method of persuasion by letter or personal contact rather than the method of public criticism'.<sup>126</sup> The source of this approach, once again, was the CCIA which Grubb and Brink represented at the WCC Central Committee meetings. This explains why Brink did not take kindly to De Blank's sharp criticism. Brink was acquainted with church leaders of higher international stature such as Grubb, Visser't Hooft and many others within the CCIA and the WCC Central Committee, who opted not to condemn his 'positive' apartheid openly. Indeed, Brink had strong ties with the WCC, assiduously built over a longer period, while De Blank had only recently arrived in South Africa; how dare he presume to chastise the DRC's support of apartheid?

Whilst the WCC continued to cling to the illusion of 'positive' apartheid and empty protest from white South Africans, it remained indifferent to the views of blacks within the Ecumenical bloc. Verwoerd's announcement that he was to replace apartheid with the 'non-racial' policy of separate development was the fulfilment of this illusion.<sup>127</sup> Under the cloak of this innovation, Verwoerd hoped to accommodate the political freedom of Africans in 'homelands' or Bantustans. This policy was designed as a substitute for a non-racial democratic South Africa, to which the ANC aspired. Even though the Africanist group split from the ANC at this point and formed the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), resistance against apartheid continued. Luthuli began to call for economic sanctions against South Africa and the All Africa People's Conference in Accra<sup>128</sup> and the British Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) took up the cause.<sup>129</sup> Anti-apartheid activists from Britain and various parts of the African continent also began to respond positively to the plight of the oppressed majority. Yet Luthuli's call for economic sanctions against the South African government received little attention on the platforms that the WCC authorities provided to debate the issue of apartheid in the Central and Executive Committees.

What the WCC was able to offer by 1959 was a two-month study of the techniques that the US churches had used to deal with racial tension in their country. A private individual provided a generous grant and made it possible for the Reverend Daisuke Kitagawa to ascertain how insights from such a study

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125. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 11th meeting of CC of the WCC, Nyborg, Denmark, 21–29 August 1958, pp. 68–69.

126. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

127. Terreblanche, *History of Inequality*, p. 300.

128. H. Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 50.

129. S. Ndlovu, 'The ANC and the World', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 1*, p. 550.



could be applied in other areas, such as South Africa. Two months was hardly adequate for such an undertaking. The WCC still did not have sufficient funds for Kitagawa's appointment on a full-time basis.<sup>130</sup> Brink was present at the WCC Central Committee meeting which discussed and pronounced on this matter. What this meant in practical terms was that since requesting that a Secretariat on Racial and Ethnic Relations be set up to deal with apartheid, the WCC authorities had merely managed to come up with insights derived from a two-month study. This was the tool the WCC expected to employ to fight apartheid.

Other WCC associate members from the Ecumenical bloc, such as Luthuli, Reeves and De Blank, continued to put up a fierce fight against apartheid. The NP government banned Luthuli and confined him to Groutville for five years.<sup>131</sup> He was, however, able to meet with De Blank in Cape Town and Reeves in Johannesburg before his banning order began.<sup>132</sup> By this time, resentment against the pass laws and police harassment had become unbearable. A campaign to press for the abolition of passes led to the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, where white policemen shot and killed 69 people.<sup>133</sup> The massacre laid bare the violence of the apartheid state. Furthermore, it caused moral outrage and condemnation of the South African government throughout the world.

Reeves played a crucial role in documenting and exposing the massacre overseas.<sup>134</sup> Pertinently, he gave a first-hand account of this event at the WCC Central Committee meeting in Scotland.<sup>135</sup> De Blank issued a statement that the events at Sharpeville confronted the Church in South Africa with the gravest crisis in its history. He had noted that the prime minister had informed parliament the following day that the riots were a periodic phenomenon and had nothing to do with reference books. Arguing that this hardly seemed to be a satisfactory explanation, he appealed to the WCC to intervene by sending a fact-finding team to investigate the racial situation in the country.<sup>136</sup> The newspapers reported that De Blank had requested the WCC to expel the DRC's membership<sup>137</sup> but the WCC recorded that it had not received a formal request to this effect from De

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130. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 12th meeting of CC of the WCC, Rhodes, Greece, 19–27 August 1959, p. 29.

131. S. Baai, *O.R. Tambo: Teacher, Lawyer and Freedom Fighter* (Johannesburg: Mutloatse, 2006), p. 85.

132. Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, pp. 191, 192.

133. *Ibid.*, p.198; Phillips, 'Richard Ambrose Reeves', p. 178; De Blank, *Memoirs*, p. 126.

134. A. Reeves, *Shooting at Sharpeville: The Agony of South Africa* (London: Gollancz, 1960).

135. Pearl-Binns, *Ambrose Reeves*, chapter 7; Phillips, 'Richard Ambrose Reeves', pp. 178–192.

136. De Blank, *Memoirs*, pp. 126–127.

137. A.H. Luckhoff, 'Die Cottesloe-Kerkberaad' (PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1975), p. 19; PCR Collection: Box 4223.9.4, A. Blackball, 'Confidential Comment on the WCC Consultation with their Eight Member Churches in the Union of SA', p. 1. The talks took place at the Cottesloe student residence of the University of the Witwatersrand, 7–14 December 1960. Blackball, was the secretary/treasurer of the Christian Council of SA. His comment (dated 2 January 1960) was for the information of Bishop Leslie Newbigin, the general secretary of the International Missionary Council.

Blank. Instead it was the Transvaal branch of the DRC Church which asked for reassurance on this issue from the WCC.<sup>138</sup>

The WCC then arranged the Cottesloe consultation to reflect on the political crisis in South Africa. Here it met strictly with representatives of its eight member churches, namely the DRC of the Transvaal; the DRC of the Cape; the Hervormde Church; the Presbyterian Church of SA; the Bantu Presbyterian Church; the Congregational Union of SA; the Methodist Church of SA; and the Church of the Province of SA.<sup>139</sup>

Reeves could not be present because the government deported him when he was on his way back from the WCC meeting in Scotland.<sup>140</sup> Luthuli had no chance – even if the WCC wished him to be there – because he was already banned. De Blank was there to confront representatives of both the Dutch Reformed and Ecumenical blocs whom he believed were prepared to continue functioning as before under the apartheid system. Matthews, the mastermind behind the COP which formulated the Freedom Charter for a future non-racial democratic South Africa, was invited to attend.<sup>141</sup>

This time around, the WCC sent a multiracial delegation which was initially rejected by the DRC bloc. The delegation included an Indian, Bishop de Mel from Ceylon, who chaired some of the small groups where the work of the consultation was carried out. The consultation provided an opportunity for the racially divided South African delegates to share the same residence, eat together and engage on apartheid for about two weeks. Those from the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk chose to commute to and from the venue and isolated themselves during meals.<sup>142</sup> Racial segregation to these Afrikaner representatives was by now second nature. They were not about to integrate themselves with ‘non-whites’ because of the WCC.

Dr Franklin Clark Fry, the chairperson of the Central Committee, set the tone of conciliation in his opening address. He made it clear that the South African churches were not on trial, because the WCC representatives did not come to their country as a tribunal. He reassured the audience that they were all there as equal partners in an attempt to resolve the problems apartheid posed.<sup>143</sup> This immediately exonerated the various churches, many of whose members were regular NP voters who supported an evil and unjust system. Fry showed a

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138. WCCRS, Minutes, meetings of the WCC Executive Committee (1956–1962) (Ref. 280.38), p. 5.

139. *Ibid.*

140. [www.aluka.org](http://www.aluka.org) ‘WCC asks for Report on Bishop Reeves’s Deportation’.

141. Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, p. 201; A.H. Luckhoff, *Cottesloe* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1978), p. 73.

142. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

143. PCR Collection: Box 4223.9.4, Cottesloe Consultation, ‘Confidential Report of the Consultation among South African Member Churches of the World Council of Churches, 7–14 December 1960 at Cottesloe, Johannesburg’, p. 2.

natural reluctance to overtly disapprove of apartheid. His approach was not dissimilar to that adopted by the WCC authorities over the years when dealing with the issue of apartheid. The WCC still relied on quiet diplomacy with its associate member churches.

But importantly, world opinion towards South Africa had meanwhile shifted. The UN openly deplored the actions and policies of the government. Most crucially, it recognized that the situation in South Africa was a threat to international peace and security.<sup>144</sup> Locally, the ANC sent Oliver Tambo abroad to solicit support from the international community (including the WCC) for the struggle against the regime. In addition, during this period an increasing number of colonies were becoming independent nations, and missions were becoming churches; this also influenced the WCC constituency. The WCC's CCIA was under pressure to take substantial action on behalf of blacks in southern Africa.

The following is how Hudson explained the CCIA's response to this challenge:

As at previous meetings, the north Europeans temporized. Sir Kenneth Grubb suggested that it would be wiser to await the results of the December consultation in South Africa before making further statements.<sup>145</sup>

Once again, Grubb was evasive. He resisted any move to take an activist stance against apartheid.

### **Cottesloe consultation**

The Cottesloe consultation was a platform for the delegates to battle it out over the issue of apartheid. The DRC delegates put their case in support of apartheid and Z.K. Matthews put forward his counter-argument that everything possible had to be done to end a system that was so unjust towards the majority of South Africans. A DRC delegate objected to listening to a political discussion from Matthews, although the consultation's major aim was precisely to engage on the political crisis resulting from apartheid. Matthews had the opportunity to tell the pro-apartheid delegates that it was imperative to consult genuine African leaders when planning for Africans.<sup>146</sup> Monica Wilson was the only female delegate present.<sup>147</sup> She described Matthews' input as remarkable, as he brought 'a continental – almost a world vision to the group'.<sup>148</sup>

In the end, predictably, the WCC and its member churches remained divided on the question of apartheid, but the majority of the participants approved the consultation's final statement which repudiated apartheid. This majority view

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144. Reddy, 'The United Nations and the Struggle', p. 51.

145. Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, p. 85.

146. Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, p. 203.

147. J.W. De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979), p. 65.

148. *Ibid.*

indicated the willingness of the South African member churches and the WCC to stand together on this issue. The minority opinion, representing the three DRC member churches, saw apartheid as the only just solution to the South African race problem and therefore rejected the consultation's final statement.<sup>149</sup> Consequently, the Synod of the three DRC churches which had NP members, voted to withdraw their membership from the WCC. The Synod's constitution had a clause stating that no 'non-white' Christian could be a member of a congregation. Although its delegates had defended the Cottesloe statement, the Church of the Cape Province (Reformed) also found it necessary to withdraw from the WCC.<sup>150</sup>

There were, however, a few courageous individual members from the Dutch Reformed bloc, such as Beyers Naudé, who later stopped defending apartheid. He was deeply involved in the arrangements of the Cottesloe conference. The experience encouraged him to do a great deal of introspection on his commitment to the apartheid system.<sup>151</sup> As for De Blank, he made peace with the church representatives he had sharply criticized.<sup>152</sup> However, he was determined to make it known to the rest of the world that he and the majority of the participants at Cottesloe had agreed that compulsory racial separation could never be defended in the light of the Gospel.<sup>153</sup> He remained true to the resolutions taken at Evanston and contributed towards the alleviation of racial injustice in South Africa. This was evident with the ordination of Alpheus Zulu as the first black Anglican bishop during his tenure.

The Cottesloe deliberations received diverse reviews. Daryl Balia, a South African theologian, has criticized the consultation for many reasons. He felt that it should have tackled issues such as 'one man one vote'; predominant political power for Africans; a major redistribution of land; and the nationalization of the mines. He believed that the WCC and its associate South African churches had missed a golden opportunity to hold a meaningful debate. For Balia the Cottesloe consultation reflected the 'insularity of white-led churches formed by a smug white culture that was complacent in its Western world view'.<sup>154</sup>

Sjollema, a WCC staff member, saw Cottesloe as a historic multiracial event. For him,

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149. PCR Collection: Box 4223.9.4, 'Report of the WCC's Consultation, Cottesloe, Johannesburg', pp. 1–2; Bock, *Responsible World Society*, p. 169; Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, p. 77; Ryan, *Beyers Naudé*, p. 60; www.aluka.org, 'The WCC Mission in South Africa: April–December 1960', pp. 1–14.

150. WCCRS, Minutes, meetings of WCC Executive Committee (1956–1962), 'General Secretary's Report', 6–10 February 1961, p. 2.

151. Ryan, *Beyers Naudé*, pp. 59–62.

152. Luckhoff, *Cottesloe*, p. 95.

153. De Blank, *Memoirs*, p. 134.

154. D. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid: Ecumenism in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1989), p. 8.

Cottesloe laid bare a deep conflict between the demand for justice and the concern for unity. Ought the Council to risk a break in the ecumenical fellowship because of the demand for justice now? During and after Cottesloe this question was openly asked and covertly feared. The problem of race relations in South Africa coloured all else. And the churches were very much a part of it.<sup>155</sup>

The majority of the WCC constituency was steadfast in its rejection of apartheid. The onus was now on the WCC authorities to execute this specific mandate. By the end of 1960, they were forced to confront the political and social injustice that apartheid had caused in South Africa; they could no longer evade this problem under the guise of quiet persuasion. The WCC could no longer pretend to be at the mercy of the divided South African member churches by leaving them to deal with apartheid.

Most importantly, the admission of a large number of new churches from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, neutralized the dominance of Western churches within the WCC. The new membership soon expressed its impatience with a 'pro-Western' agenda. This was clearly evident in the CCIA when Grubb was suddenly challenged to give support to black South Africans against the apartheid regime. There were at the same time those within the Western churches who were yearning for change in the work of the Church. There was combined pressure from these two factions to see radical changes within the WCC; the 'new blood' thus changed the direction the WCC took moving forward. It gradually shifted away from over-emphasizing problems of the Western world and began to give equal attention to difficulties facing other parts of the globe. Significantly, its next WCC Assembly was held in India, a 'third world' country.<sup>156</sup>

## **New Delhi**

The delegates at the New Delhi Assembly renewed the WCC's pledge to the cause of racial justice. They called upon the Church to identify with the victims of oppression, discrimination and segregation. They acknowledged the political transformation taking place in parts of the world at the time and urged the Church to strive actively for racial justice in various creative ways, such as conciliation, litigation, legislation, mediation, protest, economic sanctions, and non-violent action, including cooperation with secular groups working towards the same ends. They also wanted the Church to recognize its duty to the oppressor in a ministry of education and reconciliation.<sup>157</sup>

The South Africans from the various denominations who were present at New Delhi included D.V. Sikutshwa, B. Burnett, E. Knapp Fisher, A. Zulu, B.H.M.

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155. Sjollema, 'The Initial Challenge', pp. 2–3.

156. Bock, *Responsible World Society*, p. 45; Nash, 'Beyers Naude', p. 35.

157. W.A. Visser't Hooft, ed., *The New Delhi Report* (Geneva: WCC, 1962), p. 103; Bock, *Responsible World Society*, p. 171; WCC Collection, Box 4223.0.02, 'Race Relations in Ecumenical Perspective: The 3rd Assembly on Racial and Ethnic Relations, New Delhi', January 1962, p. 1.

Brown, E.E. Mahabane, C.E. Wilkinson, B. Kruger, R.B. Mitchell,<sup>158</sup> G.S. M'timkulu, and J. Duminy.<sup>159</sup> Many of them were important figures in church circles and were critical of apartheid policies. Sikutshwa represented the Bantu Presbyterian Church which strongly resisted domination by white missionaries.<sup>160</sup>

Burnett was the first South African Anglican Bishop of Cape Town and was known for his outspoken criticism of apartheid.<sup>161</sup> M'timkulu was an educationist and a Fort Hare graduate who resigned when the apartheid government placed the college under the Department of Bantu Education.<sup>162</sup> Knapp Fisher was the Right Reverend of Pretoria who defended a Dutch-born priest, Pierre J. Dil, who was deported for criticizing apartheid legislation.<sup>163</sup> Wilkinson, was the president of the Methodist Conference, while R.B. Mitchell was moderator of the Presbyterian Church.<sup>164</sup> The Bishop of Zululand, Alpheus Zulu, served in Swaziland and Transkei.<sup>165</sup> As for Brown, he was subjected to severe restrictions by the apartheid regime because of his involvement in the Christian Institute.<sup>166</sup>

The message from New Delhi was unmistakable. The WCC was committed to supporting the black majority in South Africa who were the victims of racial discrimination under the apartheid regime. By implication, the constituency was instructing the WCC leadership to adopt active measures to end apartheid in South Africa. At the same time, it expected black and white South Africans to become reconciled. Accordingly, a message was sent to all Christians in South Africa. It communicated regret that the DRC member church had ended its relationship with the WCC. It also reminded South Africans that fellow Christians everywhere in the world were involved in the struggle for the elimination of racial segregation. Furthermore, the message pledged support to the South African Christians who shared the WCC vision to fight institutionalized racism.<sup>167</sup>

This particular assembly corresponded with three developments of vital importance in the country. First, South Africa became a republic. In the

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158. Visser't Hooft, *New Delhi Report*, pp. 378–379.

159. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 15th meeting of CC of the WCC, New Delhi, 6–7 December 1961, p. 30.

160. See his publication, D.V.S. Sikutshwa, *Formation of the Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa* (Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1946).

161. A.D. Donker, *Who Did What in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Mona de Beer Publisher, 1988), p. 36; J. Robertson, 'Obituary: Most Reverend Bill Burnett', *The Independent*, 9 September 1994, at [www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary.themost-rev-bill-burnett-1447654.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary.themost-rev-bill-burnett-1447654.html)

162. Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, pp. 195, 197.

163. No author, 'Episcopal Churchmen for South Africa', *ECSA* (Eastertide 1967), at [www.historicalvoices.org/pbuilder/pfiles/project39/scheme361/african\\_activist\\_a0a018-a-12419.pdf](http://www.historicalvoices.org/pbuilder/pfiles/project39/scheme361/african_activist_a0a018-a-12419.pdf)

164. Prof G.C Cuthbertson, Written feedback on thesis, chapter 2, 30 April 2010.

165. Donker, *Who Did What in South Africa*, p. 196.

166. Wikipedia, Beyers Naude, [http://en.wikipedia.org/Beyers\\_Naude](http://en.wikipedia.org/Beyers_Naude)

167. WCC Collection, Box 4223.0.02, 'Race Relations in Ecumenical Perspective', New Delhi, January 1962, Preamble and 'A Message to Christians in SA', pp 12–13.

Constitution Act of 1961, the apartheid government credited God for giving South Africa her land and protecting her people from threats and perils. It therefore described South Africa as a theocracy. Furthermore, NP politicians made frequent reference to the 'Christian character of South African institutions'.<sup>168</sup> The proclamation served to intensify the challenge for the WCC as a Christian institution. Instead of limiting its dealings with its South African member churches, it was now called to widen its scope and interact directly with the self-professed South African theocracy.

Second, South Africa withdrew from the Commonwealth. Similar to the changing face of WCC membership, the composition of the Commonwealth changed with the arrival of a large number of newly independent states that soon created problems for the apartheid regime.<sup>169</sup> The South African United Front made up of the external missions of the ANC, PAC, SAIC and South West African National Union (SWANU) also lobbied successfully for the expulsion of South Africa.<sup>170</sup> The new WCC constituency was thus a fertile ground for more pressure against apartheid South Africa.

Third, Luthuli received the Nobel Peace Prize. The international community recognized him for the principled non-violent struggle he and his organization was waging against an evil system. Luthuli's contribution and the role of the ANC had thus far not been acknowledged by the CCSA and the WCC, or the supposedly Christian homes nationally and internationally. Dr Bilheimer of the WCC who visited South Africa after Cottesloe, did not think that the award to Luthuli had any great effect, except perhaps with the liberal element of the population.<sup>171</sup> It was also a time when all legal means available to apartheid's opponents to engage with the government had failed. As a result, the ANC and the PAC (both of which had been banned), embarked on an armed struggle. Shortly after Luthuli received the Nobel award, the ANC launched its military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). Luthuli was reported to have been surprised but did not oppose the MK.<sup>172</sup> It is important to emphasize that both Luthuli and Z.K. Matthews, as Christian leaders, agonized over the decision by the ANC to resort to armed resistance by establishing MK. At the same time, they did not condone the decision.<sup>173</sup> The creation of MK (and Poqo by the PAC) had implications for the WCC's commitment to support black South Africans in their resistance

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168. M. Wilson and L.M. Thompson, *The Oxford History of South Africa, Volume 2* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 1; N. Edward, *Christianity in the Southern Hemisphere: The Churches in Latin America and South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 114.

169. Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, pp. 87–88.

170. Baai, *O.R. Tambo*, p. 152.

171. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 15th meeting of CC of the WCC, New Delhi, December 1961, p. 40.

172. B. Magubane, P. Bonner, S. Sithole, P. Delius, J. Cherry, P. Gibbs and T. April, 'The Turn to Armed Struggle', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 1*, pp. 89–90.

173. J.G. Matthews (for SADET), *The Road to Democracy: South Africans Telling their Stories, Volume 1* (Johannesburg: Mutloatse Publishers, 2008), p. 19.

against apartheid. This introduced the dimension of violence and where the Church stood on this issue.

The stand the WCC was to take moving forward was important in influencing the balance of forces in the battle to either sustain or end apartheid. Although the government was under pressure, it still enjoyed enormous support internationally. The attempt to call for diplomatic and economic sanctions against South Africa failed to get approval from a two-thirds majority in the UN Security Council.<sup>174</sup> With such support there was nothing stopping the South African government from bolstering its apartheid policy and clamping down on political resistance.

The WCC stuck to its commitment to racial justice that had been renewed in New Delhi. It revived the Secretariat on Racial and Ethnic Relations initiative. An ad hoc Advisory Committee for the Secretariat met in Paris in 1962 and worked out a plan that the Central Committee approved and was to be implemented in the period 1962–1965. The plan envisaged creating channels for the exchange of information and ideas among churches and national Christian councils as well as publicizing current ecumenical thinking on racial and ethnic issues. The Secretariat would prepare and circulate monographs on particular case studies and provide interpretations and summaries of relevant materials from UN-related agencies, universities and other research bodies. Furthermore, it was to undertake an in-depth study on 'The Meaning of the Racial and Ethnic Group for the Personal Existence of Man in the Context of the Emerging new Society'. The Secretariat was also tasked to consult with the All Africa Conference of Churches; the East Asia Christian Council; and the Latin American 'Junta' on the Church. It also had to communicate with comparable bodies in Europe, the UK, North America, the Pacific Islands and the Caribbean, to help develop a series of situational studies on what it meant for Christians to be members of one body of Christ in societies where racial and ethnic tensions manifested themselves politically, economically and socially and not infrequently, within the life of the churches themselves.<sup>175</sup>

The significance of this plan was that the WCC was building a foundation for a resource structure to deal with racism. The purpose was to generate research and disseminate credible information on issues of racism in order to educate and empower its constituency globally. It was also to pool resources with other institutions on the racism issue. The progression of this effort overlapped with the arrests of Nelson Mandela and other ANC leaders in 1962 and 1963 respectively. They were charged with sabotage. The apartheid government had passed the Sabotage Act, which allowed the state to hold political prisoners in detention for

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174. Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, pp. 87–88.

175. PCR Collection: Box 4223.0.03, Minutes of Paris meeting in July 1962; WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 16th meeting of CC of the WCC, Paris, 7–16 August 1962, pp. 144–145.



90 days without trial. Under this law, detainees suffered the worst humiliation, torture and even death.<sup>176</sup> This attracted widespread reaction.

The DRC approved of the Sabotage Act. It believed that the ANC was planning to overthrow the government and this was to lead to a civil war in the country.<sup>177</sup> The CCSA, on the other hand, protested the 90-day detention law. It was during this period that the DRC of the Cape Province sent an official letter of withdrawal from the WCC. This was accompanied by a personal letter indicating a strong desire to maintain friendly relationships and to continue receiving the WCC documents.<sup>178</sup> The WCC remained committed to supporting its member churches and other Christians who were involved in the struggle against apartheid. This was evident in the moral support it provided to the establishment of an ecumenical monthly journal – *Pro Veritate* – which challenged the biblical justification of apartheid and advocated for cooperation and unity between the churches and all Christians.<sup>179</sup>

More importantly, the thinking and approach within the Central Committee began to change. This was illustrated by what emerged from its annual meeting held in the US in 1963. It urged white Christians in South Africa to repudiate by word and deed all that weakened their witness to Christ. It called for the reversal of apartheid and the granting of full political, civil and economic rights to all South Africans. By now the WCC had recognized that most Africans were abandoning hope of an internal solution in their country. It encouraged white Christians to work harder with their fellow South Africans and the government, not only to end racism but also to avoid international isolation.

Further, the Central Committee appealed to non-South African Christians to influence world opinion. It wanted them to impress upon governments in their respective countries the importance of being more conscientious about the crisis in South Africa. It specifically drew attention to governments which had beneficial trade relations with apartheid South Africa. It cautioned about the impact of this in deferring the achievement of justice in the country. It furthermore urged all Christians to do everything in their power to show their concern for the victims of discrimination and to relieve the needs of refugees from South Africa. It also requested prayers for those South Africans who took great risks and incurred severe penalties in the cause of justice and human solidarity. It called upon all Christians to work for a just and peaceful solution in South Africa.<sup>180</sup>

This was qualitatively different from the evasive approach on apartheid which prevailed within the Central Committee during the pre-New Delhi era. This time

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176. B. Magubane, 'Introduction: The Political Context', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 1*, p. 41.

177. Balia, *Christian Resistance*, p. 24.

178. WCCRS, Minutes, meetings of WCC Executive Committee (1956–1962) (Ref. 280.38), p. 4.

179. Sjollema, 'The Initial Challenge', p. 5.

180. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 17th meeting of CC of the WCC, Rochester, USA, 26 August–2 September 1963, Appendix xxii, pp. 141–142.

the WCC authorities were not obfuscating about the serious injustice in South Africa. Their message was clear. They wanted white South Africans and the rest of the world community within the Christian constituency, to place their weight behind the cause to end apartheid. This was a step forward by the WCC Central Committee, which also expressed its support to the civil rights struggle current in the USA. This progressive attitude was reflected in the official statement on racial and ethnic tension it adopted which read:

[W]hen we are given Christian insight, the whole pattern of racial discrimination is seen as an unutterable offence against God, to be endured no longer, so that the very stones cry out. In such moments we understand more fully the meaning of the Gospel, and the duty of both Church and Christians. ...Men, women and children, Christians and non-Christians alike, are laying aside thought for personal safety, are enduring the dislocation of family life, are demonstrating a supreme courage amid natural fears, and are refraining from the retaliation which uses the brutal means of their oppressors. To all these, we give wholehearted support, praying that they may be strengthened and that their goal may soon be achieved. We give thanks to God that He has called many Christians to share in the leadership of this struggle for racial equality. We ask all Christians and the churches as such to join them and to support them. We acknowledge with deep shame that many Christians through hesitation and inaction are not engaged in this struggle, or are on the wrong side of it. We therefore repeat, with all the conviction at our command what the Assembly said in 1954, that 'any form of segregation based on race or colour or ethnic origin is contrary to the Gospel and is incompatible with the Christian doctrine of man and with the nature of the Church of Christ'.<sup>181</sup>

Before New Delhi, on the issue of apartheid there had always been a gap between the pronouncements the delegates made during the general assemblies and the decisions on those pronouncements the WCC authorities took thereafter. There was now a move to close that gap.

### **Mindolo consultation**

In 1964, the WCC set in motion some of its Race and Relations Secretariat plan focusing on southern Africa where there was a concentration of institutional racism. In collaboration with the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation and the South African Institute of Race Relations, the WCC convened a consultation on 'Christian Practice and Desirable Action in Social Change and Race Relations' in the region.<sup>182</sup> The political climate had deteriorated during this time. Repression by the white minority regimes in South Africa, Namibia (then South West Africa), Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) was paralleled by resistance from the black liberation movements.

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181. *Ibid.*

182. PCR Collection: Box 4223.0.03, Mindolo Consultation, 1964. See also, 'Report on an Ecumenical Consultation on Christian Practice and Desirable Action in Social Change and Race Relations in Southern Africa, Kitwe, 25 May–2 June 1964', in *Christians and Race Relations in Southern Africa* (Geneva: WCC, 1964). The consultation was held under the auspices of the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, the SAIRR and the WCC.

The consultation was held at Mindolo in Zambia. Participants included South Africans such as Z.K Matthews,<sup>183</sup> Beyers Naudé and Prof A.S. Geysler. Others were W.K.P. Makhulu of Botswana; Eduardo Mondlane of Mozambique; Lord Caradon of the UK; Visser't Hooft, the WCC general secretary; and Alan Booth from the CCIA.<sup>184</sup> The South African participants were all critics of apartheid. After attending this consultation, Naudé and Geysler<sup>185</sup> were accused of 'selling themselves to the Devil and being traitors to God, their churches, their country and their people', by a professor of Christian History, Adriaan Pont.<sup>186</sup> Makhulu worked underground to help South Africans under threat from the state to flee the country.<sup>187</sup> At the time, Matthews was assessing problems relating to victims of the apartheid policy as Africa secretary for the WCC's Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service.<sup>188</sup>

Prior to the consultation, Booth visited South Africa to gain a comprehensive understanding of what was going on there from other sources which were not to be represented at Mindolo. He met with representatives from the government such as Hilgard Muller, the Minister of External Affairs and Frank Waring, the Minister of Information. He also held discussions with Sir de Villiers Graaff, the leader of the opposition, and the editors of *Die Burger* and *Die Huisgenoot*, as well as several church leaders.<sup>189</sup> The CCIA was determined to make sure that the views of those who believed in apartheid were not neglected. Meanwhile oppression inside the country accelerated and the apartheid government arrested or had banning orders placed on many of its leading political opponents. In an extreme example, Vuyisile Mini and Zinakile Mkaba, who were ANC Youth League leaders in the Eastern Cape were executed in 1964.<sup>190</sup> The Institute of Race Relations invited Archbishop Denis Hurley to deliver a lecture on 'Apartheid: A Crisis of the Christian Conscience'. Hurley was one of the fiercest critics of the apartheid government in South Africa.<sup>191</sup> The political atmosphere was extremely bleak.

The Mindolo consultation was a platform for participants to deliberate on the impact of apartheid in the entire southern African region and to recommend

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183. He was a staff member of the WCC by this time. See, *Matthews: Freedom for My People*, p. 204.

184. PCR Collection: Box 4223.0.03, Mindolo Consultation, 1964.

185. Geysler was found guilty of insubordination and was defrocked by the Synodal Commission of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk. See Donker, *Who Did What in South Africa*, p. 74.

186. Ryan, *Beyers Naudé*, p. 118.

187. J. Allen and K. Shapiro, 'Standing up for God. Working Underground for Justice in South Africa: A Conversation with W.P.K. Makhulu', Concilium on Southern Africa (COSA), Spring 2010, available at [news.duke.edu/2010/makhulu.html](http://news.duke.edu/2010/makhulu.html), accessed 7 May 2010.

188. Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, pp. 203, 208.

189. Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, p. 91.

190. Magubane *et al.*, 'Turn to Armed Struggle', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 1*, p. 118.

191. D.E. Hurley, 'Apartheid: A Crisis of the Christian Conscience', Alfred and Winifred Hoernle Memorial Lecture, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1964.

possible solutions. Matthews' speech was entitled 'The Road from Non-violence to Violence'. He warned that in South Africa, violence was the only option left open for blacks to resist apartheid. This was after the Rivonia trial in which prominent ANC leaders were sentenced to life imprisonment.<sup>192</sup> His speech at Mindolo was the third time Matthews communicated a clear message to the WCC on apartheid. The first was 11 years earlier (in 1953) when he warned the WCC not to gamble with the lives of black people who were suffering racial injustice under the evolving apartheid system. The second occasion was at Cottesloe when he expressed to the WCC authorities (and white South African representatives) the genuine desire of the oppressed majority for a non-racial democratic South Africa. The WCC authorities had been largely unresponsive to African interests. At Mindolo he informed the WCC that it was the end of the road for black South Africans; they would no longer try to appease the apartheid regime.

Because they had been outspoken in their criticism of the apartheid system, both Beyers Naudé and Geysers were by this time outcasts in Afrikaans-speaking church circles. Naudé had resigned from the Broederbond, a secret Afrikaner nationalist organization loyal to the apartheid regime. Geysers had found no biblical confirmation from the Scriptures to confine membership exclusively to whites, as his Church constitution stipulated.<sup>193</sup> Participants at the Mindolo consultation recognized the failure of the Church in not speaking out earlier about the racial injustice in South Africa.

The proposed solutions which emerged at this gathering included a guarantee of the security of minority groups and the Africans' attainment of economic equality. There were several suggestions about the action the churches could take in the country, including involvement in formulating and supporting schemes aimed at preventing the exploitation of African labour and initiatives to supplement the inferior Bantu Education system. Christian businessmen could also provide appropriate training for Africans to fill executive positions, while the Church should endeavour to persuade the government to provide capital and credit facilities for entrepreneurial activity. Through their agricultural missions, the churches themselves could help relieve rural poverty by teaching Africans how to grow enough food to make the change from a subsistence to a cash economy. The proponents of these ideas believed that if black people achieved economic equality, there would be no need for those who were Christians to support boycotts, general strikes or any planned industrial disruption in the country.<sup>194</sup> This paternalistic view exposed the white members of the DRC and Ecumenical blocs as regressing to the timeworn ideas of 'positive' apartheid and trusteeship, both of which were doomed to fail.

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192. PCR Collection: Box 4223.0.03, Papers by Z.K. Matthews; Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, p. 210.

193. Ryan, *Beyers Naudé*, pp. 86–95.

194. Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, p. 93.

Makhulu objected to the proposed 'solutions'. He told the audience that black South Africans were more interested in freedom than in economic progress. He went on to inform the delegates that the oppressed majority would gladly suffer economic hardship caused by sanctions, if this led to their liberation. He said that the churches in countries that supported the Pretoria regime (in lucrative trade links, or providing arms and oil, for example) had a special responsibility in this regard. The WCC authorities and the CCIA were charged with taking the initiative in establishing dialogue with the South African Christian and political leaders. The participants emphasized the importance of bringing these leaders together.<sup>195</sup>

There were two critical messages for the WCC emerging from this dialogue. One was the call by Africans for economic sanctions against the Pretoria regime in order to defeat apartheid. The second was creating platforms for the divided South African church and political leaders to engage one another to address the problem of apartheid.

For Naudé, the significance of this consultation was that the Afrikaans churches had to acknowledge their guilt in supporting the apartheid system. The English churches were also criticized for not practising what they preached on justice as far as the challenge of apartheid in the country was concerned.<sup>196</sup> Naudé was admitting to the sin of apartheid, something that was difficult for others to do.

The WCC committed itself to becoming fully involved and to act both as a prophet and conscience from that point onwards. It undertook to support disobedience of unjust laws and to suffer the consequences. It promised not to encourage violence; but neither would it condemn violence. It intended to ask those embarking upon violence if they had exhausted all other possibilities. In cases where violence was the method chosen, the WCC committed itself to attempt to limit it to the extent that negotiations were possible.<sup>197</sup> This was a momentous commitment. The WCC was gearing itself to take a stand on violence arising from racial domination and the resistance against such injustice.

The final report of this consultation urged Christians worldwide to play a leading role in the struggle for racial justice. The WCC executive responded to the call and urged its member churches to study the Mindolo report and take it seriously. More directly, the WCC Central Committee expressed deep sympathy with the victims of unjust accusations and discriminatory laws in southern Africa. It supported the appeal for funds to be used in the legal defence and humanitarian aid of the victims and their dependants. It also called upon the DRC and all

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195. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

196. Ryan, *Beyers Naudé*, p. 99.

197. Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, pp. 93–94.

churches in South Africa to fight against legislated discrimination in their country.<sup>198</sup>

This was another significant step forward by the WCC authorities. Not only did they openly side with those South Africans who disobeyed apartheid legislation, but they also offered them financial support. There was now a gradual harmonization and implementation of the various resolutions on apartheid taken at the general assemblies.

The call for economic sanctions against South Africa from Mindolo was an issue that was of concern to many other formations. The World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) asked its members to study the South African situation that was now perceived by the UN as a threat to world peace. It called on student Christian movements to support the campaign for economic sanctions against the apartheid regime. The Student Christian Association (SCA) of South Africa reacted negatively and disaffiliated from the WSCF.<sup>199</sup> British Christians were also concerned about this and sent a working party to visit South Africa. Its report 'The Future of SA' concluded that apartheid was a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and that its continuance threatened world peace. The British Council of Churches asked its government to take appropriate measures to ensure that Britain no longer encouraged apartheid practices, but did not advocate economic sanctions.<sup>200</sup> The recently formed Organisation of African Union (OAU) wanted to speed up the liberation of all African peoples under white or foreign rule. It encouraged its member states to give active support to the liberation movements. It also called for an oil embargo on South Africa.<sup>201</sup> In its own right, the WCC had already started mobilizing its global membership to influence the respective governments from which South Africa derived economic benefit. Also important was that its constituency had a bigger capacity to carry out this call for sanctions against the apartheid regime. Unlike others, the WCC was an international agency with a broader appeal not limited to students, or British or Africans but directed to all Christians in every corner of the globe.

The appointment of Dr Eugene Carson Blake as the new general secretary marked a new era for the WCC. Blake came from an activist background where he championed the cause for war against poverty in the US. He had marched alongside Martin Luther King Jr in the civil rights protests.<sup>202</sup> More importantly, Blake supported the idea of Christian churches becoming involved in economic,

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198. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 18th meeting of CC of the WCC, Enugu, Nigeria, 12–21 January 1965, p. 43.

199. *Pro Veritate*, February 1965, p. 1.

200. T.A. Bertham and N. Salter, eds, *The Future of South Africa: A Study by Christians* (London: no publisher, 1965), p. 92.

201. Ndlovu, 'The ANC and the World', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 1*, p. 559; Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, p. 71.

202. *Christian Beacon*, 31, 17 (June 1966).

social and political questions throughout the world.<sup>203</sup> His philosophy was radically different from that of his predecessor whose primary concern was church unity above all else.<sup>204</sup> However, he was not without his critics. Carl McIntire believed that Blake's nomination into this new position was expedited by the influential representative of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow. McIntire warned Christian people everywhere not to associate with an organization such as the WCC which was supportive of a worldwide communist conspiracy.<sup>205</sup> The WCC was evidently caught up in Cold War politics.

## Geneva

In 1966 the WCC sponsored a consultation on 'Church and Society' in Geneva. The event was conceived as a means of getting the WCC churches to debate the meaning of their Christian faith for social thought and action. It served as a platform for a representative group of competent laymen and theologians to think together on special issues in contemporary society on which the churches and the WCC sought to have their opinion.<sup>206</sup> Examples of these issues included the liberation of peoples from various kinds of domination; their expectations for a fuller life; the growing division between the rich and the poor; and the problem of migrant workers and how this affected churches in their respective localities.<sup>207</sup>

The South Africans invited included Beyers Naudé, Bill Burnett<sup>208</sup> and Alpheus Zulu. At the time, Zulu was a vice president of the WCC but the apartheid government denied him a passport to travel to Geneva.<sup>209</sup> It was clearly afraid that Zulu would expose the gross human rights violations it was perpetrating in the country. Eugene Blake spoke on 'How the Church can Contribute to the Transformation of Society'. He suggested that the Church formulate concrete goals in the light of the Gospel, by identifying itself with the cause of the poor, the outcasts, and those who were discriminated against and rejected.<sup>210</sup> This was an endorsement of something the WCC had begun to do with respect to South Africa. At Mindolo, it took the side of those opposed to apartheid and finally committed itself to supporting them.

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203. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.01, WCC Communications: E.C. Blake, USA Presbyterian, November 1968.

204. Visser't Hooft is known for his concern for Church unity. See E.C. Gerald, *The Future of the Church: The Theology of Renewal of Willem Adolf Visser't Hooft* (Pittsburg: Pickwick Press, 1924), p. 2; A.J. van der Bent, ed., *Voices of Unity: Essays in Honour of Willem Adolf Visser't Hooft on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday* (Geneva: WCC, 1981).

205. *New York Times*, 24 February 1966, p. 5.

206. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 18th meeting of CC of the WCC, Enugu, January 1965, p. 82.

207. P. Albrecht, 'Report Responses to the World Conference on Church and Society, 1966', *Ecumenical Review*, 20 (January to December 1968), pp. 446, 448, 449, 458.

208. De Gruchy, *Church Struggle*, p. 117.

209. Sjollema, 'The Initial Challenge', p. 8.

210. E.C. Blake, 'How can the Church Contribute to the Transformation of Society?', *Ecumenical Review*, 18 (January to December 1966).

One of the critical observations the consultation made was that racial justice depended upon greater changes in political and economic structures. It was pointed out that the wealth of the world was in the hands of Europeans and Asians and that investment policies often helped those groups who sanctioned discrimination. The participants deplored the failure of some major powers to use full economic sanctions against South Africa and Rhodesia. They called upon Christians everywhere to urge their governments to ratify and enforce the various UN resolutions on human rights. One of the critical recommendations was a formulation of policies which were to give expression to a Christian concern for human solidarity, justice and freedom in a world of revolutionary change.<sup>211</sup> The theologians who reflected on this conference afterwards asserted that all Christians should identify with people struggling for new structures of social justice. They expressed strong convictions that Christians had no alternative but to work for drastic social change.<sup>212</sup>

The conference was described as one of the most controversial meetings in ecumenical history. Nash wrote that the SACC and the Western churches alleged that the WCC was 'highjacked' by the leftists and that it was politicized and had lost its theological base.<sup>213</sup> However, the WCC Central Committee supported many, but not all, of the statements made at this conference. It was also the first time that a black South African, the Reverend E.E. Mahabane participated at a WCC Central Committee meeting.<sup>214</sup> The International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF) was formed in 1966. It developed a global base with strong connections to church and mission circles. Its main aim was to distribute donor funds to South Africa.<sup>215</sup> This was an area of particular relevance to the WCC, because it already offered financial support to many South African political prisoners and their families.

Part of the WCC's Race and Ethnic Relations Secretariat plan was to pool resources with other institutions on the race question. UNESCO approved scientific studies on race and racial prejudice which dismissed the myth of white superiority. Accordingly, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination in 1967. The WCC learnt much from these studies and the pledge made by the UN. The Central Committee also urged Christians and churches everywhere to oppose the perpetuation of the myth of racial superiority openly and actively.<sup>216</sup> Most importantly, it urged the Church to use the powers inherent in its administrative structures, such as those that arose from investment of its resources or from the influence of its means of communication, to correct racial malpractice in society as well as within the

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211. Albrecht, 'Report Responses to the World Conference', pp. 446, 448, 449, 458.

212. *Ibid.*

213. Nash, 'Beyers Naudé', p. 35.

214. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 19th meeting of CC of the WCC, Geneva, February 1966, pp. 5, 77.

215. Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, p. 33.

216. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 19th meeting of CC of the WCC, Geneva February 1966, pp. 5, 77.



Church itself.<sup>217</sup> Furthermore, it called upon member churches everywhere to make representations to their governments.<sup>218</sup> By implication, the South African member churches were expected to use their human and financial resources to redress the racial imbalance in their country. The WCC also challenged them to use their power and wealth to negotiate with the apartheid government to achieve racial justice in the country.

When he succeeded Verwoerd as prime minister in 1966, B.J Vorster did not waver on apartheid, although there were nuances in his policy and style. Prior to his new appointment he had been the Minister of Police and had pushed through the Terrorism bill which gave the South African police powers to arrest those accused without any warrant, and allow them no bail. Political detainees were held indefinitely and often placed in solitary confinement as the new prime minister made South Africa an authoritarian police state.<sup>219</sup> It was coincidentally during the course of this period that Luthuli died mysteriously, being hit by a passing train near his home in Groutville, in what appeared to be a freak accident.<sup>220</sup> These political developments were of grave concern to the world community, including the WCC.

In South Africa, Christians at universities and colleges responded by forming the University Christian Movement (UCM) that same year. UCM established branches throughout the country and offered a more radical interpretation of the Gospel and its social implications.<sup>221</sup> Pertinently, the WCC Executive Committee for the first time issued a statement condemning the South African state for violating the UN Declaration on Human Rights.<sup>222</sup> At long last, the WCC began to 'bark' directly at the main culprit, the South African apartheid state, rather than through its member churches.

## Conclusion

Racial segregation clashes with the teachings of Christ. From the outset, the WCC, as an ecumenical Christian organization, denounced racism, including apartheid. All three of the WCC's General Assemblies were categorical in their pronouncements on apartheid. The problem lay with the most influential leaders within the Central and Executive Committees, who took decisions on how the work of the WCC was to be carried out between assemblies, until 1960. This powerful group showed reluctance to openly disapprove of apartheid for 12 years. It was only in the last seven years of this period that there was a shift in attitude, which resulted in the WCC speaking out against apartheid.

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217. Bock, *Responsible World Society*, p. 175.

218. WCCRS, Minutes and reports, 20th meeting of CC of the WCC, Heraklion, Greece, 15–26 August 1967, pp. 50–51.

219. Terreblanche, *History of Inequality*, pp. 325–326.

220. L. Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2004), p. 218.

221. De Gruchy, *Church Struggle*, p. 154; Terreblanche, *History of Inequality*, p. 350.

222. Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, p. 100.

The reluctance of powerful individuals in the WCC top structures to condemn apartheid openly can be attributed to a confluence of several factors. These include the influence of South African associate members in the formative years; the overriding importance given to Church unity; the inherent prejudices of the Western church leaders; the success of the NP government in entrenching its power and influence; and Cold War fears of a communist threat.

The natural entrance to South Africa for the WCC was through its associate member churches in the Ecumenical and DRC blocs, but these blocs were divided on the question of apartheid. The Ecumenical bloc protested but did not resist apartheid, with the notable exception of individuals such as Reeves and De Blank. The DRC bloc supported a different variation of apartheid than the apartheid system implemented by the government. Even the inclusion of the Bantu Presbyterian Church denomination in the WCC membership failed to bring a significant representation of the views of the oppressed majority in South Africa. The annual meetings of the WCC Central Committee, which provided a platform to debate apartheid, did not have an African representative before 1960. The WCC authorities interacted mainly with white South Africans such as Gerdener, Reeves, Marais, Brink, Kerr and De Blank until 1960. For the most part they were therefore listening to and empathizing with the opinions and experiences of white South Africans, albeit divided on the system of apartheid.

The lack of equal engagement with black South Africans who were at the receiving end of apartheid, contributed to the WCC avoiding action against apartheid. Luthuli was one of their own, in the sense that he was linked to the CCSA, that the WCC consistently interfaced with. Yet the WCC remained deaf and blind to the role played and actions taken by Luthuli as the president of the ANC against an evil system. It was only by 1966, when Mahabane was in the Central Committee, that the WCC had become outspoken on apartheid. Z.K. Matthews was not only a Christian, but also an intellectual and a political leader. He was one of the instigators of the process that gave rise to the Freedom Charter which espoused the idea of a non-racial democratic South Africa. Yet as with Luthuli, the WCC remained oblivious to Matthews' concern for the future of South Africa. It was not until he expressed his opinions in 1960 at Cottesloe that the WCC took note of what he said. Thereafter, he joined the staff of the WCC as Africa secretary of the Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service.

As a relatively new formation, the WCC lacked experience to deal adequately with the challenges it faced in South Africa. This was evident in its decisions over the years to send individual delegates to meet with predominantly white South Africans in fruitless attempts to resolve the serious issue of apartheid over the years. This tactic suggests that the WCC underestimated the gravity of the problem.

Some of the WCC leaders who visited South Africa were Europeans accustomed to a Western outlook. They had a natural affinity to white South Africans and tended to see the majority of black South Africans as too 'uncivilized' to merit equal political rights in the country. This explains why they were prepared to give consideration to the options of trusteeship and 'positive' apartheid supported by the Ecumenical and DRC blocs respectively, for more than a decade. Goodall and Grubb shared British roots with the members of the Ecumenical bloc; Visser't Hooft shared Dutch roots with those of the DRC bloc. Graham Duncan, a church historian, explains the racist attitude toward blacks in the colonialist ethos of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, the desire to maintain white power and authority.<sup>223</sup>

The WCC's priority was to build and consolidate its relationship with its South African associate members. This was of critical importance, especially in the first years and this explains the hesitation to enter the political arena and its desire to prevent public denunciation. As the years went by, this priority competed with the reality of serious racial discrimination which the WCC authorities were reluctant to confront. This was the reason why the WCC was often evasive when dealing with the South African situation.

The landslide victories of the NP in successive whites-only general elections signalled the categorical approval of apartheid by the majority of the white electorate in South Africa. The NP government succeeded in enforcing institutionalized segregation and (for the meantime, at least) was able to contain resistance. With the apartheid system apparently thriving, some WCC authorities believed it should be given some credibility.

Apartheid South Africa took an anti-communist stance and was thus of strategic value to the Western countries antagonistic to the Soviet Union and Eastern European bloc. It was also seen as a major ally of the capitalist system. The WCC was troubled by communist states that rejected its Christian associate member churches in Eastern Europe. A South African anti-communist state that allowed free ecumenical Christian work was to be commended. The WCC also felt its investments and those of individual investors in the Council, were safer under a South African pro-capitalist state.

It was the convergence of these factors that led to reluctance on the part of the WCC leadership to reject apartheid openly. These powerful members resisted political activism in favour of conciliatory initiatives in the churches and thereby compromised the WCC's commitment to reject apartheid. They were more concerned about preserving the fellowship with white South African Christians than addressing the plight of the black majority. They heeded the voice of the politically powerful and rich and declined to contradict them in rejecting the

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223. G.A. Duncan, '350 Years Reformed in South Africa: The Contribution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa', *Open Journals Publishing*, 59, 1 (2003), p. 51 at [www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTSarticle/view/649/550](http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTSarticle/view/649/550), accessed 8 May 2010.

legitimacy of the apartheid state. This was despite the fact that these members were themselves acutely aware of the blatant injustice of the apartheid system. Until 1960, it was thus the WCC authorities who were responsible for letting down the rest of the WCC constituency in fighting apartheid.

The Cottesloe, Mindolo and Geneva consultations in the 1960s were defining moments in the history of the WCC and its attitude to racism. After the violent racial conflict at Sharpeville, the WCC was compelled to pay special attention to South African politics at the Cottesloe discussions – something it had previously avoided. At Mindolo in 1964, the WCC faced up to the realities of southern African politics and its racist white governments. At Geneva in 1966, the WCC sought innovative ways for the churches to transform society into one where justice and human rights prevailed.

From the 1960s onwards, the new universal WCC constituency inevitably transformed the once-dominant Western outlook in the WCC. Its relationship with the South African member churches changed; it was no longer swayed by the opinions of the politically powerful and wealthy South African church leaders. It began to heed the cries of oppressed South Africans and showed Christian compassion by taking up their cause.

There was also a noticeable change in the direction the WCC followed. Its drivers were yearning to bridge the great gulf between Church and secular society. This was evident in the attitude of WCC leadership figures such as Dr Akuna Ibiam, Dr M.M.Thomas, Dr Eugene Blake and Pauline Webb.<sup>224</sup> The governor of the Eastern Province of Nigeria, Ibiam, was instrumental in ensuring that the ecumenical movement contributed effectively in the development of Africa.<sup>225</sup> A social thinker and an activist in India, Thomas became known for stressing the importance of the secular for the wholeness of the life and mission of the Church.<sup>226</sup> Blake was at the forefront of the US struggle for civil rights.<sup>227</sup> Webb was influenced by people such as Helder Camara, the radical Roman Catholic priest, who was known as the friend of the poor. It was people of this calibre who steered the WCC into a new direction in its resolve to repair the ailing world.<sup>228</sup>

These prominent figures represented the 'new blood' that began to remove the kid gloves the WCC authorities had used in its dealings with the apartheid government prior to Sharpeville. The WCC began to speak out against apartheid and openly criticised the Pretoria government; it was, however, still only verbal condemnation, falling short of action.

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224. There are many others who brought radicalism and activism to the WCC, such as Baldwin Sjollema, David Gill, Paul Albrecht, Brigalia Bam, Rena Karefa-Smart, Jose Chipenda, and Albert van den Heuvel.

225. M.C. Oduyoye, 'A Decade and a Half of Ecumenism in Africa: Problems, Programme and Hopes', in Van der Bent, *Voices of Unity*, pp. 72–73.

226. Fowlkes, 'Developing a Church Planting Movement', pp. 23–24.

227. *Christian Beacon*, 31, 17 (June 1966).

228. Webb, *The Worldwide Webb*, pp. 39, 40–53, 64.

## Chapter Three

### The creation of the Programme to Combat Racism, 1968–1969

#### Introduction

Previously, the WCC had believed in the efficacy of non-violent methods to bring about social change in society. But in the late 1960s, violent incidents of racism caused those who believed in pacifism and passive resistance to shift their thinking. Leo Kuper described passive resistance as a method of non-violence based on an ethic of universal love.

<sup>1</sup> Pacifism is defined as opposition to war or violence as a means of settling disputes or gaining advantage. It covers a spectrum of views including the rejection of theories of 'just war'.<sup>2</sup> Michael Walzer, the author of *Just and Unjust Wars* explained a 'just war' as an argument of the religious centre against pacifists on the one side and holy warriors on the other.<sup>3</sup> This argument had relevance for the WCC membership which was wrestling with how to respond to the violence inherent in racism. It began to consider active resistance to redress the wrongs suffered under racial domination.

This chapter deals with the departure of the WCC from positions of pacifism and passive resistance to that of a 'just war' in respect of racism. It traces the process of forming the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) from July 1968 at Uppsala, Sweden, until the end of 1969, with the appointment of its director. Scholars have merely referred to the formation of the PCR of the WCC, or aspects of this, without due regard to the full process of why and how it was established.<sup>4</sup> The chapter provides an analysis of the course of action taken by the WCC and the implications for South Africa. It tracks the WCC's internal line function and covers the various forums responsible for developing the PCR, including the WCC Central and Executive Committees; the Church and Society Department; the Racism Coordinating Committee; as well as the international consultations on racism. The consultative approach of developing the PCR brought on board

1. L. Kuper, *Passive Resistance in South Africa* (London: Camelot Press, 1956), p. 9.
2. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacifism>, accessed 6 August 2010.
3. M. Walzer, *Arguing about War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 4.
4. See Z. Mbali, *The Churches and Racism: A Black South African Perspective* (London: SCM Press, 1987), pp. 15–20; J.W. De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979), pp. 127–129; T.G. Karis and G.M. Gerhart, eds, *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882–1990, Volume 5, Nadir and Resurgence, 1964–1979* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 1997), p. 81; C. Ryan, *Beyers Naudé: Pilgrimage of Faith* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990), pp. 136–137; L. Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2004), p. 513; S. Ndlovu, 'The ANC and the World', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960–1970* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), p. 569; A. Boraine, *A Life in Transition* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2008), p. 58; A. Frochtling *et al.*, eds, *Wolfram Kistner: Justice and Righteousness Like a Never-ending Stream. Essays, Reflections and Discussion Documents* (Johannesburg: SACC, 2008), pp. 175–176.

every unit within the WCC. It also drew on an external diverse audience to shape the PCR; this approach inaugurated a more political focus to the WCC's traditional churchly way of handling socio-political issues.

The formation of the PCR took place at a time when the world was at a crossroads; 1968 was in many ways a watershed, beginning with the 'Prague Spring' when the Soviet Union occupied Czechoslovakia and radicalized European society.<sup>5</sup> France experienced a dramatic outbreak of unrest when university students demonstrated against the involvement of the United States in Vietnam. Militant demonstrations also broke out in Japan and Mexico. Indeed, a rebellious youth seemed to be threatening both East and West.<sup>6</sup> It was at this juncture that the WCC held its Uppsala General Assembly.

Race relationships were thus deteriorating rapidly across the globe and in South Africa, blacks wanted to free themselves from all forms of apartheid. In 1969, the black intelligentsia founded the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), without waiting for their white allies to lead the struggle for freedom.<sup>7</sup> In other parts of southern Africa, the liberation wars against white racist regimes intensified. The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr in April 1968 created a crisis in the US and beyond. The WCC had invited King to present a keynote address at Uppsala in July that year.<sup>8</sup> His assassination and other conflicts in various parts of the world had a direct bearing on the process that led to the creation of the PCR. The impact of race relations, world politics and the role of global forces on race politics had attracted scholarly attention by the end of the 1960s.<sup>9</sup> It was also at this time that the WCC undertook to set up its PCR that tackled the apartheid system in South Africa, which is the narrow focus of this particular study. The PCR also fought racism in other parts of the world.

## Uppsala

Many of the WCC delegates at the Uppsala Assembly came from troubled countries. When they gathered at Uppsala for the WCC's Fourth Assembly in July 1968, it was therefore hardly surprising that the dominant theme of the conference was the growing chasm between rich and poor nations. The churches faced a moral imperative to give priority to economic development to overcome

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5. C. Gurney, 'In the Heart of the Beast: The British Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1959–1964' in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 3, International Solidarity*, Part 1 (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008), p. 285.
  6. J.E. Cronin, *The Cold War Made Order, Chaos and the Return of History* (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 163–165; H. Brandt, ed., *Outside the Camp: A Collection of Writings by Wolfram Kistner* (Edenvale: SACC, 1988), p. 4.
  7. M.R. Maimela, 'Black Consciousness and White Liberals in South Africa' (PhD thesis, UNISA, 1999), p. 6.
  8. B. Sjollesma, *A Long Struggle: The Involvement of The WCC in South Africa* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), p. 9.
  9. See E. Locksley, 'The Challenge of Race: From Entrenched White Power to Rising Black Power', *International Journal*, 24, 4 (Autumn 1969), pp. 693–716; C. Gerwels and H. Isaacs, 'Color in World Affairs', *Foreign Affairs*, 47 (January 1969), pp. 235–250.

poverty.<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that the preparations for this assembly excluded a special focus on racism; this issue was subsumed by concerns about poverty, education, development, war and peace.<sup>11</sup> There was nothing dealing with racism per se in the several researched papers compiled and distributed to the delegates in advance.

The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr triggered a sit-in by black American priests; they protested against white racism in the local US churches of the National Council of Churches (NCC). Eugene Blake witnessed this sit-in.<sup>12</sup> He was previously the head of the NCC and had participated in protest demonstrations held by the civil rights movement together with Martin Luther King Jr.<sup>13</sup> On his return from the US, he arranged with colleagues in Geneva for racism to receive special focus at the coming assembly. Consequently, a background document focusing on white racism was prepared for discussion and was circulated at Uppsala. Furthermore, Lukas Vischer, a WCC staff member, suggested that James Baldwin, the renowned African American author and civil rights activist, be invited to address the assembly.<sup>14</sup>

UNESCO had approved scientific studies on race and racial prejudice which had dismissed the validity of the 'white superiority' myth, a year earlier.<sup>15</sup> The WCC staff members who produced the background document drew insights from these studies. They singled out white racism because it was perceived as the most dangerous form of social conflict. The resultant document was a historical review of the issue of racism and how the ecumenical community had responded to it over time. It exposed the repeated failure of the churches to participate in the struggle for racial justice. It also highlighted the gap between 'talk and action' and agitated for meaningful action against racism.<sup>16</sup> Baldwin Sjollema, David Gill and Rena Karefa-Smart, who were WCC staff members, met with a group of delegates each morning during the assembly, and together they planned how to ensure that racism became a topic of debate in most of the sub-committees.<sup>17</sup> Brigalia Bam, a South African WCC staff member, also collaborated in this initiative and she has testified to the long hours of discussion she and several

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10. N. Goodall, ed., *The Uppsala Report 1968: Official Report of the 4th Assembly of the WCC, Uppsala, 4–20 July 1968* (Geneva: WCC, 1968), p. 5.

11. Telephonic interview with Brigalia Bam, 13 May 2010.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Christian Beacon*, 31, 17 (June 1966); J. Teelucksingh, 'African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement', *Caribbean Voice*, available online at [www.caribvoice.org/Opinions/Jerome/africanamericas.html](http://www.caribvoice.org/Opinions/Jerome/africanamericas.html), accessed 16 May 2010.

14. Telephonic interview with Brigalia Bam, 13 May 2010.

15. WCC, Main Library, Research Section, Geneva (hereafter WCCRS), Programme to Combat Racism Collection (hereafter PCR Collection): Box 4223.0.05, UNESCO, Statement on Race and Racial Prejudice, Paris, 26 September 1967, pp. 1–6.

16. PCR Collection: Box 4223.0.01, Background document on White Racism (draft), June 1968.

17. R.S. Taylor, 'The Church is Being Persecuted', in B. Clarke, *Anglicans against Apartheid 1936–1996* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2008), p. 246.

other colleagues spent at Eugene Blake's house in Geneva deliberating on how to combat white racism.<sup>18</sup>

During the assembly, various speakers made moving speeches about the problem of racism and poverty and urged the WCC to resolve these matters. In his speech on 'White Racism or World Community', James Baldwin accused the Christian Church of betraying black people in the world. He reminded the delegates that the Church still ruled the world and specifically challenged it to use its power to change the structure of apartheid South Africa.<sup>19</sup> He held interviews with Bam on the situation in her country before his presentation.<sup>20</sup> He was still coping with the recent violent death of King, a close associate who strove to end racial segregation and discrimination non-violently through civil disobedience. Baldwin called on all the churches to take proactive measures to stop the structural violence so prevalent in their respective countries. For a full 20 years the apartheid system had been the backbone of advancement for the minority white population in all aspects of life – to the detriment of the black majority. His impassioned speech set the tone for the entire assembly.<sup>21</sup>

Kenneth Kaunda was the newly appointed president of a liberated Zambia. The delegates heard him praising the Church for its concern and widening interest in the economic and social problems confronting the world. He highlighted development as a moral issue and appealed to the WCC to play its part in saving mankind from destruction.<sup>22</sup> Lord Caradon, the UK representative in the United Nations, spoke about the danger of racism and how it was inextricably connected to the issue of poverty. He appealed to the youth to undertake an international campaign to tackle this problem under the guidance of the WCC.<sup>23</sup> He had been present at Mindolo in 1964 where Z.K. Matthews warned about the armed struggle as the only option left to fight apartheid. These speeches were well received, notably by the youth, who were agitating for change in the world around them.

South Africa was represented by prominent figures in their respective church, academic and political communities.<sup>24</sup> Some of them were to play an active role in the WCC's struggle against apartheid as indicated later in this chapter. In

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18. Telephonic interview with Brigalia Bam, 13 May 2010.

19. J. Baldwin, address at Uppsala Assembly, 'White Racism or World Community', excerpts cited in *Ecumenical Review*, 20 (1968), p. 376.

20. Telephonic interview with Brigalia Bam, 13 May 2010.

21. See Taylor, 'The Church is Being Persecuted', p. 246. Joe Matthews, Francis Wilson and Brigalia Bam made the same point during my initial informal conversations with them.

22. K.K. Kaunda, 'Rich and Poor Nations', address at Uppsala Assembly, excerpts cited in *Ecumenical Review*, 20, (1968), pp. 334–335.

23. Lord Caradon, cited in *Ecumenical Review*, 20 (1968), p. 384.

24. These included B. Bam, J. Matthews, A. Zulu, F.A. Amoore, B. Bailey, B. Burnett, C.K. Davidson, H. Fosseus, H.S. Govinder, L.G.S. Griffin, B. Kruger, S.P. Lediga, S.M. Mokitini, G. Setiloane, S. Robert, G.T. Vika, A. Mzileti, O.J. Zondi, B. Naudé, R.S. Taylor and F. Wilson. See Goodall, *Uppsala Report 1968*, pp. 408, 410, 412, 415, 417, 419, 424–425, 429–430, 436, 438, 441, 443–444 and 453.



attendance were also pro-apartheid South African agents that Beyers Naudé had mentioned in the Johannesburg daily, the *Rand Daily Mail*.<sup>25</sup> The agents dropped two Department of Information 'fact sheets' outside the door of each delegate and also left copies of a book by W.A. Landman entitled, *A Plea For Understanding: A Reply to the Reformed Church of America*. Landman was a director of the NGK and his book was a response to criticism levelled against the Dutch Reformed Churches who were supporting apartheid. By then it was more than five years since the DRC had officially withdrawn from the WCC, yet it still wanted to present its case through surreptitious, unnamed individuals. Delegates were reported to have been highly upset by this incident.<sup>26</sup> Bam confirmed this in her testimony,<sup>27</sup> although Joe Matthews could not recall the episode.<sup>28</sup> It thus appears that not everyone present at Uppsala was aware of these intrusions.

There was a significant increase in the number of black South Africans attending compared to earlier assemblies. Alpheus Zulu was already a member of the WCC Central Committee. Bam, who was previously the South African secretary of the Young Women's Christian Association, had been a WCC staff member since 1967.<sup>29</sup> She was among the first few African women employed at the WCC headquarters.<sup>30</sup> Z.K. Matthews also worked there until his untimely death in 1967. The general secretary spoke with great regret of the death of Matthews. His son, Joe Matthews, an attorney, was invited to attend the Uppsala General Assembly.<sup>31</sup> He had left South Africa in 1960 and was doing political work for the ANC and its military wing, MK.<sup>32</sup> Uppsala therefore had a multiracial South African representation, which also included political activists.

The assembly was a unique opportunity for them as they came from racially segregated areas and were political exiles; in their own country, it was a punishable crime for blacks such as Bam, G.T. Vika and Zulu, from the urban townships and rural villages, to interact freely with Naudé and Robert Selby Taylor from the white suburbs. Besides, as black and white South Africans, they had diverse views on the apartheid system in their country. Uppsala therefore offered them a common space to meet, share meals and most importantly to discuss apartheid over several days, to seek solutions to overcome it.

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25. *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 July 1968, cited in Ryan, *Beyers Naudé*, pp. 119–120.

26. C.G. Ryan, 'From Acquiesce to Dissent: Beyers Naudé' (MA dissertation, UNISA, 1997), pp. 108–109.

27. Telephonic interview with Brigalia Bam, 13 May 2010.

28. Informal conversation (chance meeting) with Joe Matthews, Johannesburg, 16 May 2010.

29. Interview with Brigalia Bam, Pretoria, 11 November 2008.

30. M.A. Oduyoye, 'A Decade and a Half of Ecumenism in Africa: Problems, Programme, Hopes', in A.J. Van der Bent, ed., *Voices of Unity: Essays in Honour of Willem Adolf Visser't Hooft on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday* (Geneva: WCC, 1981), p. 73.

31. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 22nd meeting of Central Committee (hereafter CC) of the WCC, Uppsala, 18 and 20 July 1968, p. 21; and interview with Baldwin Sjollema, Geneva, 3 August 2006.

32. J.G. Matthews (for SADET), *The Road to Democracy: South Africans Telling their Stories, Volume 1* (Johannesburg: Mutlootse Publishers, 2008), p. 23.

Wolfram Kistner has highlighted a number of points that indicate the relevance of these ecumenical world conferences in the anti-apartheid struggle. The first was the fact that the representatives of South African churches were forced to face the problem of apartheid in their country. The second relates to the above paragraph, where representatives of South African churches met with fellow Christians from exile, some of whom were supporters of the armed struggle. The third point of relevance was that the representatives of the South African churches met Christians from neighbouring states and from countries in East and Central Africa who had attained their independence from former colonial powers and were observing the political developments in South Africa. Finally, representatives of the South African churches met black activists from the US who were involved in the civil rights movement and were fighting for the recognition of their rights from a Christian platform.<sup>33</sup> These conferences thus certainly influenced the direction the WCC was to take in its responsibility to oppose apartheid.

Archbishop Taylor described the Uppsala Assembly as ‘opening up a new chapter in the fight against racism’ and went on to say that the ‘gathering condemned racism in no uncertain terms’.<sup>34</sup> Two South African churches, the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa and the Moravian Church, Eastern Province, applied and were accepted as new members of the WCC.<sup>35</sup>

The WCC recognized that the world faced a crisis of racism which was as serious as the threat of a nuclear war. In profound and spiritual language, the delegates expressed their resolve to fight racism ‘at all levels of mankind’s deepest and most vulnerable emotions – the universal passion of human dignity’.<sup>36</sup> The following is the statement on racism the WCC delegates made, at the Uppsala Assembly:

Racism is a blatant denial of the Christian faith. It denies the effectiveness of the reconciling work of Jesus Christ, through whose love all human diversities lose their divisive significance. It denies our common humanity in creation and our belief that all men are made in God’s image; it falsely asserts that we find our significance in terms of racial identity rather than in Jesus Christ. Racism is linked with economic and political exploitation. The churches must be actively concerned for the economic and political wellbeing of exploited groups so that their statements and actions may be relevant. In order that victims of racism may regain a sense of their own worth and be enabled to determine their own future, the churches must make economic and educational resources available to under-privileged groups for their development to full participation in the social and economic life of their communities. They should also withdraw

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33. Frochtling *et al.*, *Wolfram Kistner*, pp. 171–172.

34. Taylor, ‘The Church is Being Persecuted’, p. 246.

35. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 22nd meeting of CC of the WCC, Uppsala, 18 and 20 July 1968, p. 22.

36. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.01, Report of the Committee on Church and Society, Uppsala Assembly, August 1968.

investments from institutions that perpetuate racism. They must also urge that similar assistance be given from both the public and private sectors. Such economic help is an essential compensatory measure to counteract and overcome the present systematic exclusion of victims of racism from the mainstream of economic life. The churches must also work for the change of those political processes which prevent the victims of racism from participating fully in the civic and governmental structures of their countries.<sup>37</sup>

The message from this statement was transparent. The WCC intended to make the Church relevant by being actively involved in the economic and political realms of society to fight racism. It was promising financial and educational help to those at the receiving end of racism, so that they could overcome their hardships and lead quality lives in their communities. It was threatening to withdraw its own financial investments from institutions that practised racism.

This was a radical shift from the earlier mindset held by the WCC and its membership. The political and economic framework from which the WCC had operated previously had placed the whites in a dominant position in race relations. Visser't Hooft, the former general secretary had wanted to confine the WCC to the business of the Church and not become involved in politics. The WCC was led by influential industrialists like Grubb, who encouraged complicity with apartheid. Before 1960, the WCC had not been prepared to spend a cent of its own money to help set up the Race and Ethnic Relations Secretariat to help fight racism. Instead, it relied on individuals to sponsor this effort. There was now an acknowledgement of the complexity of relations between blacks and whites and a recognition of the need to attend to the imbalances in political and economic power to achieve racial justice.

Visser't Hooft acknowledged the shortcomings of the WCC's efforts thus far in addressing race relations. He admitted that it had set too much store on persuasion by declarations and was not sufficiently aware of the irrational factors that had arisen. He accepted that the WCC had not given adequate attention to the economic factors involved and that it had placed too little insistence on the very considerable sacrifices that had to be made if racial justice was to prevail.<sup>38</sup> The hunger to repair the situation and the remorse for past inadequacies inspired the WCC leadership and members to begin acting vigorously against the perpetuation of apartheid. In other words, they came to terms with their theological obligation to address the scourge of racism.

Pauline Webb, the British Christian who had experienced apartheid first-hand while visiting South Africa, was present at Uppsala. She conceded that the WCC had at last heard the cries of its delegates who called for peace. More importantly, the WCC had begun to heed the cries of the hungry and exploited who demanded bread and justice; at last the millions of victims of discrimination

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37. *Ibid.* See also section 4 of the Uppsala Report quoted in J. Vincent, *The Race Race* (London: SCM Press, 1970) p. 40.

38. P. Bock, *In Search of a Responsible World Society: The Teachings of the WCC* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), p.178.

were claiming their human dignity. Webb believed that 'Christ wanted His Church to foreshadow a renewed human community'. In her opinion, Christians were to manifest their unity in Christ by entering into full fellowship with those of other races, classes, age, religious and political convictions, in their home countries.<sup>39</sup> Her assertion exemplified the level of commitment in the WCC.

On 16 July 1968, at much the same time as the WCC community began to explore ways to stop racism, the apartheid government detained Benjamin Ramotse, an ANC freedom fighter. He was kidnapped by the Rhodesian (Zimbabwe) police near the Bechuanaland (Botswana) border and was handed over to the South African authorities. He endured protracted torture, all the more so because his detention by the South African police was in complete secrecy. He was only brought to trial two years later after 702 days of captivity. This cruelty was committed in the name of preventing the likes of Ramotse, who were deemed 'a dangerous threat to white security',<sup>40</sup> from resisting against the apartheid government.

The Theological Commission of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and the Christian Institute (CI) issued a joint statement entitled 'A Message to the People of South Africa' condemning apartheid as false and utterly hostile to Christian belief. The people behind it, Beyers Naudé and Bill Burnett, were influenced by the 1966 Geneva Consultation on Church and Society that the WCC had arranged.<sup>41</sup> The message cited the stance taken by the British Council of Churches and the Reformed Church of America, both of which categorically condemned apartheid as un-Christian in 1965 and 1967 respectively.<sup>42</sup> To Zolile Mbali, an individual black voice representing many, the significance of this message was that it 'put the responsibility of challenging apartheid squarely before white South African Christians'.<sup>43</sup> Vorster warned church leaders against trying to stir up racial emotion as Martin Luther King had done in the US. He was quoted in the press as saying 'cut it out immediately, for the cloth you carry will not protect you if you try to do this in South Africa'.<sup>44</sup> In Geneva, the WCC received the efforts of the SACC and CI message positively.<sup>45</sup> The real challenge

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39. P. Webb, *The Worldwide Webb: Memoirs of a Life in the Universal Church* (Norwich and London: Canterbury Press, 2006), p. 89.

40. M. Fullard, 'State Repression in the 1960s', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa Volume 1, 1960–1970* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), p. 351.

41. De Gruchy, *Church Struggle*, pp. 115–118.

42. PCR Collection: Box. 4223.0.07, 'A Message to the People of South Africa', 1968.

43. Mbali, *The Churches and Racism*, pp. 45–46.

44. *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 September 1968, cited by D. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid: Ecumenism in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1989), p. 35; D. Hudson, *The WCC in International Affairs* (London: Faith Press, 1977), p. 97.

45. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.01, Minutes of meeting of Staff Coordinating Committee on Racism (hereafter SCCR) (formed by the WCC Department on Church and Society) held on 8 October 1968. The meeting was attended by Eugene Blake, Rena Karefa-Smart, (secretary) and others, including committee members Paul Albrecht, Burgess Carr, Baldwin Sjollem, and David Gill. Apologies were received from Brigalia Bam, Lukas Vischer and others. Those absent included Prof. Bakart and Rev. Kitagawa.

was whether the local churches and Christians would capitulate in the face of Vorster's intimidation – or go ahead with their plans to combat apartheid.

The apartheid establishment had by this time built up a 20-year bastion of legally sanctioned racism in South Africa. The country had also enjoyed unprecedented growth in the 1960s.<sup>46</sup> Foreign investments continued to bolster the apartheid state's economy. Brimming with economic confidence, the Pretoria regime was able to ward off external pressure. This explains why it was able to continue its gross violations of the fundamental provisions of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Sampie Terreblanche contended that 'until the mid 1970s, the National Party was far more concerned about its power base among white voters than about protests brewing in the ranks of people other than white, or in international organizations such as the UN and OAU'.<sup>47</sup> In the case of the WCC, the apartheid government had thus far had little to fear. It had faced quiet condemnation from the WCC until 1960. Thereafter it received open condemnation, short of action. The message from Uppsala in 1968 was different. The WCC wanted its Christian Church constituency to act against racism. To some observers, the apartheid state was very sensitive to criticism from international agencies. Quiet or open condemnation was always labelled 'interference' in South African domestic affairs.

### Unfolding process

The WCC top leadership was determined that the clearly articulated message that emerged from Uppsala – 'words seem cheap and empty'<sup>48</sup> – did not fall on deaf ears. Immediately after the assembly, the Central Committee set in motion a process which was to guide the WCC in acting against the racism that Vorster and his government continued to perpetrate. It authorized the Department of Church and Society to hold a consultation to assist the WCC develop a crash programme against racism.<sup>49</sup> This department was home to the Race and Ethnic Relations Secretariat which had been taking up such issues since New Delhi.

The Church and Society Department collaborated with other divisions to establish a Staff Coordinating Committee on Racism (SCCR), which was responsible for the early development of the programme. Eugene Blake, the WCC general secretary, chaired this planning committee.<sup>50</sup> Committee members included Brigalia Bam, Rena Karefa-Smart, Baldwin Sjollema, David Gill, Paul

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46. W. Beinart and S. Dubow, eds, *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 13.

47. S. Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2002), p. 305.

48. E. Adler, *A Small Beginning: An Assessment of the First Five Years of the Program to Combat Racism* (Geneva: WCC, 1974), p. 10.

49. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of the 22nd meeting of the CC of the WCC, Uppsala, 18 and 20 July 1968, p. 8.

50. WCCRS, Minutes of meeting of Executive Committee of the WCC, 1969, p. 26.

Albrecht, Burgess Carr, Lukas Vischer and several others.<sup>51</sup> Within a period of six months, the SCCR reported its recommendations (as required by the Central Committee) to the Executive Committee, which met in January 1969. The Central Committee met once a year whereas the Executive Committee met several times if and when it was necessary to do so. The SCCR suggested that a world consultation on racism be held in London in May 1969, and this was duly approved.<sup>52</sup>

The purpose of the international consultation was to explore the nature, causes and consequences of racism in the world and to advise the WCC on an ecumenical programme of education and action to eradicate it. The WCC sought input from various people with expertise on this issue, including South Africans. It was Bam who suggested the list of South African participants at this consultation. She chose individuals with significant political and academic profiles who could speak candidly on apartheid. She also considered candidates who could travel overseas and return to South Africa without political intimidation from the state.<sup>53</sup> Included in the list of invitees were Helen Suzman, a parliamentarian,<sup>54</sup> Absalom Vilakazi, an anthropology professor,<sup>55</sup> Van Zyl Slabbert, a sociologist<sup>56</sup> and Alex Borraine, the president of the South African Methodist Church. Others were Beyers Naudé, Bill Burnett and Gabriel Setiloane all of whom had been present at Uppsala the previous year. Ian Thompson was not a delegate but attended as a press representative.<sup>57</sup> Despite being invited, Suzman, Van Zyl Slabbert and Naudé were unable to attend the consultation for various reasons.<sup>58</sup>

The ANC leaders based in London, such as Robert Resha, who was a representative in exile,<sup>59</sup> did not concern themselves much about the interest of the churches in the struggle against racism. They therefore declined the invitation from Bam to participate in the consultation.<sup>60</sup> Joe Matthews corroborated that this was the general attitude of the ANC in exile. Joe Slovo, a lawyer and prominent South African Communist Party (SACP) leader, who was one of the organizers of

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51. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.02, WCC Department on Church and Society, 'Proposal for a Consultation on Racism', April 1969.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Telephonic interview with Brigalia Bam, 13 May 2010.

54. Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helen\\_Suzman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helen_Suzman), accessed 5 May 2010.

55. See A.L. Vilakazi, 'White Social Scientists and South African History', *African Studies*, 38, 2 (1979), pp. 225–229.

56. Information on Frederick van Zyl Slabbert in *Who's Who SA*, available online at [Whoswhosa.co.za/user/1128](http://Whoswhosa.co.za/user/1128), accessed 5 May 2010.

57. I. Thompson, 'The Problem of Power and the Problem of Guilt', part 1, *Pro Veritate*, 8, 4 (August 1969), p. 9; D. Thomas, *Christ Divided: Liberalism, Ecumenism and Race in South Africa* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2002), p. 211.

58. Suzman and Slabbert cited prior arrangements; Naude cited political pressure: telephonic interview with Brigalia Bam, 13 May 2010.

59. T. Karis and G.M. Carter, eds, *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa 1882–1964, Volume 4, Political Profiles* (Stanford: Hoover Institutional Press, 1977), p. 133.

60. Telephonic interview with Brigalia Bam, 13 May 2010.

the Congress movement,<sup>61</sup> apparently felt it was something of a joke that Matthews had accepted the invitation to attend.<sup>62</sup> Oliver Tambo, the Christian ANC acting president, however, received the invitation from the WCC positively. He attended as a replacement for the Christian Mozambican, Eduardo Mondlane, who was assassinated a few months prior to the consultation.<sup>63</sup> Also present was Garfield Todd, the former prime minister of Southern Rhodesia, who was active in seeking to combat racism.<sup>64</sup>

The South Africans, together with other participants from different parts of the world, were expected to consider racism as a universal scourge. The special emphasis was to be on its manifestations in selected regional and national situations, as well as its implications for the churches and how they were to contribute to the creation of a world community.<sup>65</sup>

In the same year, at Morogoro, Tanzania, the ANC held its own conference, with the aim of reviewing its policy, strategy, leadership structure and style of work as a political movement. During the 1950s, the ANC attracted wider support because of its broad church approach. It worked with communists, churches and liberals. Membership, however, remained closed to all but Africans.<sup>66</sup> The ANC finally opened membership to other racial groups, even though they were not allowed into the ANC national executive. In the country a year earlier, the South African Student Organization (SASO) had broken away from the formally non-racial but white-dominated National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). SASO wanted to provide black students with a vehicle of their own to fight apartheid.<sup>67</sup> The ANC conference in Morogoro; the formation of SASO; and the WCC consultation at Notting Hill, were all examples of the racial struggles being waged in the world community in the 1968–1969 period.

The SCCR intended to have a session focusing on South Africa, given that the situation there was an obvious case of institutional racism, which was supposedly justified on biblical grounds. The theme planned for this session on day three of the consultation was: 'The Struggle of the Churches with an Official Government Policy of Racial Segregation'. This was to be discussed under the topic 'The Struggle to De-racialize: Techniques of Education and Action Used in Society and Church'. The South African churches were expected to present one of the

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61. Karis and Carter, *Political Profiles*, p. 147.

62. Informal conversation with Joe Matthews, 16 May 2010.

63. Sjollema, *Long Struggle*, p. 12; Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom for My People: The Autobiography of Z.K. Matthews, Southern Africa 1901 to 1968* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1981), p. 210.

64. Electronic interview with Pauline Webb, 9 December 2008.

65. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.02, WCC Department on Church and Society, Proposal for a Consultation on Racism, April 1969.

66. N. Ndebele and N. Nieftagodien, 'The Morogoro Conference: A Moment of Self-reflection', in SADET, *Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960–1970* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), pp. 573–599; Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*, pp. 330–334.

67. Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality*, p. 350.

papers. On day six, when there was to be worship and Bible study, the SCCR planned a dialogue between Beyers Naudé and Canon Burgess Carr on selected passages,<sup>68</sup> however, Blake received a letter from Naudé advising of his inability to participate in the London consultation because of heightened political tension in South Africa.<sup>69</sup>

Naudé was referring to hostility between the government and the churches in South Africa. He and Burnett had attended the WCC consultation in Geneva in 1966, which inspired them to compile their 'Message to the People of South Africa' (1968), refuting the so-called biblical validity of apartheid. The state reacted negatively and this led to a verbal spat between church leaders and the prime minister. The following are examples of their exchange. They wrote to Vorster:

With all due respect, though with the greatest firmness, we must assure you that as long as attempts are made to justify the policy of apartheid by appeal to God's Word, we will persist in denying their validity; and as long as it is alleged that the application of this policy conforms to the norms of Christian ethics, we will persist in denying its validity.

Vorster responded in an open letter:

It is your right of course to demean your pulpits into becoming political platforms to attack the Government and the National Party, but then you must not be touchy when I and others react to your political speeches in the way I have done. It does not surprise me that you attack separate development. All liberalists and leftists do likewise. It is with the utmost despicability, however, that I reject the insolence you display in attacking my Church as you do. This also applies to other Churches, ministers of the Gospel and confessing members of other Churches who do in fact believe in separate development. ... I again want to make a serious appeal to you to return to the essence of your preaching and to proclaim to your congregations the Word of God and the Gospel of Christ.<sup>70</sup>

The pressure on Naudé was all too evident. The SCCR agreed that discussions on South Africa and apartheid would continue even though he felt it inadvisable to participate at the consultation. The SCCR also made it very clear that the WCC was not going to avoid considering difficult and controversial issues relating to racism during the consultation.<sup>71</sup>

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68. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.02, WCC Department on Church and Society, Proposal for a Consultation on Racism, April 1969. This was a second draft; the first was drawn up on 1 November 1968.

69. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.01, Minutes of meeting of SCCR, 25 March 1969.

70. This exchange is cited by De Gruchy, *Church Struggle*, pp. 118–119.

71. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.01, Minutes of meeting of SCCR, 25 March 1969. In Box 4223.1.02, there are several versions of the 'white racism' document; the process of refining it began in August 1968 and continued until just before the consultation in May 1969. See 'An Ecumenical Program to Combat Racism' (approved by CC, Canterbury, August 1969).



The document on white racism that had been circulated at the Uppsala General Assembly went through a rigorous process of refinement in order to form part of the forthcoming consultation. The WCC Executive Committee, at its meeting in January 1969, approved the focus on white racism without necessarily neglecting other forms of discrimination.<sup>72</sup> The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) was also asked to give its views on the document, so that cooperation could be sought in the WCC and RCC programmes and publications.<sup>73</sup> This indicated significant growth in the WCC's ecumenism; it was moving strongly towards a broad-based Christian approach to social issues.

Since there had been no designated session on racism, the delegates did not vote on the status of the white racism document circulated at the Uppsala Assembly. This angered Frances Smith, who was a staff member of the Ecumenical Feature Service. She argued that she had heard the WCC making similar statements against racism in the past – she was disappointed that the Uppsala delegates had not adopted this document at the assembly. Instead, they handed over the responsibility of dealing with racism to the Central Committee.<sup>74</sup>

The Archbishop of Cape Town, Robert Selby Taylor, was troubled by the 'background statement' (the white racism document), for a different reason. He sought clarity on its status. He also wanted reassurance from the WCC general secretary that he would prevent a repetition of the confusion which had arisen at Uppsala in the way the issue of racism had been handled.<sup>75</sup> The confusion arose from the fact that firstly, the Uppsala delegates were required to deal with racism without prior consultation and adequate preparation. Secondly, the discussions on white racism were not finalized because there had not been a specific session on this theme. Taylor wanted clarity on whether the focus on white racism had a bearing on the South African situation. Some of his colleagues knew him for denouncing apartheid openly and effecting changes behind the scenes. It was also known that he found the abrasive attacks on apartheid counter-productive.<sup>76</sup> His anxiety was indicative of the challenge he faced in dealing with the government's policies and the direction the WCC was taking in handling racism. In Taylor's opinion, the oversight of not including a special focus on racism in the planning of the Uppsala Assembly had created this dilemma for the WCC. The contrasting reactions by Smith and Taylor mirrored the division within the WCC membership in its readiness to deal with racism.

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72. See PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.01; and *Ecumenical Review*, 21, (1969), p. 349.

73. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.01, Correspondence from Paul Albrecht to Rena Karefa-Smart, on suggestions for revising the background statement on racism, 2 December 1968.

74. PCR Collection: Box 4223. 1.02, F.S. Smith, 'World Council Confronts Race Turmoil', pp. 1 –2. Frances Smith, was a WCC staff member in the Ecumenical Feature Service.

75. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.03, Letter from Blake to Archbishop of Cape Town, 24 September 1968.

76. A. Lindhorst, *The Golden Mitre: A Tribute to the Life and Ministry of Archbishop R.S. Taylor* (Cape Town: A. Lindhorst, 1995), p. 68.

Blake responded by informing the Archbishop that even though the 'background statement' had not been issued as an official WCC document, it still reflected the convictions of many (but not all) of its constituent members. For that reason, he could not reassure Taylor that the WCC statements on race relations were designed to satisfy all Christians. He reminded him of the Uppsala mandate that called on the WCC to act against racism.<sup>77</sup> His intolerant reaction towards the South African Archbishop was significant. It indicated his major concern about the deaths of church activists such as Martin Luther King and the ongoing suffering of countless millions of people, as a result of the destruction of white racism, worldwide. It also reflected the unevenness in the way the WCC members saw the urgency to tackle racism.

During this period, the WCC resolved not to avoid the difficult and controversial issue of racism.<sup>78</sup> The time to isolate apartheid had arrived; International pressure was rising. The WCC was now forthright; it was no longer evasive about the sin of apartheid to its South African partners. Previously, the South African churches had prevaricated about the problem of apartheid, and the WCC authorities had gone along with that. The WCC leadership was singing a different tune at this point.

### **Notting Hill consultation**

Notting Hill was chosen as the venue for the consultation on racism. This was a symbolic choice because it was here that the first British race riots had erupted in 1958.<sup>79</sup> The consultation provided leaders of the ecumenical movement and representatives of radical movements the opportunity to meet for the first time in an international context.<sup>80</sup> This was remarkable because few (if any) organizations were able to convene a gathering of this kind. The participants were a diverse group made up of social scientists; trade unionists; advocates of militant black power; student leaders; exiles from southern Africa; Roman Catholic Church observers; and the WCC members.<sup>81</sup> The presentations were widely varied and yet united in the common desire to eradicate racism.

Southern Africa was under the spotlight. All the participants identified the policies of the white minority regimes as the source of the problem. They pointed out that the problem in the southern African region was compounded by the support the powerful Western governments provided to the white minority governments. The churches were called to use their economic and moral influence to stop the racism and exploitation perpetrated by the white minority regimes. They were asked to adopt economic sanctions, boycotts and to provide moral and material

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77. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.03, Letter from Blake to the Archbishop of Cape Town, 24 September 1968.

78. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.03, Minutes of meeting of the SCCR, 25 March 1969.

79. Hudson, *The WCC in International Affairs*, p.105.

80. Sjollema, *Long Struggle*, p. 12.

81. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.02, Ecumenical Press Service (EPS), 30 January 1969 (WCC Nb/3–69).

support to the liberation struggles of black southern Africans.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, Joe Matthews solicited Church support for the armed struggle against apartheid. He argued that Christians had also supported resistance movements against Nazism.<sup>83</sup> This was a significant moment in legitimating the armed struggle in the WCC discourse. It marked a decisive shift away from the previous pacifist approach.

Scott, Tambo and Matthew had left South Africa clandestinely because of state repression. They were travelling the world and participating in international forums to solicit help to end apartheid. Scott had investigated the abuse of black labourers in the Eastern Transvaal and had also participated in the Indian passive resistance campaign in the mid 1940s. He was consequently arrested and was declared a prohibited immigrant in South Africa.<sup>84</sup> He submitted the Herero petition at the UN and mobilized world opinion against South Africa's apartheid policies in Namibia.<sup>85</sup> Tambo left the country precisely to sustain the struggle against apartheid. In 1964, he addressed the UN Special Committee against Apartheid in New York. He then travelled widely to inform the world of the struggle South Africans were waging against an extremely brutal system of racist oppression. He urged the international community to lend its support against apartheid to help the ANC build a non-racial democratic society.<sup>86</sup> Matthews and his father were arrested during the 1960 state of emergency after Sharpeville, when the ANC and the PAC were banned.<sup>87</sup> Afterwards he left the country for Lesotho and became the link between freedom fighters in exile and those who remained inside the country. He attended the International Communist Conference and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) inauguration in 1960 and 1963 respectively to seek help for the liberation movement.<sup>88</sup> Both Tambo and Joe Matthews knew firsthand the meaning of apartheid and its destructive power in the region. They were therefore in a position to make suggestions on how the Church could add value in the liberation struggle.

There was also a view that the power of white racism could still be broken and non-racial societies created, through predominantly peaceful means. This view was held by white southern African Christians and those who were sympathetic

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82. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.03, National Council of Churches of the US, 'An Economy of Performance. Racism as a Major Obstacle to World Community: A Position Paper on Southern Africa (Respectfully)'. WCC Consultation on Racism, London, 19–24 May 1969

83. Matthews, *South Africans Telling their Stories, Volume 1*, chapter 1, p. 23.

84. P. Walshe, *Prophetic Christianity and the Liberation Movement in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1995), p. 46.

85. A. Yate and L. Chester, *The Trouble Maker: Michael Scott and his Lonely Struggle against Injustice* (London: Aurum Press, 2006), pp. 74, 75, 82-84.

86. E.S. Reddy, ed., *From Oliver Tambo. Apartheid and the International Community: Addresses to the United Nations Committees and Conferences* (London: Kliptown Books, 1991).

87. F.B. Matthews, *Remembrances*, Mayibuye History and Literature Series, no. 54 (Belville: Mayibuye Books, 1995), pp. 73–74.

88. J.G. Matthews, 'Matthews', in *South Africans Telling their Stories, Volume 1*, pp. 21–22.

towards them.<sup>89</sup> Other contributions on various aspects of racism reinforced the belief that the churches needed to become involved in the political arena of their respective countries in order to build a more equal society. J.N. Kamikamica, from Fiji advocated concerted action and positive programmes to improve the economic, social and political environments to bring about a better distribution of resources and income in the world. He reiterated the point that the time for statements and pronouncements was over and drove home that the WCC should now walk the talk against racism.<sup>90</sup>

Not surprisingly, a week-long gathering that deliberated on the explosive topic of racism stirred up a great deal of drama. Cathy Walker, an Australian poet and political activist, related how white Christians and colonialists had brought Bibles, guns, liquor and disease to her country. She predicted that power would be wrested away from them violently if white people did not learn to submit this power to the poor and the powerless. Professor Jean Pliya of Dahomey spoke in quiet intensity of his fear about what would happen if the tables were turned and the oppressed became the oppressors, especially in a world where white people were in the minority and their number was constantly diminishing in proportion to the black majority. Trevor Huddleston was renowned for his commitment to the struggle against apartheid and the plight of black South Africans.<sup>91</sup> He and Oliver Tambo were jeered by white right-wingers who shouted 'long live apartheid!' and cheered for Ian Smith. In another incident, a quintet of black Americans with a Nigerian demanded £60 million from the WCC to be paid by the following morning, but did not appear the next day.<sup>92</sup>

The drama was significant in many respects. It made the WCC more appreciative of the brutality of racism that black people endured. It highlighted the call for reparations and the need for the WCC to heed that call. Moreover, it alerted the WCC to the challenge from opposition (right wing or otherwise) that it would have to face in the future.

It is worth detailing Ian Thompson's reflection on his personal reactions and overall impressions of the consultation:

I went to the May WCC Consultation on Racism in London fully expecting, as a South African, to enjoy a certain prominence or at least the distinction of notoriety. I went along clutching my copy of 'The Message to the People of South Africa', and other evidence of what the South African Council of Churches, the Christian Institute and the Obedience to God Movement are doing – as evidence of my bona fide fight to be at the conference

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89. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.02, WCC Consultation on Racism, London, May 19–24 1969, Working Group III, Southern Africa Draft, p. 1.

90. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.03, WCC Consultation on Racism, London, May 19–24 1969, 'The Struggle to Deracialise: The Role of the Churches and the WCC', no.9/E.

91. See, T. Huddleston, *Naught for your Comfort* (London: Collins, 1956).

92. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.03, Robert Nelson's editorial correspondence, 25 June 1969. Nelson, a Methodist from Boston University, participated in the consultation and wrote of the various dramas there. See also Hudson, *The WCC in International Affairs*, pp. 105–106.

and as my passport to acceptance. Although I went to the consultation not as a delegate, but as a representative of the press, I fully expected to be attacked and confronted with angry demands to justify my presence, or to be congratulated for the stand taken by the South African Council of Churches against racism ... Like a spoilt child that always expects to enjoy the limelight and to be the centre of attention and who deliberately misbehaves when he is not getting the desired attention, I found myself behaving in what I imagine is a rather typical fashion for a South African in such a situation – reacting in a deeply ambivalent fashion to my own country. On the one hand wanting to represent myself as an optimist radical and to disassociate myself from the guilt of our society, or wanting to give way to a paroxysm of despair and self-pity and tragic pessimism about the future of South Africa. Similarly I found myself torn between the self-righteous desires for an opportunity to accuse others. (It is amazing how self-righteous one can be, even in one's repentance and confession of responsibility for one's part in the guilt of our society.) Yet the disconcerting, even embarrassing thing was that one was ignored. (This was the experience of the South African delegates at the Uppsala Conference too.) One was dismissed as irrelevant. Again, like a spoilt child one wanted to create a scene; to insist that we are important; that South Africa is the centre of the universe; that our problems are more important than any others; that at least the problems of the world are to be seen in microcosm in South Africa. One wanted to insist that what had happened with the publication of 'The Message' is significant; that 'The Message' really offers a recipe for the salvation of mankind and that the world should take heed of it.<sup>93</sup>

In other words, South Africa did not feature prominently at this consultation. Passing reference was made several times to the 'Message' and the courage of 'those few individual churchmen who were attempting to keep alive the Christian witness in South Africa'. Thompson elaborated on other features of the consultation, including the varied perspectives of international delegates. He highlighted that it was the wider problem presented by world poverty and population explosion that claimed most attention – including the issues of just distribution of political, economic, scientific and technological power. He also made the point that the consultation had moved quickly away from parochial problems and issues of local politics in specific countries and attempted to review racism in a global perspective against the background of the supra-national movements, economic realities as well as scientific and technological developments of the twentieth century.<sup>94</sup>

He further contrasted the worldwide perspectives on racism with the South African outlook:

... one was struck by the pathetic ego-centricity of South Africans, by the neurotic way in which we are preoccupied with ourselves and our problems and obsessed with our own importance. We are isolated from the main currents of world opinion, shut up in our laager, fed on canned opinions – and all South Africans, Black and White, are increasingly affected by this isolation. I remember a prominent South African churchman remarking some years ago that ours is a schizophrenic society. Yet I have never been

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93. Thompson, 'Problem of Power', part 1, p. 9.

94. *Ibid.*

so struck by the truth of this remark as I was at this consultation when I reflected on my own behaviour, that of my fellow South Africans and that of South African political refugees. We all suffer from 'delusions of grandeur' – whether we are Nationalists offering our panacea for the salvation of mankind and the perseveration of White Christian National Civilization, or liberal churchmen with our 'Message to the People of South Africa', or political refugees. We all too easily see ourselves, consciously or unconsciously, in the role of saviours, heroes, or martyrs. Our schizophrenia is also illustrated by the paranoiac way in which we inevitably see ourselves as scapegoats, as persecuted – perhaps all too easily seeing ourselves as Suffering Servants – and the way we rush self-righteously into attempts to justify ourselves and accuse others or simply surrender to self-pity and despair.<sup>95</sup>

His brutal honesty about his personal reaction and his observation of South Africans in relation to the world, are of fundamental importance. They provide insight into the nature of the relationships not only between the leadership of the South African ecumenical churches and the WCC, but also between the leadership of the South African liberation movements and the WCC, with respect to the anti-apartheid struggle. The exchange between the Archbishop of Cape Town and the WCC general secretary on the question of the white racism document discussed above, is a case in point. Thompson enhances our understanding of the tensions between the local and international church activists in the global anti-apartheid struggle. The issue for the WCC was the harsh reality of massive worldwide injustice at the hands of white racism, as the WCC general secretary perceived. The WCC's main concern was not whether the South African progressive church delegates were well prepared for the consultation; nor was it inclined to spend much time on a document focusing on white racism drawn up in South Africa, that the Archbishop of Cape Town was upset about. His correspondence with Blake makes it clear that the WCC was far from narrowly focusing on South Africa although the repressive nature of white racism in the country unavoidably attracted the attention of the WCC. Thompson dispels the impression that the WCC was obsessed over South Africa; it had a far wider emphasis on the global ramifications of racism.

### **WCC statement after Notting Hill**

After Notting Hill, the WCC issued a statement to churches and Christians announcing ways to defeat racism. Those identifying with the status quo in race relations were seen as part of the problem; they were accused of not using the weapons they had at their disposal to combat racism. Christians were then called upon to confront racism as a movement rather than at an individual level. They were asked specifically, with their governments, to apply economic sanctions against corporations and institutions involved in racist practices and policies. The WCC asked Christians to educate themselves by reading the UNESCO racism report in order to understand why they should become involved in the struggle

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95. *Ibid.*, p. 10. See also, I. Thompson, 'Impressions of the WCC Consultation on Racism', *Pro Veritate*, 8, 2 (June 1969), pp. 14–15; I. Thompson, 'The Problem of Power and the Problem of Guilt', part 2, *Pro Veritate*, 8, 5 (September 1969), pp. 4–6 for more details.

against racism. The statement also supported the principle of reparations to the exploited peoples as an attempt to help redress the economic imbalances in the world. The WCC leadership resolved to form an adequately resourced unit to focus on combating racism. The CCIA was chosen to coordinate the suggested strategies by the churches to combat racism in southern Africa. Notably, the statement instructed that if all else failed, the WCC and member churches were to support resistance movements, including revolutions aimed at eliminating political and economic tyranny which made racism possible.<sup>96</sup> Thompson again sheds light on the final statement. He stated that condoning the use of force and recourse to revolution was carefully qualified by the expression, 'all else failing' – then, and only then, in the consultation's view would such tactics be justifiable.<sup>97</sup>

The WCC's statement was of great consequence in that it marked its departure from pacifism and passive resistance. Firstly, it indicated that the WCC was entertaining the idea of a moral justification to wage a 'just war' against the white governments in southern Africa, where massive racial injustice was prevalent. Secondly, it showed that the active resisters were ready to face up to the pacifists and passive resisters within the WCC with respect to structural violence by white racist governments in that region and elsewhere in the world. Thirdly, it signified that the active resisters were willing to become a pressure group against the injustice of racial domination. Fourthly, it meant that the active resisters were willing to use radical measures such as economic sanctions to that end. Most pertinently, the statement spelt out that in the event of the failure of other forms of resistance, the active resisters were prepared to support revolutionary organizations who were fighting for non-racial, just societies.

The racism consultation and its follow-up statement generated a great deal of publicity. In South Africa, the WCC resolution on southern Africa was widely reported as condoning the use of violence. As a result, certain denominations seriously considered disassociating themselves from the WCC. Leading clergymen also reacted negatively because they assumed (inaccurately) that the WCC's statement was aimed primarily at South Africa.<sup>98</sup> A Swiss newspaper article accused the WCC of instigating a 'holy war'.<sup>99</sup>

The SCCR met to review the situation and to discuss the process of writing the report, how the inputs, feedback, criticism, and contexts were to be handled until the stage when the report was submitted to the WCC Central Committee. Rena Karefa-Smart reminded the SCCR members that churches in the West had agreed on such measures during the Second World War and the Korean War. She argued therefore that the WCC also had to admit that it was taking a

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96. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.03, Statement of the Consultation on Racism, London, 19–24 May 1969.

97. Thompson, 'Problem of Power', part 1, p. 10.

98. *Ibid.*

99. The Bible explains a 'holy war' as one that is fought primarily for a religious purpose. An example is the war fought by the Israelites to claim the land God promised them. See, *The Holy Bible*, King James Version, Book of Joshua, chapter 2: 1–17; chapter 11: 1–23.

decision on a 'holy war'.<sup>100</sup> Her argument is of paramount importance. It validated Joe Matthews's appeal to the WCC and the churches, to support the armed struggle against apartheid. It also marked a particular moment in the WCC's process of abandoning its pacifist approach when dealing with the structural violence inherent in racist systems perpetrated by white governments in southern Africa. More importantly, it was the SCCR, chaired by the general secretary, that convinced the Executive and the Central Committees on the new direction the WCC was to take against racism moving forward.

For the ecumenical South African churches and Christians, the writing was on the wall. Decoding the statement in their context meant an indictment of white Christian partners supporting or passively protesting the apartheid system. The WCC was now calling for an uncompromising rejection of apartheid. It was requesting support in the political strategy of sanctions that would transform the imbalances in economic and political power in South African society. It was calling for the sharing of wealth, development and privileges with fellow black South Africans in the townships, those in remote, barren villages and those who had left the country to go into exile. All, in other words, who were bearing the brunt of the apartheid system. Further, the statement suggested that as a last resort, the WCC would consider the support of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and the Azanian People's Liberation Army, of the ANC and PAC respectively, in a liberation war against the South African apartheid government.

Scholars such as John de Gruchy, David Thomas and Darryl Balia have focused their research on the South African ecumenical churches' struggle against apartheid. Their studies provide insight on how the local churches reacted to the WCC. According to De Gruchy, the SACC Executive Committee responded critically. He argued that the SACC had no desire to defend apartheid, but was rather critical of the means proposed to combat racism. Its churches and many individual Christians were reluctant to use revolutionary means to dislodge entrenched injustice. He elaborated on the SACC's response:

We are disturbed by the way in which the Churches and the World Council in section 6 are called upon to initiate the use of means usually associated with the civil power in the struggle against racism. These are the weapons of the world rather than the Church.<sup>101</sup>

Thomas claimed that the CCSA/SACC reacted with shock. He cited the SACC general secretary, Bishop Burnett, whose comment in his report to the 1969 national conference of the SACC was that he felt that the WCC statement was poorly constructed and badly expressed. He therefore found it difficult to endorse it. He reported that the reaction of many was to ask that the Church should condemn it out of hand.<sup>102</sup> Bishop Burnett appealed to the WCC Central

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100. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.03, Minutes of SCCR meeting, 19 June 1969. Minutes were in dialogue form, making it possible to know who said what among the committee members.

101. De Gruchy, *Church Struggle*, pp.128–129.

102. Thomas, *Christ Divided*, p. 211.



Committee against the recommendations of the Notting Hill consultation without success.<sup>103</sup> However, Balia, the author of *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, suggests that Burnett's appeal came from an isolated white hierarchical structure of the SACC. That was his interpretation of why the WCC Central Committee was unsympathetic to such appeals from South African churchmen.<sup>104</sup>

The leadership of the WCC paid little heed to critical comment from the SACC because it had already acknowledged the need for revolutionary change in social and political structures of unjust societies, including that of South Africa, at the consultation on 'Church and Society' in 1966. Furthermore, at Uppsala in 1968 it had called on all Christians and churches (including those in South Africa) to oppose publicly and actively the continuation of the myth of superiority of one race.<sup>105</sup> The assassination of black Christians such as Martin Luther King in April 1968 and Eduardo Mondlane in February 1969 had added fuel to the fire. In addition, the WCC was fully aware that there was ongoing suffering of black citizens under the apartheid government in South Africa, as well as racial injustice elsewhere in the world. These realities had compelled the WCC to move away from a passive approach to in transforming discriminatory societies. Bishop Burnett was present at the consultations in Geneva in 1966, at Uppsala in 1968 and was also invited to Notting Hill in 1969. These were the three forums that marked the shift in the WCC's thinking on dealing with world racism.

The main issue for the WCC at Notting Hill was departing from pacifism in the harsh reality of the violent deaths of black Christian leaders and the pain black peoples were suffering in various parts of the world, including South Africa. It was also to redistribute economic, political, scientific and technological power (all predominantly under white control) more evenly among people of all racial groups. It was far from merely targeting the South African ecumenical partners to transform their own society.

It is clear that the problem for the SACC was the *direction* the WCC was taking moving forward; it was not the craft or lack thereof in compiling the Notting Hill statement that Bishop Burnett was criticizing. The issue was that his appeal to the WCC Central Committee was ignored, as were those of other South Africans.

The next step in this process was for the SCCR to compile a full report for the Central Committee which was due to meet in August 1969. Preparation for the report took two months, from June to July; it was a period of intense work, with the SCCR paying particular attention to the content and the form of the report. There were rigorous debates on whether to use the word 'eradicate' or 'combat'

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103. De Gruchy, *Church Struggle*, p. 129.

104. Balia, *Christian Resistance*, pp. 48–49.

105. The Church and Society Consultation in 1966 is discussed in chapter 2. See also De Gruchy, *Church Struggle*, p. 117; Frochtling *et al.*, *Wolfram Kistner*, p. 173.

in the programme, for example.<sup>106</sup> In addition to the SCCR, there was also a sub-team, the Staff Executive Group (SEG), which took decisions on some of the work the SCCR coordinated.<sup>107</sup> It was the SEG that ultimately reported back on the Notting Hill recommendations on the lines of actions for an ecumenical programme to eradicate racism.

It pleaded for a profound and renewed commitment from the churches and the WCC to offer a convincing moral lead in the urgent struggle against racism. The report identified areas covering the scope, the basis, the outline, structure and budget for the programme. The SEG report declared:

The scope of a new ecumenical program for the elimination of racism indicated that Christians had to be the vanguard of the struggle against racism; some churches felt the issue of racial justice more keenly than others and therefore the sense of urgency was not uniform. It was often the very areas which did not sense that urgency, which posed the greatest problem. Racism was present in all aspects of human life. It had to become a priority concern in all aspects of the work of the WCC. In sum, racism had to be a concern of International Affairs, Church and Society, Laity, Mission, Faith and Order. All the departments and divisions of the WCC were to show a commitment in the ecumenical attack on racism.<sup>108</sup>

The following key points were seen as the basis for the programme:

1. The facts about racism and the struggle for racial justice had to be presented to the churches, including the WCC's constituency, in a more systematic and effective way.
2. More opportunity was to be availed for confrontation between those holding different positions on the meaning of racial justice and those advocating different methods of attaining it.
3. There was to be mobilization of all ecumenical activities and concerns in support of the struggle against racism.
4. There was to be a new ecumenical action to establish unequivocally ecumenical belief in human solidarity and racial justice and to support the opponents and victims of racist and related forms of political and economic oppression.<sup>109</sup>

The WCC was to undertake a five-year programme focusing on selected areas in southern Africa, Latin America, Asia, Australia and the Pacific, North America and Europe. It had specific tasks to perform. These included having teams of inquirers to express ecumenical concern and assist in formulating guidelines for action; holding consultations on selected issues with the potential to bring audiences with diverse views to confront each other to maximize common action to achieve justice; and exploring all available means to bring racial justice,

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106. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.03, WCC Plan for an Ecumenical Programme for the Elimination of Racism, as proposed by the WCC Staff Executive Group, undated.

107. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.03, Report of the Staff Executive Group.

108. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.03, WCC Plan for an Ecumenical Programme for the Elimination of Racism, as proposed by the WCC Staff Executive Group, undated, p. 2.

109. *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3.

including economic sanctions, by member churches and their governments. Furthermore, it was envisaged that the tasks should include helping member churches to develop strategies by examining ways in which they could stand for the rights and meet the needs of victims of racism; as well as collecting and circulating analyses of racism (including theological analyses) to the churches so that they could in turn inform and educate their members. Finally, provision had to be made for assessing the existing WCC programmes and structure for possibilities to increase the support efforts for racial justice; as well as encouraging member churches and national and regional councils of churches to prioritize the problem of racism in their national programmes.<sup>110</sup>

The SEG advised the Central Committee to appoint three staff members to prepare, execute, stimulate and coordinate the proposed programme. The staff members were also to gather information and provide the necessary technical expertise for the operation of the proposed programme as a whole. In addition, the Central Committee was to appoint an International Advisory Committee and 20 specialists, including members of the Central Committee, who were to advise and guide the structural unit of the programme. The SEG even challenged the Central Committee to be exemplary by changing the racial and cultural imbalance within the WCC's structures, staff and its decision-making bodies.<sup>111</sup>

The WCC was called upon to provide a budget for the administration, the projects and the programme's special fund. The funds were to be derived from three sources within the WCC: the general budget; the Service Programme budget of the Division of International Church Aid Refugees and World Service (DICARWS); and the operating fund of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism (DWME). The special fund needed a total amount of US\$500,000. It was to be created by the transfer of US\$200,000 drawn pro rata from the three WCC sources given above. Member churches were expected to contribute the outstanding US\$300,000. The money was to be distributed to organizations of oppressed racial groups or those supporting victims of racial injustice whose purposes were compatible with those of the WCC. The WCC Executive Committee was to make the final decision on recipients from the fund.<sup>112</sup>

## Canterbury

The SEG was even more daring. It proposed that the Central Committee pledge to act corporately, in order to remove every element that was racist in the WCC itself during the five-year period of the proposed programme.<sup>113</sup> Members of the Central Committee finally endorsed the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR). The following is what the SEG wanted the members of the Central Committee to agree to in order to show their commitment to dismantle racism:

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110. *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

111. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–8.

112. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

113. *Ibid.*

Confessing Jesus Christ, the Man who was and is for all men, as the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, and as responsible members of its constituent churches, we covenant to act corporately in order to remove from the institutional life of the WCC, during the period 1969–1975, all that is racist and thus be equipped for a more effective struggle against this demonic manifestation in our temporary world. We further covenant to combat racism in all its forms and at all levels through a world programme to be carried out in cooperation with other agencies and groups and with all men of goodwill. As members of churches we pledge ourselves to fight for their sacrificial involvement in the struggle against racism, at all levels in their structure and by measures at least as far reaching as those endorsed by this Central Committee.<sup>114</sup>

Thus, the PCR was inaugurated at Canterbury, three months after its shape was carved in Notting Hill, London. Of particular significance was that South Africa's Bishop Zulu was part of this Central Committee.

It is equally important to note that not everyone in the WCC leadership structure was happy with the newly formed PCR. The end product itself showed a discrepancy from the outcome of the consultation. It was tamer than anticipated, although it still remained an activist programme. The disagreement was mainly between those from the West and those in the 'developing world', although there were exceptions to this generalization. Some of the ecclesiastics perceived it as too radical for their liking.<sup>115</sup> The US Bishop Roy C. Nichols of the United Methodist Church voted against the PCR's plan and recommended that it went to the Reference Committee for mediation. Dr R. Marshall of the Lutheran Church in the US (who was a member of the WCC Central Committee) and Dr. E.A. Payne, a Baptist representing Great Britain and Ireland, objected to the use of the WCC financial reserves for the PCR special fund; they found such a policy morally wrong and thus problematic.

Geoffrey Nutall, the author of *Christian Pacifism in History*,<sup>116</sup> argued that Christians have the inclination to sanction the use of violence either as a means for attaining racial justice or as a means to maintain order and safeguard existing structures and institutions against revolutionary or subversive attack.<sup>117</sup> The argument bears relevance to the WCC. Such tendencies were played out in the WCC Central Committee, where there was disagreement on the Christian response to violence in the transition to modern times. Some were objecting to the WCC using its funds to support revolutionary organizations aimed at bringing about racial freedom; others approved of the WCC using the PCR and its special fund as a weapon to end racial domination. The former view was put to a vote

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114. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

115. Hudson, *The WCC in International Affairs*, p. 106.

116. G.F. Nutall, *Christian Pacifism in History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958).

117. G.F. Nutall, *Christianity and Violence* (Royston: Priority Press, 1972), p. 4; also cited by D.P. Whitelaw, 'Christian Responses to Violence: A Historical Survey', in W. Vorster, ed., *Views on Violence* (Pretoria: Gutenberg, 1985), p. 23.

and defeated. Those predominantly from the 'developing world', namely India, China, Africa and African Americans, supported the latter view.

Two US members of the Central Committee, Charles Spivey and Jean Fairfax, were particularly concerned about the deeper meaning behind the PCR.<sup>118</sup> For Spivey, white racism was not the only element in the problem, but as far as the Church was concerned, it was the greatest and most serious element. He felt that something more than an act of contrition was called for. He wanted the WCC to make available resources so that people could be helped to break out of the restrictive structures in which they lived. Fairfax wanted the Central Committee to clarify that the special fund to victims of racism was not a call for grants or 'charity' from wealthy churches, but was part of an agenda for the redistribution of economic power with a view to make self-determination meaningful.<sup>119</sup>

Pauline Webb appealed to the Central Committee members to act as a community of human beings representing both the oppressed and oppressor races in such a way as to demonstrate solidarity with one another and all who were engaged in the struggle to eradicate this evil from their midst. She welcomed the proposed programme and called upon all to make some corporate act to assist those engaged as victims or activists against oppression.<sup>120</sup>

Bishop E.S. Reed of Canada pointed out that racism was bound up with development and distribution of the world's resources. For him the question facing the Central Committee was whether the Church was determined to serve God's purposes at this time. He argued that God had given them an instrument in the WCC through which they could take corporate action worldwide. He wondered whether or not the WCC would put itself behind a definite programme for the eradication of racism.<sup>121</sup> The support for PCR ultimately prevailed.

## **Ulvenhout**

Erica Meijers, the editor-in-chief of *De Helling*, a Netherlands newspaper, shed light on the fierce response by the South African and Western churches to the launch of the PCR. She reported on the heated debates that focused on the use of violence, berating the decision that the special fund was to provide financial support to revolutionary organizations without any prerequisite on the methods used to fight racism. She drew attention to the secret Ulvenhout consultation held in the Netherlands in October 1969. The supporters of the Christian Institute (the South African organization headed by Beyers Naudé) were offered an opportunity to discuss their displeasure about strengthening ties with freedom fighters. The platform was also provided for them to voice their preference for the

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118. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 23rd meeting of CC of the WCC, Canterbury, Kent, 12–22 August 1969, pp. 36–38.

119. *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 37.

120. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

121. *Ibid.*, p.39.

traditional way of the Church. They were reported to have pleaded for an intensified dialogue between black and white rather than promoting black resistance.<sup>122</sup> Naudé participated in this consultation. He apparently expressed the view that he discouraged communication with South African organizations that used violence to achieve their aims.<sup>123</sup>

Sjollema also explained the Ulvenhout consultation as an attempt to devise an alternative to the radical terms of the PCR. According to him, a group of liberal white Western churchmen were alarmed by the developments and tried to come up with recommendations for other less radical options that were available to the PCR. He speculated that the group wanted to use the good offices of Naudé in an attempt to find a compromise or an alternative to the PCR.<sup>124</sup>

The Ulvenhout consultation was of paramount importance. It indicated the high degree of tension in the ecumenical community on the direction the WCC was taking in respect of racism. It was not only ecumenists in South Africa but those abroad, notably in the Netherlands, who objected to the radical approach the WCC was embracing. The issue for this faction was the availability of a more moderate approach to transform societies into a just world. The South African church leaders, especially those involved in the SACC and the Christian Institute favoured this option.<sup>125</sup> They were wary of endorsing liberation movements who had opted for armed action and had formed military wings. A better choice for this moderate faction was promoting multiracial organizations such as the Christian Institute, which had emerged as the vanguard organization of Christian dissent.<sup>126</sup>

The conspicuous racist system in South Africa soon came under the spotlight of the newly approved PCR. It made plans to conduct research on the problem of apartheid in southern Africa to guide the WCC towards appropriate action. Arrangements were made for the PCR to hold consultations to provide an opportunity for dialogue between South Africans holding different opinions on the meaning of racial justice and those advocating different methods of attaining it. In other words, the PCR was to provide platforms for South Africans such as Archbishop Taylor and Oliver Tambo, to engage one another in an attempt to address apartheid. The PCR hoped to explore all available means to end apartheid including economic sanctions by its global member churches and by the governments in countries where these churches were based. It also intended to help the SACC in developing strategies to fight apartheid. For example, it was to examine ways in which the South African churches could stand up for the rights of black South Africans who were victims of apartheid and to try and meet

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122. E. Meijers, 'White Brothers, Black Strangers: Dutch Churches and Apartheid in South Africa', *Exchange*, 38, 4 (2009), p. 374.

123. Ryan, *Beyers Naudé*, pp. 135–137.

124. Electronic interview with Baldwin Sjollema, 19 April 2010.

125. De Gruchy, *Church Struggle*, p. 128.

126. P. Walshe, 'Mission in a Repressive Society', in P. Randall, ed., *Not Without Honour: Tribute to Beyers Naudé* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981), pp. 55–56.

their needs. Furthermore, the PCR was to explore the WCC structures and programmes to identify whether there was any possibility of giving additional support to anti-apartheid initiatives. It also intended to encourage all the member churches, including those from South Africa, such as the Presbyterian Church of South Africa; the Church of the Province of South Africa; the Moravian Church; as well as the SACC and the AACC, to make the problem of apartheid their priority.

The battle lines were drawn against the apartheid system. From this point, the WCC was waging a war against the sin of apartheid. It indicated its readiness to turn to more radical and activist methods of fighting through the PCR. The apartheid government was a formidable foe which had survived for two decades; it also had staunch support both nationally and internationally.

The WCC Executive Committee appointed Baldwin Sjollema, a Dutch sociologist, as the executive director of the PCR. He was an insider and had done much groundwork on racism before and after the Uppsala General Assembly. According to one of the WCC Executive Committee members, Sjollema was the obvious choice for this position.<sup>127</sup> Joe Matthews was also approached but he declined because he had political commitments in Lusaka.<sup>128</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This period saw radicalization within the WCC in its struggle against racism, caused by the crisis of racial discrimination and political turbulence throughout the world. Nor was the WCC unscathed. Its members were saddened by the assassinations of two remarkable black Christian leaders, Martin Luther King Jr in 1968, and Eduardo Mondlane in 1969. The 'crime' they had apparently committed was fighting against racial discrimination. The process of establishing the PCR was therefore a product of the trauma in many countries around the world. The apartheid system practised in South Africa weighed heavily on the conscience of the ecumenical Christian constituency and the broader global civil society. It was evident that not everyone in the ecumenical Christian community accepted the departure from non-violent to militant means to transform the world.

Uppsala was a turning point in the history of the WCC because it addressed itself to the calamity of racism. This was despite the fact that the focus on racism by itself was an addendum at the assembly. The violent nature of racism directly affected the ecumenical Christian community. For that reason, Eugene Blake, the WCC general secretary initiated the proposal that the assembly should address the issue. Together with colleagues such as Brigalia Bam, Baldwin Sjollema, David Gill, Rena Karefa-Smart and others, he placed white racism on the agenda and engaged in sharp debate at the assembly. It was this group which ensured that the delegates deliberated on white racism in many of the sessions. The

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127. Electronic interview with Pauline Webb, 9 December 2008.

128. Informal conversation (chance meeting) with Joe Matthews, Johannesburg, 12 April 2007.

outcome of these deliberations was a new approach which linked racism with political and economic exploitation. By the end of the assembly the WCC embraced radical means to transform racialised societies.

The 'background document' which isolated white racism was pointedly not adopted as an official policy at the Uppsala Assembly. Its persistence in the aftermath of the assembly had a discomfiting effect on some individual members in South Africa, such as the Archbishop of Cape Town. He wanted to be fully informed in advance whether the focus would be on white racism; he also felt that as an associate member he should be consulted prior to the assembly. Although Blake replied to Taylor's letter, his request was simply ignored.

Further, some of the delegates had leaflets and other propaganda material justifying the apartheid system placed surreptitiously for their attention by agents of the South African government, which had the backing of the DRC Church. The intention was to influence the attitude of the WCC towards its apartheid policies.

The Notting Hill consultation was another landmark in the approach to racism by the WCC. Firstly, the reach was widened to include the WCC staff, given that there were initially only a few who pioneered the specialized focus on racism. Members from all divisions and departments were invited to become involved in this initiative via the Staff Coordinating Committee on Racism (SCCR). The pioneers remained involved in the SCCR and the Staff Executive Group (SEG) which finalized the report that was to guide the WCC Central Committee on this issue. Secondly, the WCC brought together an array of opinion that other organizations would never have been able to do. This was despite the divisive nature of religion. The WCC was commended for its

sincere and largely successful attempt to bring together people of virtually every shade of political opinion, from extreme left wing politicians, representatives of Black Power organizations, conservative White businessmen and politicians, to non-believers or members of other non-Christian religions'.<sup>129</sup>

The political profile of participants who attended contributed in the politicization of the debate on racism. Consequently, the solutions to end racism were of political nature. Despite the diverse contributions, the participants were united in the quest to end racism.

Yet strident rightwing hecklers hurled insults at Trevor Huddleston and Oliver Tambo when the two anti-apartheid activists criticized the Western conception of Christian civilization, one that subtly promoted acceptance of the doctrine of

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129. Thompson, 'Problem of Power', part 1, pp. 9–10. See also Mbali, *The Churches and Racism*, p. 16.



white superiority and black inferiority.<sup>130</sup> The hecklers presumably believed in racial hierarchy and the survival of the apartheid system.

More pertinently, the outcome of this consultation was what Ian Thompson eloquently expressed as the 'global perspective [of racism] against the background of the supra-national movements and economic realities and scientifico-technological development of the twentieth century'.<sup>131</sup> The consultation reiterated the radical means of transforming racialized societies that had been put forward (but not officially accepted) at Uppsala. It went further and suggested that only if non-violent political strategies failed, would the use of force and recourse to revolution be condoned.

The consultation was intended to advise the WCC on the approach to take when dealing with the problem of racism. The WCC still had to decide on this, based on the advice it received. The decision to be made was a critical one with serious implications for the path the WCC would follow in the anti-racism struggle. Significantly, it was at this particular time that the WCC took a stand on the side of the revolutionary organizations. The turning point was when the WCC was accused of making the anti-racism struggle a 'holy war'. Rena Karefa-Smart, a member of the SCCR, pressed the WCC to make that critical determination. This was against the backdrop of Joe Matthews's plea to the churches at Notting Hill to support the armed struggle the liberation movements were waging against the apartheid regime.

The SACC leadership was opposed to racism but it disapproved of the WCC's techniques to dismantle racial injustice. In its view, the churches should use non-violent and moderate tactics to redistribute economic, political, scientific and technological power more evenly. The SACC general secretary expected a soundly constructed and definitive statement by the WCC after the consultation at Notting Hill. Ian Thompson admitted that the reports and resolutions were drafted hurriedly and were inevitably inadequate. In his view they tended to be framed in terms of the same old clichés rather than representing the new terminology and current tendencies raised at the consultation.<sup>132</sup> The appeal made by the SACC general secretary was critical of the WCC's statement but was simply ignored by the WCC Central Committee.

Behind the final declaration of intent of the PCR were the individuals who initiated the white racism discussions at Uppsala. Some of them were members of the SCCR that arranged the Notting Hill consultation and drafted the WCC statement thereafter. Others were part of the Staff Executive Group that reported directly to the Central Committee. These individuals were the 'holy warriors' who lobbied

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130. Sjollema, *Long Struggle*, p. 13. Brigalia Bam confirmed this incident in a telephonic interview, 13 May 2010.

131. Thompson, 'Problem of Power', part 1, p. 9.

132. Thompson, 'Problem of Power', part 2, p. 5.

the WCC highest decision makers to commit to a combative programme to transform racialized societies.

The PCR was designed as an educational programme to eradicate racism. The SCCR did not believe that the WCC's Education Department had the capacity to handle such a programme. This was because the PCR was to focus on political education and political strategy for mobilization rather than mainstream education. It was about the redistribution of wealth from the haves to the have-nots through funding. It was about consultations to bridge the differences between those who opposed racism.

It was ultimately the majority of the Central Committee members who were persuaded to approve the PCR. They placed themselves in the forefront of an activist programme to uproot entrenched racial domination in the world. At the same time, a minority in the WCC Central Committee disagreed with the proposed PCR. It favoured a moderate programme; it did not want to redistribute the WCC financial reserves to 'subversive' groups which had formed military wings to wrest power away from white minority groups. Nevertheless, the moderates in the Central Committee were outvoted.

The apprehension about the PCR was also expressed at Ulvenhout by a group of ecumenists from South Africa and the Netherlands. These were the individuals who supported the Christian Institute. They did not want it known publicly that they disagreed with the radical approach and the prominence the freedom fighters were given by the WCC leadership. A better option for them was strengthening discussions between black and white people in South Africa and elsewhere; they wanted less emphasis on black resistance.<sup>133</sup> Beyers Naudé did not favour being hand-in-glove with the ANC and the PAC both of whom were engaged in an armed struggle to liberate South Africa from the apartheid government.<sup>134</sup>

It is relevant to emphasize that South Africans fiercely opposed to apartheid lost a rare opportunity provided by the WCC. Notting Hill was an ideal platform for direct dialogue between Beyers Naudé, Michael Scott, Oliver Tambo, Ian Thompson and Joe Matthews. The consultation created the space for them to tackle their disagreements over economic sanctions and the support for the armed struggle, among other concerns.

Erica Meijers argued that the new generation of Dutch anti-apartheid activists had less empathy for the Afrikaner and related more to black South Africans during this period.<sup>135</sup> Baldwin Sjollema, the Hollander who pioneered the PCR at the WCC certainly developed a good rapport with Tambo;<sup>136</sup> he also established

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133. Meijers, 'White Brothers, Black Strangers', p. 374.

134. Ryan, *Beyers Naudé*, pp. 135–137.

135. Meijers, 'White Brothers, Black Strangers', p. 374.

136. Interview with Baldwin Sjollema, 18 July 2006.

a good relationship with Naudé.<sup>137</sup> More relevant was the profound impression Tambo made on Blake, the American general secretary of the WCC and many others who interacted with him at Notting Hill.<sup>138</sup> Tambo was not just the president of the ANC. He was also an active Anglican layman.<sup>139</sup> He was known as 'a person of rational thought who could deal with both the concrete and the abstract, the specific and the general and who understood well the dialectical interaction between tactics and strategy'.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, there was already an affinity with Joe Matthews through his father, Z.K. Matthews, who had worked for the WCC. Joe Matthews was broadminded and an intellectual in his own right. The WCC's confidence in him was indicated by the fact that Blake considered him for a position on the staff of the PCR.

The appointment of Sjollema signified the triumph of the 'holy warriors' in the WCC in the struggle against racism. Sjollema began his task as one of the creators of the white racism document mooted at Uppsala. He progressed into the SCCR and later to the SEG which influenced the WCC Central Committee to approve the PCR. He ultimately became the director of the PCR. This in itself is evidence of the ascendancy of the militant element within the WCC.

It is also worth noting that South Africans were closely involved in the process of creating the PCR. This was something unique; other countries where racism was prevalent did not enjoy this opportunity. Joe Matthews, Francis Wilson, Bill Burnett, Beyers Naudé and others made their contribution at Uppsala. Brigalia Bam was one of the role players in formulating the white racism document and remained a member of the WCC Staff Committee which coordinated the entire process. Tambo, Thompson and Matthews all contributed at Notting Hill. Bishop Zulu played his role as a member of the WCC Central Committee which endorsed the proposed PCR at Canterbury.

James Baldwin's direct call to the WCC to end apartheid focused attention on South Africa. This meant added pressure on the Pretoria government and on member churches. For black South Africans, the victims of enduring racial injustice, it meant added support to end their misery.

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137. Electronic interview with Baldwin Sjollema, 19 April 2010.

138. Telephonic interview with Brigalia Bam, 14 May 2010.

139. Sjollema, *Long Struggle*, p. 12.

140. Thabo Mbeki, quoted by Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*, on back cover page.

## Chapter Four

### The PCR struggle against apartheid under the Uppsala mandate, 1970–1975

#### Introduction

The inauguration of the PCR signified activism in the WCC's struggle against racism. Activism is defined as a policy of taking direct and militant action to achieve a political or social goal.<sup>1</sup> The theologians Andrew Bradstock and Christopher Rowlands argue that Christianity has always been radical and political. It has been about deeds, and not words. Yet the radical stand within Christianity has neither been homogeneous in its radicalism or revolutionary in its activism.<sup>2</sup> Their argument bears relevance in the sense that the WCC did not only embrace a radical and politically charged, but also a divisive Programme to Combat Racism.

This chapter focuses on the PCR activities in its fight against apartheid in South Africa during the period 1970–1975. The approach the PCR adopted rested on a four-pillared strategy: funding; mobilization; political action; and bridging. The four were interconnected and all were important. However, their implementation created disharmony among the WCC policy-makers and the broader ecumenical Christian community. This disharmony endangered the survival of the PCR and its campaign against the racialized system.

The PCR organizational jigsaw and the controversial multiple strategies it adopted form the structure of this chapter. The organizational jigsaw refers to the configuration of the budget and the officials who administered the PCR during this period. The chapter assesses how effective the officials were in implementing the four strategies with the allocated budget. Section one proceeds with the first pillar, namely funding. It discusses the storm of controversy that erupted when it was announced that financial support would be given to the South African liberation movements and the various international anti-apartheid solidarity groups. It deals with the verbal battles about the sources of funding; the criteria used to disburse the funding; as well as the reaction and counter-reaction when the WCC publicly announced the beneficiaries. Section two deals with the second pillar of PCR strategy, the mobilization of the global ecumenical Christians against racism. It discusses the political education campaign which targeted people throughout the world in an attempt to make them more conscious of the apartheid system and thus motivate them to act against it. It

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1. <http://wordnetweb.edu/perl/webwn>, Activism, accessed 16 June 2010.
  2. A. Bradstock and C. Rowland, 'Christianity: Radical and Political', in A. Bradstock and C. Rowland, eds, *Radical Christian Writings: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. xviii, xx, xxi.

deals with the internal intellectual and ideological battles about who was to control the campaign. Section three discusses the third pillar, the political action to dislodge the apartheid system. It looks at foreign disinvestment from South Africa and the controversy that arose about this in the WCC constituency. Section four focuses on the fourth pillar and concerns measures taken to bridge the differences among South Africans opposed to the apartheid system. It deals with the platforms for dialogue the WCC created for them as residents of South Africa and political refugees in other parts of the world. It pays attention to the struggles amongst them to 'bridge' their differences and cooperate against their common enemy.

The South African government had implemented the apartheid system steadily over more than 20 years. The two white communities, the Afrikaans and English-speakers, held political control and the lion's share of economic power respectively, and were determined to preserve this domination over the black majority.<sup>3</sup> Direct foreign investment sustained the South African economy, despite a decrease in growth since the prosperous 1960s.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the development of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) restored some of the dignity and pride to African, Coloured and Indian South Africans.<sup>5</sup> Sam Nolutshungu argues that while the BCM existed independently of the ANC and the PAC, it also concluded that the armed struggle was inevitable to achieve freedom in South Africa.<sup>6</sup> Beginning to flex its muscles in 1973, the workforce that wielded the power of labour responded with widespread strikes against the exploitation of workers.<sup>7</sup> This marked a new era of political resistance against racial injustice in the country. Pertinently, it marked a new era in the WCC's opposition to apartheid and its solidarity with the oppressed people of South Africa, through the PCR.

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3. C. Legum and M. Legum, 'Power In South Africa', in R. Segal, ed., *Sanctions against South Africa*, (London: Penguin, 1964), p. 32.
  4. See, B. Nthai, *The Political Economy of South Africa: The Making of Poverty* (Washington: University Press of America, 1977), pp. 176–179; N.L. Clark, *Manufacturing Apartheid: State Corporations in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. xi; C. Coker, 'Constructive Engagement: The United States, Southern Africa and the Use of Positive Sanctions, 1969–1974' (PhD thesis, Wolfson College, 1982), pp. 81–87; R.M. Price, *The Apartheid State in Crisis: Political Transformation in South Africa, 1975–1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 24–25.
  5. See C.J. Gerwels, 'Black Power: South Africa', *South African Outlook*, 103, 1126 (July 1973), pp. 119–120; G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). Black Consciousness ideology grouped Africans, Coloureds and people of Indian descent together collectively as 'blacks'.
  6. S.C. Nolutshungu, *Changing South Africa: Political Considerations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), p. 183.
  7. D. Hemson, 'Trade Unionism and the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa', *Capital and Class*, 6 (1978).

## PCR organizational jigsaw

It is important to understand the organizational jigsaw behind the PCR to appreciate its effectiveness or lack thereof in the WCC's fight against racism around the world. The jigsaw comprised a number of different layers of control, not necessarily in order of rank or hierarchy but working towards the same goal as colleagues in various spheres of operation. The first layer consisted of three fulltime staff members based in Geneva: a director and a secretary for each of the two sections that dealt with research and the development of programmes respectively. Although they were all WCC employees, they had diverse professional backgrounds; the team comprised a sociologist, a lawyer and a theologian. More importantly, the three were not all Christians and did not all have inside information about the WCC operations.

The second layer consisted of about 30 members of the WCC Commission, who were resident in different countries throughout the world. They were appointed by the WCC Central Committee. The Commission comprised an array of activists and technocrats from both secular and church organizations besides the ecclesiasts from within the WCC. There were individuals connected to the racially discriminated groups; international solidarity groups; the United Nations; the Commonwealth; the OAU; and governmental structures such as parliament and official opposition parties. It was this PCR Commission, also known as the International Advisory Committee (IAC) that gave advice and guidance to the new PCR. It took decisions on the PCR projects and budget and made recommendations to the WCC Central and Executive Committees. The PCR Commission members met once a year in different parts of the world.<sup>8</sup> Their responsibilities were however ongoing and had to be carried out all year round. They used their grassroots insights to inform the PCR. They promoted the PCR activities in other forums. They also helped with research, projects and convening the consultations the PCR initiated.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the Commission members, there were consultants who were invited to the annual PCR meetings. These were individuals with specialized knowledge and experience in the anti-racism struggle.<sup>10</sup> The consultants did not have voting rights on the PCR decisions, a privilege reserved for Commission members.

The significance of the PCR Commission lay in three attributes. First, they were an assortment of independent-minded individuals, many of whom were committed and loyal primarily to the cause of anti-racism rather than to the WCC. The second was the variation in the nature of their activism against racism. The

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8. WCC, Main Library, Research Section, Geneva (hereafter WCCRS), Programme to Combat Racism Collection (hereafter PCR Collection): Box 4223.2.01, Confidential summary record of the 1st meeting of the IAC of the PCR, Geneva, June 1970.
  9. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.03, Correspondence between Baldwin Sjollemma and Eugene Blake, August to November 1969.
  10. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.02, David Gill, 'Consultation on Racism', in *Ecumenical Diary for Faith and Order*, undated.

third positive feature was their connection to various influential institutions with influence to sway the world community to become involved against racism.

These three features are illustrated in the role of Commission members such as Edward Brown, Alex Boraine, Nathan Shamuyarira and Andrew Young. Brown was an African American activist outspoken about the situation in the US.<sup>11</sup> He believed that the PCR was obsessed with southern Africa and was inclined to neglect the problem of racism elsewhere in the world; this led to his resignation in 1975.<sup>12</sup> Boraine, a white South African apartheid critic, was a parliamentarian, a member of the Progressive Party, the official opposition in government at the time.<sup>13</sup> He was also president of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.<sup>14</sup> His constant absence (due to political pressure) rendered him largely ineffective in the Commission. Shamuyarira, a black Zimbabwean political scientist fought on behalf of the militant groups such as the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwean African National Union and the Zimbabwean National People's Union. Young, a prominent black US civil rights activist, believed in non-violent resistance as a tactic for social change. He was a congressman, an ambassador to the UN and was president of the US National Council of Churches.<sup>15</sup> He made his presence felt at the Commission meetings.

During the first, somewhat uneasy meeting of the PCR Commission,<sup>16</sup> Eugene Blake requested Pauline Webb, who was a member of both the WCC Central and Executive Committees, to act as chair. She accepted the responsibility and was flanked by Blake, the general secretary, and Sjollema, the new PCR director. Young objected to being presided over by 'Queen Victoria' (Webb); a 'white American bureaucrat' (Blake); and a white Dutchman (Sjollema). Webb explained calmly that they understood the point Young was making, but that the PCR had shown that action against racism meant a willingness to share power rather than simply expressing principles.<sup>17</sup> It was this calibre individual, with different opinions on non-violence and militant resistance and with connections to government structures, the UN and the liberation movements, that could contribute to the effectiveness of the PCR.

The third layer in the PCR organizational jigsaw was the PCR Executive Committee, also known as the PCR Executive Group This was made up of about 10 people. Three of them were the fulltime employees and the rest were selected

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11. Electronic interview with Baldwin Sjollema, 8 September 2010.

12. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Correspondence on Edward C. Brown's resignation as a PCR Commissioner, 5 March 1975.

13. <http://www.ictj.org/news/features/2021.html>, Alex Boraine, accessed 17 June 2010.

14. *Ibid.* See also J.W. De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979), p. 260, footnote 30.

15. [http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew\\_Young](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Young), accessed 17 June 2010.

16. By this time the PCR Commission was also known as the International Advisory Committee (IAC). See PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, David Gill's letter to Rev. Frank Engel, informing him of the first meeting of the IAC, 4 June 1970.

17. Electronic interview with Pauline Webb, 9 December 2008.

from the PCR Commission. The Group had a moderator and a vice-moderator. The PCR Executive Committee (unlike the WCC Executive Committee) only met to take decisions on urgent matters.<sup>18</sup> The fourth PCR layer consisted of a Staff Coordinating Group (SCG) appointed by the WCC Executive Committee. It comprised about 25 to 30 Geneva-based individuals from the various departments and divisions of the WCC. Its purpose was to coordinate the WCC's overall efforts towards combating racism. It acted as a watchdog over the PCR from within the WCC.<sup>19</sup> Brigalia Bam, head of the Women in Church and Society division, was also part of this group.<sup>20</sup> Importantly, there was no uniformity in the way the SCG members supported the PCR.

The fifth layer of the PCR was Unit II of Justice and Service, which consisted of five commissions. These were the Commission on Inter-Church Aid Refugee and World Service (CICARWS); the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA); the Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development (CCPD); the Christian Medical Commission (CMC); and the Commission on the Programme to Combat Racism (CPCR). Some of these commissions (such as the CICARWS and CCIA) had been in existence for longer and were well resourced. The CPCR and the CCPD were new formations and were under resourced. Pertinently, to carry out its mandate to fight racism effectively, the PCR Commission relied on support from the other commissions within the Unit. Again, there was no uniformity in the way the Unit supported PCR.

At the time, the WCC was facing a serious financial crisis and therefore sought cost effective means to sustain itself. One way was by restructuring the manner in which its commissions coordinated their work.<sup>21</sup> There were three important functions linked to the PCR budget. The first was managing the day-to-day administrative expenses such as travel, telephone, faxes, printing and so on. The second was supervising the costs relating to the projects that the research and programme secretaries carried out. The third function was to distribute grants to organizations representing the racially oppressed and to solidarity groups. Both the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) located in Unit I of Faith and Witness, and the CICARWS, provided financial support for the PCR's administrative and projects costs.<sup>22</sup> In other words, because the WCC was in difficult financial straits, the other internal commissions took care of the first and second functions – the administrative and projects costs. It should be

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18. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Information on the PCR Executive Group.

19. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 24th meeting of the Central Committee (hereafter CC) of WCC, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 10–21 January 1971, Appendix vii, pp. 238–245.

20. Interview with Brigalia Bam, 11 November 2008.

21. It is important to bear in mind that apart from the new PCR, the WCC had other newly formed commissions such as the CCPD. These were set up in the same period. There was also an urgent need to deal with economic development to overcome poverty so there was competition for financial resources to implement the new programmes.

22. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Confidential summary record of the 3rd PCR Commission (IAC) meeting, 23–28 April 1972; Summary record of 1st PCR Executive Committee meeting, 5–6 August 1972.



emphasized, however, that the distribution of grants from the Special fund was handled exclusively by the PCR. The money for the Special Fund came from the WCC General Reserve Fund and from member churches

The sixth PCR organizational layer was that of WCC Central and Executive Committees. The individuals serving on these committees had the final say on all PCR activities. Although the members of these two committees were all opposed to racism, they did not all agree unreservedly on the radical approach the PCR embraced. The seventh layer was that of the individual Christians and member churches globally – the target audiences who in effect had to implement the PCR strategies. There was clearly no uniformity in the way the world community at large (be it Christian or non-Christian) supported the PCR.

Profiling this PCR organizational jigsaw is relevant in many respects. Firstly, it demonstrates that the PCR was in the hands of independent minded individuals. They were not all Christians; nor were they all members of the WCC. For that reason, there was impartiality on how the PCR activities should be carried out. Secondly, there were different kinds of activists within the various layers of the organizational jigsaw. They brought a diverse range of insights into the WCC's anti-racism commitment. Thirdly, despite the small complement of fulltime PCR employees, there was a wider network of individuals and establishments connected globally, who assisted in carrying out the WCC's struggle against racism. Then too, although there was genuine desire to end racism, the radical PCR approach proved divisive across the board.

## Funding

The central issue for the WCC was the problem of just distribution of power.<sup>23</sup> The rationale behind the funding of South African liberation movements (and other racially oppressed groups), was therefore to symbolize the redistribution of that power.<sup>24</sup> The financial support to liberation movements that were engaged in an armed struggle against the apartheid state became the widest known and most controversial of the WCC's concerns. It eclipsed all other activities the PCR undertook in its fight against apartheid.<sup>25</sup>

As indicated previously, the initial source of the Special Fund was the transfer of US\$ 200,000 drawn pro rata from the WCC general budget, the Service Programmes of the CICARWS and the CWME and the projected US\$ 300,000 in donations from member churches. The total of US\$ 500,000 was allocated to kick-start the Special Fund. At the time the WCC was in a grave financial predicament. The first hurdle for the PCR came from the Finance Committee and

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23. See I. Thompson, 'The Problem of Power and the Problem of Guilt', part 1, *Pro Veritate*, 8, 4 (August 1968), p. 9.

24. See B. Sjollema, 'Eloquent Action', in B. Sjollema, *A Long Struggle: The Involvement of the WCC in South Africa* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), p. 13.

25. C. Ryan, *Beyers Naudé: Pilgrimage of Faith* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990), p. 36.

some of the Central Committee members. They opposed the transfer of the WCC reserves to the Special Fund on the grounds that it would have negative fiscal implications in the future.<sup>26</sup> These Central Committee members found it morally wrong to use the WCC reserves to solve racial problems.<sup>27</sup> The dissenting view was defeated in a vote – which Claude Welch described (borrowing from the name of the hymn) as ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’ – by those who were ready to combat racism.<sup>28</sup> Regardless of the potential risk involved, the Central Committee endorsed the distribution of the money to oppressed racial groups.<sup>29</sup> This was a remarkable move. Previously, the Central Committee had refused to use the WCC’s own money to fight racism. This might well have seemed a victory for the ‘Christian soldiers’, but the shaky financial status and unhappiness among some members of the WCC was also a sign of looming obstacles on the road ahead.

The next hurdle was calling in the US\$ 300,000 contributions from member churches. The general secretary made urgent and repeated appeals to member churches for their cooperation and increased financial support so that it could comply with the Uppsala Assembly mandate to act against racism.<sup>30</sup> The Central Committee also appealed to member churches to give their full support to the PCR and its Special Fund.<sup>31</sup> Their begging yielded few positive results despite the general secretary’s creative suggestions on how member churches could become involved individually and positively in the PCR activities. Blake’s suggestions were that they could make a special gift to support the PCR per se; or alternatively the PCR could launch specialized study and action projects in various parts of the world, to which the relevant member churches could then promise their support. Significantly, he also encouraged the member churches to make a concerted effort to ensure that their churches and their societies at large achieved a better understanding of the significance of combating racism in the world community.<sup>32</sup> Because of the lukewarm response from member churches, it remained a constant problem to fill up the fund’s kitty. The WCC did not have the money it had pledged to redistribute to the racially oppressed; it was a classic case of over-commitment. The WCC’s rhetoric in favour of political and social freedom was not matched by its funding of the liberation movements.

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26. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 23rd meeting of CC of WCC, Canterbury, UK, 12–22 August 1969, Appendix xxi, p. 278.

27. *Ibid.*, ‘Plan for an Ecumenical Programme for the Elimination of Racism’, pp. 38–39.

28. C.E. Welch, Jr, ‘Mobilizing Morality: The World Council of Churches and its Programme to Combat Racism, 1969–1994’, *Human Rights Quarterly*, 23, 4 (November 2001), p. 881.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 882.

30. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.03, Blake’s letter to member churches 10 September 1969; and Blake’s letter to member churches on financial questions, 24 October 1969.

31. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 24th meeting of CC of WCC, Addis Ababa, 10–21 January 1971, pp. 54–59.

32. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Minutes of 2nd meeting of PCR Commission, 21 March 1970; Confidential summary record of 2nd meeting of PCR Commission, Geneva, 22–26 March 1971.

It became clear to those within the WCC who were committed to the PCR and its Special Fund that they would have to hunt for money to fill the fund's coffers. Baldwin Sjollema played a crucial role in this regard. He was able to persuade potential donors from the Church of England (the richest church in the UK), from Australia, Canada and the Netherlands. He also approached a number of selected Mission and Service agencies in these countries as well as others in Switzerland, Germany, New Zealand, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, France and the USA. By early 1970, there was hope that some money would be forthcoming. He did all this before the appointment of the PCR staff. This dedicated commitment to combating racism was destined to earn him the position of the PCR director.<sup>33</sup>

The first applications for Special Fund grants arrived in November 1969, three months after the WCC Central Committee's decision to set up the PCR.<sup>34</sup> It seems odd that the liberation movements, which had links with the WCC before 1969 and also played a role in the formation of the PCR, waited so long to apply for the funds they so sorely needed.

The Rev. Reinder van der Veen was a member of the PCR Commission. He also assisted in fundraising. Described as media minded, he organized television and radio interviews. He and Sjollema appealed to a wider sector of the Dutch population to remember how they liberated themselves from the Nazis during the Second World War. The Dutch were asked to contribute money to assist black people in their efforts to resist oppression in southern Africa. At the time, the Netherlands was preparing to celebrate the 25th anniversary of its liberation from Germany. The culmination of these efforts was when Queen Juliana made a handsome gift to the Special Fund from her privy purse.<sup>35</sup> Her gift was particularly significant for the PCR because it boosted the moral high ground of the WCC's stance against the competing morality of non-violence against international racism.<sup>36</sup> She had been present at the first General Assembly of the WCC in Amsterdam and personalized the Dutch nation's goodwill and hospitality.<sup>37</sup> When the Dutch government learnt that the Special Fund was to be used for humanitarian and educational purposes, it also responded positively and allocated US\$ 250,000 per year to the PCR until 1991.<sup>38</sup> Yet the Dutch residents

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33. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Correspondence, Baldwin Sjollema to Eugene Blake re staff; the IAC; the Special Fund; and the PCR, 27 November 1969; Memorandum from Sjollema to Blake re the Special Fund, 24 March 1970.

34. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Canon John Collins of the IDAF sent an application on 10 November 1969.

35. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Minutes of 2nd meeting of PCR Commission, 21 March 1971; D. Hudson, *The WCC in International Affairs* (London: Faith Press, 1977), p. 116.

36. Sjollema testifies that when they met with Queen Juliana, she asked a professor to show her the location of Guinea Bissau in the world map. When he was unable to do so, she ended up showing it to him. (Guinea Bissau liberation movements were also beneficiaries of the Special Fund grants.): interview with Baldwin Sjollema, 14 July 2008.

37. D.P. Gaines, *The WCC: A Study of its Background and History* (Peterborough: Richard R. Smith & Co., 1966), p. 231.

38. Welch, 'Mobilizing Morality', p. 889.

based in South Africa reacted negatively to the news of the support given to the PCR by the Netherlands, and organized a protest march to the Dutch embassy.<sup>39</sup>

Steadily, financial grants and pledges for the Special Fund arrived from churches, anti-apartheid groups, governments and individuals. The churches that contributed included the USA United Presbyterian Church and some in Indonesia, the Netherlands, Canada,<sup>40</sup> Liberia and Burma,<sup>41</sup> as well as the German Democratic Republic (GDR) through their organization, 'Bread for the World'.<sup>42</sup> Some PCR Commissioners noted that there were no contributions forthcoming from churches in Africa. This was probably because most of these churches gave direct financial support to the liberation movements rather than via the PCR in Geneva.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the AACC did eventually contribute after Canon Burgess appealed to the African Christians to support the liberation movements.<sup>44</sup> The UK-based Joseph Rowntree Trust, established in the name of the famous Quaker philanthropist, also donated funds.<sup>45</sup>

The governments that contributed included the Netherlands (through the Inter-Church Peace Council of the Netherlands);<sup>46</sup> Sweden through the Swedish International Development Association (SIDA);<sup>47</sup> as well as Denmark and Norway.<sup>48</sup> Significantly, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries were the only governments that openly supported the anti-apartheid call. The Dutch government set up a fund for public education on 'third world' issues. As a result of these donations, anti-apartheid organizations were able to grow and become more professional in the way they were run.<sup>49</sup> In Sweden, trade unions wielded

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39. S. Bosgra, 'From Jan van Riebeeck to Solidarity with the Struggle: The Netherlands, South Africa and Apartheid', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity*, Part 1 (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008), p. 538.

40. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Correspondence between Rev. R.E. Webster of the United Church of Canada, and Baldwin Sjollema: 27 June 1973; 13 July 1973; 14 July 1973; 25 March 1974; and 15 November 1974.

41. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Minutes of 4th meeting of PCR Executive Committee, Geneva, 13–16 December 1973.

42. The money could not be sent directly to the Special Fund because of transfer regulations. However the liberation movements were able to benefit directly from the amount. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Report and Background Papers, 'The Fund in the Context of the PCR', 1980 /no.4.

43. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Minutes of the 2nd meeting of the PCR Commission, 21 March 1971; and S.M. Ndlovu, 'The ANC and the World', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960–1970* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), p. 567.

44. Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, pp.115–118.

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Ibid.*

47. Welch, 'Mobilizing Morality', p. 889.

48. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Summary record of minutes of 2nd meeting of the PCR Executive Committee, 10–13 December 1972; Confidential summary record, minutes of 3rd meeting of PCR Commission, 23–28 April 1972; Minutes of 4th PCR Executive Committee, Geneva, 13–16 December 1973; PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Minutes of 5th meeting of PCR Commission, Staff Report on Programme Developments, 29 April to 3 May 1974 (Document 1); Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, pp. 115–118.

49. Bosgra, 'From Jan van Riebeeck to Solidarity with the Struggle', p. 538.

both labour and political power and therefore had a strong influence on legislation. Part of this legislation was to shun all links with white South African businesses.<sup>50</sup> The support of the Swedish government for the PCR was therefore hardly surprising.

Examples of individuals who donated include Gustav Heinemann, the president of the FDR,<sup>51</sup> and Garth W. Legge, from Canada.<sup>52</sup> At this point, the WCC desperately needed money from all possible sources – churches, governments and individuals – to deliver on the promise it had made when it pledged its solidarity with the liberation struggle. After nearly five years, there was at last a substantial balance in the Special Fund.<sup>53</sup>

Grants from the Special Fund were not arbitrarily distributed to organizations representing those who suffered racial discrimination. There was a particular procedure that had to be followed. The general agreement among members of the PCR Commission was that the main aim of the PCR was to express solidarity with the racially oppressed in word and deed. The underlying principle of the Special Fund was the transfer of power by the powerful to the powerless.<sup>54</sup> The applications received were for various purposes, such as research and education, legal defence, and action programme projects to benefit the liberation movements. The PCR staff and commission members came up with the following criteria:

1. The purpose of the organizations must not be in conflict with the general purposes of the WCC and its units, and the grants are to be used for humanitarian activities, i.e., social, health, educational and legal aid.
2. The proceeds of the Fund shall be used to support organizations that combat racism rather than welfare organizations that alleviate the effects of racism, which would normally be eligible for support of other units of the WCC.
3. (a) The focus of the grants should be on raising the level of awareness and on strengthening the organizational capability of racially oppressed people. (b) In addition we recognise the need to support organizations that align themselves with the victims of racial injustice and pursue the same objectives.
4. The grants are made without control over the manner in which they are spent, and are intended as an expression of commitment by the PCR in the cause of the economic, social, and political justice which these organizations promote.
5. (a) The situation in Southern Africa is recognized as a priority due to the overt and intensive nature of white racism and the increasing awareness on the part of

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50. A. Boraime, *A Life in Transition* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2008), pp. 77–78.

51. Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, pp. 115–118.

52. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Letter from Dorothy Salt (secretary to Rev. G.W. Legge of the United Church of Canada), to Baldwin Sjollema, 18 May 1972.

53. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02: The PCR staff asked some of its staunch supporters (notably the United Church of Canada) if it could use a portion of the donations for the Special Fund for administrative purposes. This was because the CICARWS was no longer helping the PCR: see letter from Baldwin Sjollema to Rev. Webster, 15 November 1974.

54. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Confidential summary record of 1st meeting of the IAC of the PCR; and WCC Executive Committee meeting, Arnoldshain, Germany, 31 August to 4 September 1970 (Document no. 10).

- the oppressed in their struggle for liberation. (b) In the selection of other areas we have taken account of those places where the struggle is most intensive and where a grant might make a substantial contribution to the process of liberation particularly where racial groups are in imminent danger of being physically or culturally exterminated. (c) In considering applications from organizations in countries of white and affluent majorities, we have taken note only of those cases where political involvement precludes help from other sources.
6. Grants should be made with due regard to where they can have the maximum effect. Token grants should not be made unless there is a possibility of their eliciting a substantial response from other organizations.<sup>55</sup>

These criteria became a source of contention because the PCR was offering money directly to organizations of the racially oppressed and not to welfare organizations per se. Hudson has offered a useful distinction between the two. He defined the liberation movements as militant organizations that sought change in their societies through activist means, which included taking up arms. He described the welfare organizations as those that sought to alleviate the symptoms of racial oppression, such as the hunger of a family whose breadwinner had been arrested (and in some cases executed) for an alleged political crime.<sup>56</sup> The implications for South Africa were that the Special Fund grants were to be sent directly to the ANC and the PAC and not to humanitarian organizations such as, for example, the Black Sash, which was 'a movement of white women who were concerned with black civil rights and social welfare'.<sup>57</sup> This had the potential to cause disgruntlement in some welfare organizations that focused on social upliftment of blacks, and might become redundant once racism had been eliminated.

The second implication was that the WCC was openly and intentionally publicising the plight of the ANC and PAC (both of which were banned in South Africa) not only in Switzerland, but to the entire world. Even more daringly, the WCC publicly announced that it had no intention of monitoring whether the Special Fund grants to the ANC and the PAC were used for Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) activities, i.e. for *armed* action. Furthermore, the WCC made it known that it planned to give the needs of the ANC and the PAC (and other liberation movements in southern Africa) special treatment in comparison with other groups that suffered under racism elsewhere in the world.

The first South African application for a Special Fund grant came from M.B. Yengwa of the ANC in late 1969 or the early months of 1970. A grant of US\$10,000 was duly approved in August 1970 to launch the Luthuli Memorial Foundation which aimed to promote the educational and moral values of the late

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55. WCCRS, Quoted from Minutes of WCC CC, Addis Ababa, January 1971 (Document no. 43).

56. Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, p. 110.

57. T. Lodge, *Black Politics in SA since 1945* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985), p. 212.

Chief Albert Luthuli, who had stood for justice and peace.<sup>58</sup> In 1971, the Luthuli Memorial Foundation received a further US\$5,000. In addition, Hank Crane, a WCC staff member who supported the PCR made a personal donation of US\$400 to the ANC.<sup>59</sup>

Even though some applications were received for funds in 1972, no grants were made, because the WCC Executive Committee (who took the final decision in such matters), only met early in 1973.<sup>60</sup> However, through the PCR, the ANC was fortunate enough to receive US\$87,000 from the Canadian Student Christian Movement (SCM).<sup>61</sup> In 1973, both the Luthuli Memorial Foundation and the PAC applied for and received US\$2,500 each.<sup>62</sup> The smaller amounts they received were indicative of the difficulty the WCC was experiencing in generating money for the Special Fund in the early years of its existence. Indeed, the amounts were small when compared to those the recipients received from other donors.<sup>63</sup> Gabriel Setiloane, who was working at the Luthuli Memorial Foundation at the time, sent a poignant personal note of gratitude to the PCR director. It read: 'You say "small", we say in Africa that however small a morsel it is, nevertheless it is food'.<sup>64</sup> The Luthuli Memorial Foundation also received financial support from two German sources.<sup>65</sup> In 1974 the financial support to the PAC and the Luthuli Memorial Foundation increased to US\$15,000 each.<sup>66</sup> The grants to the ANC and the PAC were 200% higher in 1975, each amounting to US\$45,000.<sup>67</sup>

What is less known is that the WCC did not limit its financial support to the ANC and PAC. Solidarity groups in various parts of the world also benefited from the

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58. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Special Fund applications (confidential), WCC/PCR, undated.

59. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Letter from Baldwin Sjollema to Alfred Nzo, 10 March 1971.

60. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Summary record of minutes of 2nd meeting of PCR Executive Committee, 10–13 December 1972.

61. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01. Members and friends of the SCM of Canada undertook an educational project to study the work and needs of liberation groups. Part of the involvement was to raise funds to support groups or organizations working for justice. The amount raised by each group was matched from a special fund set aside from the national budget of the SCMC. St Chad Chapel Committee at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon campus, was one of the groups that participated in this project. It requested that the funds it raised be used to further the work of the ANC through the WCC. The total was CA\$87,000 after it was matched by the SCMC national budget. See PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Letter from Liz Brown of the SCM of Canada to the WCC re donation to the ANC, 12 December 1972.

62. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Summary record of the minutes of 2nd meeting of PCR Executive Committee, 10–13 December 1972.

63. For a comparison with what the OAU provided, see S.M. Ndlovu, 'The ANC's Diplomacy and International Relations', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970–1980* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2006), Tables 1, 2 and 3 on pp. 647–649.

64. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Gabriel Setiloane's letter to Sjollema, 5 February 1973.

65. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Letter from administrative assistant for the PCR, to the WCC Finance Department and the Luthuli Memorial Foundation, 7 August 1973.

66. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Minutes of 4th PCR Executive Committee, Geneva, 13–16 December 1973.

67. K. Warr, 'The Normative Promise of a Global Civil Society', *Journal of Church and State* (1999), at [jcs.oxfordjournals.org](http://jcs.oxfordjournals.org), p. 270.

PCR Special Fund. Among these were the Africa Bureau in London; the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF); the British Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM); the Belgian Anti-Apartheid Movement; the Swiss Anti-Apartheid Movement; the New Zealand National Anti-Apartheid Coordinating Committee; the USA South Africa Committee; the Netherlands Anti-Apartheid Movement; the Netherlands Boycott Outspan Action; the Japanese Anti-Apartheid Committee Youth Section; the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa; and the USA Africa News Service and Southern Africa Committee.<sup>68</sup>

These grants were of vital importance. The WCC understood that the struggle the PCR was waging against apartheid was complex and therefore needed multi-layered strategies. The contribution of the IDAF and the British AAM to the liberation of southern Africa has already received some scholarly attention. Their anti-apartheid role as well as that of governments and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) worldwide are widely discussed in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity*, parts 1 and 2.<sup>69</sup> It is also documented in *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882–1990*.<sup>70</sup> The PCR worked closely with all such anti-apartheid bodies.

The financial support provided to the banned ANC and the PAC caused a furore in September 1970 when the WCC Executive made the first announcement of its decision. The news turned foes and friends into allies in South Africa. The apartheid government and its official white opposition were united in castigating the WCC. A barrage of insults was hurled at the WCC. South African prime minister, B.J. Vorster, accused the WCC of subsidizing murder in the name of God. He warned that any money collected in South Africa would not be redistributed to 'guerrillas' and urged the South African churches to reconsider their membership of the WCC.<sup>71</sup> Helen Suzman described the WCC's decision as 'ill advised'.<sup>72</sup>

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68. *Ibid.*, pp. 268–270.

69. See, especially A. Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa'; and C. Gurney, 'In the Heart of the Beast: The British Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1959–1964', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 3, International Solidarity*, Part 1 (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008), chapters 3 and 4 respectively. The solidarity role of the UN is discussed in detail in the same publication (chapter 2). Countries where anti-apartheid efforts (including by government, NGOs and civil society) were particularly noteworthy, include Sweden (chapter 6); the Netherlands (chapter 7); the US (chapter 9); Canada (chapter 10); Australia and New Zealand (chapter 11); the Soviet Union (chapter 12); the GDR (chapter 13); Cuba (chapter 14); China (chapter 15) and India (chapter 16).

70. T.G. Karis and G.M. Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882–1990 Volume 5, Nadir and Resurgence, 1964–1979* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 1997), pp. 53, 63, 361.

71. *Washington Post*, 5 September 1970; *New York Times*, 5 September 1970; *Daily Telegraph*, 7 September 1970.

72. *New York Times*, 5 September 1970.



The leaders of South African churches did not spare the WCC. The Archbishop of Cape Town was quick to say that the South African churches were almost certain to withdraw from the WCC even though he conceded that apartheid was wrong in the eyes of Christians.<sup>73</sup> Archbishop Leslie Stradling made it clear that 'it was quite intolerable' that money should be given in the name of religion to subversive movements and dissociated himself from the WCC's decision.<sup>74</sup> J.S. Gericke, the moderator of the DRC, described it as 'one of the most atrocious offences against the word of God [that] Christians could commit'.<sup>75</sup> The DRC accused the WCC of placing a stamp of approval on violence and anarchy, making itself an accomplice to the atrocities committed by 'freedom fighters' using Russian and Chinese weapons.<sup>76</sup> All this church criticism against the WCC was of course music to Vorster's ears.

As a WCC associate, the SACC was highly dismayed and distanced itself from the decision. One of its member churches, the Church of the Province of South Africa (CPSA), passed a carefully considered resolution on the grants at its provincial synod in November 1970. It withheld its annual contribution of R550 until a conference had taken place to discuss the matter. It believed that it was important to keep the channels of communication open with the WCC member churches, and in penitence acknowledged its failure to remove racial prejudice from its own ranks. But it was critical that it had not been consulted before the decision had been taken.<sup>77</sup> The reaction from other member churches was similar. The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa was an exception. It recognized that the WCC was responding to a serious situation that called for responsible action.<sup>78</sup>

The Rev. Richard Harries, a lecturer in Christian Ethics, did not condemn the WCC's decision to support the liberation movements. Instead, he challenged other church leaders to communicate clearly the reasons why they chose to reject the violence of the ANC and support the violence of the apartheid regime and other former colonial governments. In his opinion, churches that were critical of the WCC decision were opening themselves up to charges of hypocrisy.<sup>79</sup> The University Christian Movement in Johannesburg also expressed its displeasure with the rash public statements by their church leaders who were however

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73. *Washington Post*, 5 September 1970.

74. *Ibid.*

75. *The New York Times*, 5 September 1970.

76. PCR Collection: Box 4223.3.03, Statement by the DRC of South Africa, October 1970.

77. University of the Witwatersrand, William Cullen Library (hereafter Wits), SACC Collection (AC 623): Church of the Province of South Africa (CPSA) Papers (ref. 20.7), SACC and the PCR, 1970 church and press reactions. See also full text of the resolution of the Provincial Synod of the CPSA held in Cape Town, 6–14 November 1970 on the WCC decision to support the liberation movements of southern Africa and D. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid: Ecumenism in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1989), pp. 50–53.

78. PCR Collection: Box 4223.3.03, Statements by representatives of the South African member churches of the WCC, United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, 1 October 1970.

79. 'Letter to the Editor', *The New York Times*, 8 September 1970.

strangely silent about the violence perpetrated by the white regimes of southern Africa.<sup>80</sup>

The ANC was gratified by the step taken by the WCC but was surprised by the negative reaction of the South African churches. Tambo, the ANC president, an Anglican himself, was deeply shaken by the heated reaction from the churches and reiterated that in his mind the WCC decision was in accord with tenets of the Christian faith.<sup>81</sup> The ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) passed a unanimous vote of thanks to the WCC for its declared conviction against apartheid.<sup>82</sup> But not all the ANC leaders were happy with the WCC announcement. Raymond Mazisi Kunene described the 'meagre' amount given to the Luthuli Memorial Foundation as an absolute 'embarrassment'. He told the WCC that South Africa was a product of Western racism and economic exploitation and that the churches had played a significant role as agents of the state in that process. He wanted churches, including the WCC, to hand over to the liberation movements all the profits they had accrued over the years from exploiting blacks. He accused the WCC of conveniently forgetting that the Special Fund was reparation money to victims of racism, as was suggested at the Notting Hill Consultation. Kunene was sceptical of the WCC's new interest in liberation struggles. He was more interested to know how much money the WCC had in its coffers and how much more it could raise for victims of racism.<sup>83</sup>

The WCC announcement received mixed reaction from further afield. Within the WCC itself, the AACC Executive Committee at Lome in Togo adopted a unanimous resolution which stated:

....The Committee welcomes the revolution in the thinking of donors in being prepared to trust people who are taking radical action against racism. We hope that member churches and critics understood the history behind this decision and that all churches will continue to work to reconcile those divided by barriers of race and injustice.<sup>84</sup>

The positive reaction was not surprising given that this was an effort to assist fellow Africans in dire need of regaining their dignity. In addition, some of the national member churches, such as the Christian Council of Tanganyika (Tanzania), were already supporting members of the liberation movements who were refugees in their countries.<sup>85</sup>

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80. PCR Collection: Box 4223.3.03, Statement of the University Christian Movement, Johannesburg, 11 September 1970.

81. PCR Collection: Box 4223.3.03, Letter from Tambo to Sjollema, 11 November 1970.

82. PCR Collection: Box 4223.3.03, Letter from ANC's Alfred Nzo to Baldwin Sjollema, 20 October 1970.

83. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Minutes of 2nd meeting of the PCR Commission, 21 March 1971.

84. PCR Collection: Box 4223.3.02, Executive Committee of the All Africa Conference of Churches, Press release, 23 September 1970.

85. Ndlovu, 'The ANC and the World', pp. 567-568.

In Germany, the German Evangelical Church (EKD), one of the most significant donors to the WCC general fund, issued a strong statement against the WCC Executive Committee. It stated that:

Christendom cannot abandon its principle of a fundamental rejection of the use of violence in political and social conflicts. But it is very difficult to decide in each specific case how the principle of non-violence is to be maintained amid the realities of the world we live in. The present controversy has shown that far more study is needed of the problem of how best the churches can deal in practice with the gulf here opening up between men.<sup>86</sup>

According to Welch, the negative reaction meant that this was a matter of more than just the money for the EKD, because it felt that the basic principles (of the morality of non-violence) were at stake. Welch believed that the EKD preferred to carry out additional research and to hold more meetings attended by leading theologians than to hand over funds to liberation movements involved in real struggle.<sup>87</sup>

He contended that member churches did not know enough about the process that led to the launch of the PCR from post-Uppsala 1968 until August 1969. He also thought that the WCC had not established the groundwork for a programme which had political implications and that was why the white South African churches had reacted the way they did.<sup>88</sup> Darryl Balia made similar observations. He felt that the South African churches and the South African public had not familiarized themselves sufficiently with the discussions and decisions taken at the ecumenical conferences that led to the formation of the PCR. Hence the uproar in reaction to the Special Fund grants. He thought that the churches and South African Christians at large were still oblivious of the merits of Christian solidarity as provided by the PCR.<sup>89</sup>

This study disagrees with Welch and Balia that the leaders of the South African member churches did not know enough about the process leading to the launch of the PCR. Chapter 3 makes the point strongly that South Africans were closely involved in all the steps taken in the process of creating the PCR. The South African delegates who attended the Uppsala General Assembly in July 1968 were well aware of the agenda's, focus on white racism and the intention to take action by the WCC. Their congregations presumably received reports and feedback from them. A few months after Uppsala, the Archbishop of Cape Town complained to the WCC general secretary that there had been no prior consultation on the focus on white racism and that there was no official endorsement during the assembly. The major concern for the WCC was that the violence caused by white racism was engulfing the world. The individual Christians and member churches in South Africa on whose behalf the Archbishop

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86. Quoted in Welch, 'Mobilizing Morality', p. 885.

87. *Ibid.*

88. *Ibid.*, p. 886.

89. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, p. 49.

of Cape Town complained, presumably received the WCC response from the general secretary. An appraisal of Robert Selby Taylor's attitude by Bob Clarke concedes that 'the furore should have been anticipated, yet it seemed to have taken everyone by surprise'.<sup>90</sup>

The WCC did invite Beyers Naudé to participate at the international consultation on racism in Notting Hill in May 1969. He was unable to attend because of political pressure in his home country. His invitation was not a private matter, despite the silence on this episode in the extensive literature on Naudé.<sup>91</sup> Yet, this did not mean that the whole South African public knew about his invitation. At least it is plausible to assume that his associates at the Christian Institute and his constituency knew. Ian Thompson has published three articles on the WCC's consultation on racism in *Pro Veritate*,<sup>92</sup> a journal that Naudé edited.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, Alex Boraine was part of the PCR Commission which debated the issue and then recommended to the WCC Executive Committee that the ANC Luthuli Memorial Foundation should receive a Special Fund grant.<sup>94</sup> It is inconceivable that as the president of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, he did not inform any of his fellow office-bearers or his congregants about this decision.

The WCC general secretary did visit South Africa just before the announcement. He was not obligated to disclose the Executive Committee decision on the grants beforehand.<sup>95</sup> He did however explain to local Christians about the PCR as an international programme fighting racism beyond South Africa's borders. He reinforced the WCC's stand with those who had suffered racial discrimination and those who were striving for world peace and world community. He made it clear that he was not in their country to lecture on what they ought to do as Christians.

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90. B. Clarke, *Anglicans against Apartheid 1936–1996* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2008), p. 253.

91. See B. Naudé, *My Land van Hoop: Die Lewe van Beyers Naudé* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1995); C.G. Ryan, 'From Acquiesce to Dissent: Beyers Naudé' (MA dissertation, UNISA, 1997); Ryan, *Beyers Naudé: Pilgrimage*; C. Villa Vicencio and J. De Gruchy, eds, *Resistance and Hope: A Collection of South African Essays in Honour of Beyers Naudé* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1985); *The Legacy of Beyers Naudé*, Beyers Naudé Centre Series on Public Theology (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2005).

92. See I.E. Thompson, 'Impressions of the WCC Consultation on Racism', *Pro Veritate*, 8, 2 (June 1968); Thompson, 'Problem of Power', part 1; I.E. Thompson, 'The Problem of Power and the Problem of Guilt', part 2, *Pro Veritate*, 8, 5 (September 1968).

93. P. Randall, ed., *Not without Honour: The Life and Work of Beyers Naude* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982), p. 11.

94. He had the blessing of the SACC (and the WCC) which believed that it would possibly be easier for him to travel and attend to IAC business than it would be for a black South African. See Boraine, *A Life in Transition*, p. 58.

95. Blake visited South Africa to give a progress report on the ecumenical movement. He told the SA churches and Christians that the WCC was committed to the biblical vision of one community of all men of every colour and race. He identified poverty, ideology and race as the three obstacles to reaching that vision. He reiterated the WCC's stance on racism, namely that it was morally wrong. He reminded South Africans that they were not the only ones being challenged on this issue.

He suggested that they keep in touch with fellow Christians worldwide. He put it bluntly to his audience that neither he nor the WCC would compromise the clear position on racism in order to make it easier or more comfortable for the South African churches to be part of the ecumenical fellowship.<sup>96</sup> This confirms that the WCC did indeed consult with members of the South African churches.

Increasing hostility from the international community forced the apartheid government to establish dialogue with the African states that were prepared to listen to its case. Malawi, Ivory Coast, Gabon and Dahomey were among the African countries with a conciliatory attitude towards Pretoria's efforts at détente.<sup>97</sup> This was evident in the visit of an official Malawian delegation to South Africa in 1971.<sup>98</sup> Malagasy and Ivory Coast were keen on aid and trade deals with Pretoria. In stark contrast, the OAU rejected the legitimacy of the apartheid government.<sup>99</sup> This development in turn affected the WCC constituency; this issue will be discussed below in the section on mobilization.

The PCR advocates responded to all the criticism received on the decision to support the ANC. The director was centrally involved and had personally invested a great deal of effort in the PCR and its Special Fund. He was confident of the justification for the controversial decision. In his view, a 20-year conviction against racism was at last being activated and in addition, the ultimate aim to achieve a non-racial democratic South Africa was widely supported. The growing voice of the racially oppressed asking the churches to take a stand could no longer be ignored. Other bodies such as the Lutheran World Federation; the World Alliance of Reformed Churches; and the International Defence and Aid Fund were also condemning and acting against racism. In addition, many of the leaders of the liberation movement were well-known Christians who participated in ecumenical meetings.<sup>100</sup>

The general secretary had played a leading role in establishing and developing the PCR and its Special Fund. In his opinion, there was no need to police the ANC on how the money was spent. The campaign the WCC was running was one for justice, equality and freedom of all races. It was not against the apartheid government as some South Africans alleged. The WCC should not have to trim its decision merely to make it more palatable to its critics, even if the WCC

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96. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Blake's visit to South Africa, 24 August 1970.

97. R.W. Johnson, *How Long will South Africa Survive?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 54–55; B. Pityana, 'Tumultuous Response: The Voices of the South African Churches', in P. Webb, ed., *A Long Struggle: The Involvement of the World Council of Churches in South Africa* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994).

98. P. Wall, *Prelude to Détente: An In-Depth Report on Southern Africa* (London: Stacey International, 1975), p. 16; Johnson, *How Long will South Africa Survive?*, pp. 51–52.

99. Ndlovu, 'The ANC's Diplomacy', pp. 618–622.

100. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, B. Sjollema, A First Answer to Comments Received after the Decision by the WCC Executive Committee to Support Organizations Combating Racism, undated.

incurred financial loss.<sup>101</sup> His statement was significant in two respects. Firstly, it meant that the WCC trusted the word of the liberation movements completely. Secondly, it sent a clear message to the South African member churches such as the CPSA that regardless of their suspended financial contributions to the WCC, the PCR was going ahead.

The WCC Central Committee endorsed the decision to support the ANC financially at its meeting three months after the uproar. It reiterated the importance of the WCC remaining loyal to the belief that the Church should always stand for the liberation of the oppressed, including victims of violent systems which deny basic human rights. In the Central Committee's view, in many cases violence was inherent in the maintenance of the status quo, but it reiterated very clearly that the WCC did not and could never identify itself with any political movement. It also stated that the WCC did not pass judgment on those victims of racism who were driven to violence as the only way left to them to redress grievances. Because there was so much disagreement on the issue of violence, the Committee instructed the Department of Church and Society to conduct a study on violent and non-violent methods of social change.<sup>102</sup>

The Rev. David Gill was one of the PCR founders and advocates. He was involved in the Department of Church and Society, conducting a study on violence and non-violence. He visited South Africa in 1972 and defended the WCC's decision to make a grant to the ANC. In his view, the WCC was responding to the Bible and to God, whose love is universal, but supportive in a special way to the poor and the oppressed. This meant taking concrete and sometimes painful action such as setting up the Special Fund to combat racism, and not just expressing words of sympathy. He went on to point out that most of the WCC member churches had never been pacifist churches. The WCC was therefore not hypocritical when called to support the liberation organizations; their only option was force against apartheid. The money granted to them was not for buying weapons. The Christian Churches worldwide, including the white South African churches were displaying double standards on the subject of violence. They were stamping their mark of approval on the evil of apartheid. According to Gill, the local English churches in particular, were making the right noises about justice and reconciliation. However, strong words were not enough; action was needed. They feared the cost involved in acting against apartheid so they were paying lip service to Christianity when in reality they were taking orders from cultures created to suit themselves and their own interests.<sup>103</sup> Gill's views were subsequently corroborated by South African theologians Charles Villa Vicencio and James Cochrane. Villa Vicencio's book has lifted the veil used by white

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101. 'Freedom Fighters will Not Buy Guns with WCC Money', *The Natal Mercury*, 8 September 1970.

102. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 24th meeting of CC of the WCC, Addis Ababa, January 1971, pp. 52–64.

103. Rev. David Gill, a senior executive of the WCC, talking to Theo Coggin of *Natal Mercury*, 16 May 1972.

South African Christians (particularly the English-speakers) to maintain their privileges by hiding behind racial domination.<sup>104</sup> The following is what Cochrane said in his thoughtful assessment of the Christian Institute:

... Many churches and Christian groups have protested against apartheid in various guises, confessing their guilt and their rejection of the system. But resistance is more than confession – it implies a practice which goes beyond public statement and liturgical drama. It implies more than a distancing of oneself from a bad system, more than non-cooperation. It implies cooperation with others against that which is deemed to be fundamentally flawed, wrong, unjust, and evil.<sup>105</sup>

Criticism on the WCC's decision to support the liberation movements lingered. The chairman of the Central Committee, Dr M.M. Thomas, emphasized that the WCC was not sanctioning violence. In his words:

Where the WCC has not been able to develop a common mind is on whether war or violence can be justified as a last resort to oppressive tyranny and violence in evil situations where all non-violent methods of change are illegal, unconstitutional or otherwise suppressed. So long as there is no common mind at this point, and as long as such a situation exists in Southern Africa, the WCC cannot deny liberation movements there which may have resorted to illegal means, its moral support or its help in the humanitarian, educational and social aspects of their programs of combating racism. In fact such support is nothing more or less than a protest of the WCC against the status quo ideology of violence and an attempt to break the moral and religious sanctions behind it.<sup>106</sup>

The WCC department conducting the study on violence and non-violence focused on specific conflict situations in southern Africa. At the time, there were incidents of state violence against civilians in various parts of the region. In South Africa police shot and killed mine workers during a strike in Durban. In the Cape Verde Islands, Amilcar Cabral the liberation leader was assassinated in January 1973. Many Christians in the southern Africa faced a dilemma. They did not know whether to join the liberation movements to overthrow unjust regimes or to remain passive and thereby perpetuate racial injustice.<sup>107</sup> The pursuit to investigate state and civilian violence was vital. It indicated that the WCC was treating this debate with the utmost seriousness. The investigation's findings vindicated the decision to support the liberation movements in southern Africa.

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104. See C. Villa Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988).

105. Cited by Ryan, *Beyers Naudé: Pilgrimage*, p. 188.

106. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 25th meeting of CC of the WCC, Unit Committee meeting, 8–11 August 1972 (Document no. 11).

107. The Church and Society report made recommendations, including the need for repentance in churches for supporting unjust power, profiting from the poverty of others and using force against those who differed with them ideologically. It further stated that 'Christians could not remain content merely with binding up human wounds'. The department proposed that 'the causes of suffering in the collective selfishness and unjust structures of society, be also attacked in the name of Christian love'. See Z. Mbali, *The Churches and Racism: A Black South African Perspective* (London: SCM Press, 1987), pp. 24–25.

More importantly, it demonstrated the categorical decision by the WCC to abandon the morality of non-violence in respect of the apartheid system.

The apartheid government recognized the pressure from the WCC and others. Through the Minister of Information, Cornelius Mulder, it initiated a secret information campaign in an attempt to counteract the negative images of South Africa that were being widely published in the global media. Mulder set out to finance Christian and political groups to discredit the WCC and other anti-apartheid bodies.<sup>108</sup> From 1973, large advertisements appeared in major newspapers and periodicals in Europe and the USA, arguing against the anti-apartheid messages put forward by the WCC and the UN.<sup>109</sup>

The fracas over the WCC decision to redistribute power by means of symbolic financial support to the ANC and the PAC, had an unsettling effect on South Africans. For two decades the WCC had been merely declamatory about its rejection of the apartheid system. Its restrained approach towards the country over a very long time had the effect of making some people comfortable with the status quo, whilst others remained uneasy. The change in direction the WCC took against apartheid during this period meant people had to adjust.

## **Mobilization**

A major problem for the WCC to counteract was ignorance of the dangers of racism. The motivation behind mobilization was therefore to educate Christians in churches all over the world about the evils of racism. The underpinnings for this drive were evident at Uppsala when Christians were challenged to become a pressure group and mobilize collectively against racism. After the Notting Hill consultation, the WCC made a moral judgment against Christians who were neutral about racism. All the WCC departments and divisions were called upon to commit themselves to attack racism in all its manifestations. The PCR plan specifically suggested a more systematic and effective way of presenting facts about racism and the struggle for racial justice to Christians in churches. This development culminated in the appointment of secretaries for the PCR's research and programme sections.

The research secretary conducted active research to expose the cruelty of racism (in South Africa and elsewhere) while the programme secretary developed programmes to empower the Christian community to be proactive against racism. The various research projects undertaken and the programmes developed evolved over the years. Some were small and short term, while others were on a larger scale and designed for a longer-term outcome. Some were well-intentioned but did not materialize. Some were highly successful, whilst others

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108. D. Knight. *Beyond The Pale: The Christian Political Fringe* (London: Kogan Page, 1981), pp. 34–36.

109. H. Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 192.



fizzled out. Their scale of importance was certainly uneven, but nevertheless they were all attempts to mobilize the global Christian members to join the struggle against racism.

The PCR embarked on a research strategy that guided the WCC on the appropriate action to take against apartheid. This entailed collaborating with other international agencies involved in the anti-apartheid struggle. Key areas were identified, namely, the role, activities and needs of the liberation movements; the role of international finance in reinforcing the apartheid government and thereby giving it a false sense of power and security; the military alliance between the apartheid government and the Western powers; and cultural links with South Africa. The research undertaken was primarily targeting non-South Africans that were bolstering the apartheid establishment and thus helping to sustain it. The goal was to change mindsets and public opinion in the hope that foreign banks and corporations involved in profit making enterprises with the apartheid government would be challenged to withdraw their investments from South Africa.<sup>110</sup> The significance of this research was to enable foreign Christians to recognize and understand fully the exploitation and oppression that black South Africans endured because of these trade links.

The following was a resolution on southern Africa that members of the PCR Commission adopted at their annual meeting held in Geneva in March 1971:

1. We recommend that the PCR in its program in southern Africa shall make it a principle to work with groups of oppressed. The PCR recognizes the legitimacy of the struggle for liberation in this region and wherever possible, will work in consultation and collaboration with liberation movements. The PCR commends this principle to all units and sub-units of the WCC.
2. The PCR recommends that a thorough investigation be made of the portfolio of investments owned by the WCC in order to discover any direct or indirect investment in companies operating in southern Africa; any investment in subsidiary companies operating in that region; any investment in banks operating in that region; any investment in any other financial interests in that region.
3. Any profits accrued hereafter from such investments should be applied to the support of the oppressed. Future investment strategy should be planned in the light of the results of the investigation. We recommend that the PCR in its program regarding southern Africa should give special emphasis to the following points: i) Extension of prisoner-of-war status to freedom fighters, in accordance with the Geneva Convention. ii) Opposition to military alliances and cooperation with SA and in particular to the supply of arms by NATO and any state to the governments of SA, Portugal and Rhodesia. iii) Discouragement of white immigration to this region. iv) Investigation and analysis by member churches of their investments and financial involvement in that region. v) Discouragement of tourism to southern Africa, Malagasy and Malawi.
4. We recommend that information be made available to the liberation movements.<sup>111</sup>

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110. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Plan for a southern Africa research action project.

111. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, WCC/PCR Resolution on southern Africa, March 1971.

The WCC Executive Committee approved the above resolution and urged the broader staff and the member churches to support it.<sup>112</sup> The resolution provided the framework for the kinds of research and programmes the PCR staff conducted.

Nawaz Dawood, the PCR research secretary, compiled an ANC profile without delay. It provided information on the ANC Christian background not only of its founders but also the existing leadership. It also highlighted the ANC's history of passive resistance in an attempt to change the racist laws until 1960, when the apartheid state blocked all avenues for peaceful change. The profile, written originally in English, was translated into German and French and was distributed to the WCC member churches and other anti-apartheid groups for wider readership.<sup>113</sup> This was done with the endorsement of the WCC Central Committee, which approved the PCR research and programme projects.<sup>114</sup> The PCR opened itself to charges of partisanship when it did not produce a profile on the PAC.

The apartheid government was thriving in the world capitalist community during this period. K.S. Hasselblad argued that the Nixon administration adopted a positive foreign policy towards the South African government, while maintaining rhetorical commitment to racial equality.<sup>115</sup> In contrast, the PCR was treating the oppressed majority as its priority. This was a courageous move by the WCC given that it was not fashionable at the time to be associated with the ANC. It was also a personal risk to Dawood. The apartheid government and its allies around the world were very sensitive to political pressure.

The UN declared 1971 the International Year of Action to Combat Racism and the WCC Central Committee encouraged its member churches to support this initiative.<sup>116</sup> Charles Spivey, the PCR programme secretary, took up the call and developed concrete suggestions on how the WCC member churches could respond in their respective countries. His starting point was encouraging the member churches to ensure sure that their own governments adopted the UN call for action. The churches were to facilitate that the liberation movements were given time slots in radio stations in the various host countries where there were exiled activists. In Tanzania, there was the 'Voice of Freedom' a programme broadcast throughout southern Africa which allocated slots to the ANC three

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112. WCCRS, Minutes of meeting of WCC Executive Committee, Resolution on southern Africa, Utrecht, Netherlands, 12 August 1972.

113. PCR Collection: Box 4223.3.01, Confidential summary record of 2nd meeting of PCR Commission, 22–26 March 1971.

114. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Letter from Dawood to members and consultants of the PCR Commission, 24 February 1971.

115. K.S. Hasselblad, 'The United States Foreign Policy on South Africa: Leon Sullivan and the Sullivan Principles, 1948–1980' (MA thesis, Pacific Lutheran University, 1994), p. 62.

116. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 24th meeting of CC of WCC, Addis Ababa, 10–21 January 1971, pp. 54–59.

times a week. The Ethiopian state radio also allocated an hour slot to the ANC, which used it to counter the apartheid propaganda and to articulate an alternative political outlook for South Africa.<sup>117</sup> Spivey wanted this effort extended to other parts of the world. Member churches were encouraged to provide adequate food and housing as well as health services for the black and exploited peoples. They were to pay particular attention to education programmes and to be on the alert for overt and covert racism. Furthermore, it was suggested that the churches should consider distributing some of the land they owned to the oppressed groups. In other words, churches were to transform race relations within their own structures and respond creatively to the demand for the transfer of power to the underprivileged; the WCC was to lead by example.<sup>118</sup> This implied that individual white Christians should transfer power to black colleagues within the WCC membership. The Geneva-based members were to pioneer this effort.

One of the programmes that the PCR developed was the Racism in Theology Programme,<sup>119</sup> aimed at breaking new ground and bringing a change in white theological thinking. It linked with the Divinity School at Harvard University where the Society for the Study of Black Religion called for dialogue between black theologians in the US and elsewhere.<sup>120</sup> Conferences on the subject were arranged in three stages. The first was to involve black theologians in the US. A few African theologians were to be invited to identify and formulate the issues and questions to be discussed. The second stage was to involve African theologians with the full cooperation of the AACC. African American theologians were to discuss and further refine the basic questions and issues for discussion. The third stage was to be a larger conference of both groups (black theologians from the US and those from Africa) with continental and North American theologians. The consultations were planned in such a way that the agendas were designed and organized entirely by black theologians.<sup>121</sup> The WCC Faith and Order division also expressed interest to participate in this programme. Its interest was perceived as that of people representing the 'old style and white agenda'.<sup>122</sup>

The new programme had a strongly-stated Black Theology focus. Spivey, whose brainchild this was, came from a Black Power Movement background. He was a permanent member of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured

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117. S.P. Lekgoathi, 'The ANC's Radio Freedom and its Audience in Apartheid South Africa, 1963 to the early 1990s', *Journal of Africa Media Studies*, 2, 2 (2010), pp. 139–153.

118. PCR Collection: Box 4223.3.01, Confidential summary record of 2nd meeting of PCR Commission, 22–26 March 1971.

119. It was initially conceived as the Black and White Theology Programme.

120. PCR Collection: Box 4223.7.17, Correspondence between Spivey and Preston N. Williams of the Divinity School at Harvard University, 13 October 1972.

121. PCR Collection: 4223.2.01, Summary record of 1st meeting of PCR Executive Committee, 5–6 August 1972.

122. PCR Collection: Box 4223.7.17, Letter from Spivey to Burgess Carr, 23 November 1972.

People.<sup>123</sup> He was also the editor of religious literature for the African Methodist Episcopal church. This was the church that rejected the theological interpretations that rendered persons of African descent as second class citizens.<sup>124</sup> James Cone, an African American theologian explained that Black Theology emerged from the historical struggle against white oppression and racism. He argued that it had developed in the desire to provide a theological justification for black consciousness, thus ensuring its survival.<sup>125</sup> His explanation helps us to understand Spivey's commitment to black consciousness. During the same period, similar attempts occurred in other parts of the world.

In South Africa, this movement began in 1970 with the establishment of a Black Theology Project by the University Christian Movement (UCM).<sup>126</sup> Basil Moore was the UCM director and was fully committed to equality and partnership. Importantly, he played a pioneering role in bringing Black Theology to South Africa as an intellectual discipline.<sup>127</sup> The UCM conducted a series of seminars on Black Theology in various parts of the country with the aim of bringing it to the attention of the public and the churches. Of relevance was the contribution made by Barney Pityana in his 'What is Black Consciousness?' He was one of the founders of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in South Africa and his article directed black attention to the role of the church in the subjugation of black people.<sup>128</sup>

There was no direct connection between the WCC and South Africa on the advocacy of a Black Theology programme. No evidence could be found of any attempts by the PCR programme secretary to communicate with black South African theologians. The first contact was made by Allan Boesak who approached the PCR director in September 1973. He was concerned about the exclusion of black South African theologians from the series of conferences that the PCR was organizing. He was also worried that the development of Black Theology was being monopolized by African Americans. He therefore asked

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123. Photograph of Charles Spivey and two other NAAPC permanent members, *The Crisis*, 64, 1 (January 1957), p. 10.

124. A. Johnson, 'AME Pastor of 40 Years Dies at Age 81 in Detroit', *Jet*, 43, 21 (February 1973), p. 18.

125. J.H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (New York: J.P.Lippincott, 1970), pp. 5–6.

126. J.N.J. Kritzinger, 'Black Theology: Challenge to Mission' (DD thesis, UNISA, 1988), p. 58; M. Mothlabi, *African Theology/Black Theology in South Africa: Looking Back, Moving On*, (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2008), p. 1.

127. M.R. Maimela, 'Black Consciousness and White Liberals in South Africa: Paradoxical Anti-Apartheid Politics' (PhD thesis, UNISA, 1999), pp. 61–63; Kritzinger, 'Black Theology', p. 59; Mothlabi, *African Theology*, p. 1; Ryan, *Beyers Naudé: Pilgrimage*, pp. 142–153; B. Moore, ed., *The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973).

128. B. Pityana, 'What is Black Consciousness?', in M. Mothlabi, ed., *Essays on Black Theology in South Africa* (Johannesburg: University Christian Movement, 1972), pp. 28–36; Mothlabi, *African Theology*, pp. 58–59.

whether the WCC would be prepared to sponsor meetings between black South Africans and African Americans on Black Theology.<sup>129</sup>

The PCR's disjointed communication with South Africa was indicative of personality problems and the commitment of some of the PCR Commission members. Spivey was perturbed by the racial composition of the entire WCC staff and wanted a complete overhaul. He proposed, among other things, the appointment of black candidates in executive positions.<sup>130</sup> He devoted a great deal of his energy in 1971/1972 to persuade the WCC to introduce a quota system. In the process, he rubbed some of his colleagues up the wrong way,<sup>131</sup> and subsequently left the WCC under something of a cloud. It could also be argued that it was the responsibility of PCR Commission members such as Alex Borraine and Nathan Shamuyarira to help create ties between Spivey and Black Theology proponents in southern Africa. It was of vital importance for the PCR to make contact with theologians in the region if it was to fulfil its proclaimed commitment to fight white racism.

The PCR collaborated with the WCC's Faith and Order division to convene a meeting on 'The Unity of Church and the Struggle against Racism'. The meeting discussed the tension between racial identify and the unity of mankind; the significance of Black Theology; and the need to debate the issue of the Sacraments. It also dealt with Church order and discipline in the context of racial conflict. It was decided to pool the PCR's education resources with the WCC Education Department and together they developed an action-oriented study programme to investigate racism in school textbooks. The programme was aimed at countering the existing theories and myths on race relations that over the years had been imposed by white-dominated structures. This attempt was a follow up from what the PCR had proposed member churches should undertake to do in 1971 during the International Year of Action to Combat Racism. The PCR also teamed up with the WCC Migration Desk and worked on a project to

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129. He believed that such meetings would not only help local black theologians out of isolation, but encourage them to search for ecumenicity, solidarity and kinship. He appealed to the PCR to invite people like Adam Small, who was not a theologian but a philosopher, but was prominent among blacks in Cape Town. He also suggested Manas Buthelezi who was a regional director of the CI. See PCR Collection: Box 4223.7.17, Letter from A.A. Boesak to B. Sjollema, 14 September 1973. He also sent the letter to the AACC's Willis Logan in Nairobi. Boesak was studying in the Netherlands, but was based in New York.

130. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01. He also wanted affirmative action on 'third world' potential candidates; incentives for trained persons from the third world; a programme for executives to help such personnel to adjust to the work patterns and demands at the WCC. See memo from Spivey to Blake on employment patterns and problems of the WCC, 15 February 1971.

131. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Correspondence between Spivey, Blake, Burton, Potter, Sjollema and Dawood, re employment practices, 15 February 1971; 25 February 1971; 14 May 1971; 18 May 1971; 5 July 1971; 6 July 1971; 14 September 1971; 8 October 1971. See also PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02; Confidential summary record of 3rd meeting of the PCR Commission, New York, 23–28 April 1972; Summary record of 2nd meeting of PCR Executive Group, 10–13 December 1972, appendix vi, Highly Confidential re Staffing Policy of the WCC.

discourage white migration to South Africa.<sup>132</sup> These PCR activities seemed somewhat hotchpotch, but their importance lay in ‘conscientising’ the extra Christian and motivating him or her to act against the apartheid system in South Africa and racism in the world at large.

By 1974, the five-year period allocated to run the PCR was nearing its end.<sup>133</sup> The research secretary submitted his resignation at the end of his contract that same year<sup>134</sup> and a new programme secretary, Jose Chipenda, an Angolan theologian was appointed.<sup>135</sup> The timing of this appointment corresponded with the overthrow of Marcello Caetano’s regime and Portugal’s withdrawal from all its former colonies.<sup>136</sup> This gave hope that the end of colonial domination and racial injustice was nigh in other parts of southern Africa. Meanwhile, the PCR’s term was extended for a year until the next general assembly, which was due to be held in December 1975.<sup>137</sup>

During the brief period without a research secretary, the PCR partnered with outside groups and also commissioned research work to carry out its strategies against apartheid. It teamed up with the Interfaith Centre for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) an advocacy group that gathered information and coordinated the filing of shareholder resolutions by member denominations and orders of the US National Council of Churches.<sup>138</sup> Together the PCR and ICCR published a study on Japanese economic involvement in South Africa. The investigation, conducted by Yoko Kitazawa a Japanese journalist, also presented its findings to the UN Special Committee against Apartheid. The research indicated significant trade relations between Japan and apartheid South Africa as well as business interests, nuclear collaboration and the granting of bank loans. The Japanese anti-apartheid movement exposed the involvement of Japanese national banks that made large loans to the Pretoria government through a subsidiary in London.<sup>139</sup> As an outcome of the publication of Kitazawa’s study, many Japanese bank loans to South Africa were reportedly stopped.<sup>140</sup>

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132. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 26th meeting of WCC CC, Geneva, 22–29 August 1973, pp. 198–205.

133. ‘Proposals Concerning the Continuation of the PCR’, in *Ecumenical Review*, 26 (January–October 1974), pp. 672–675.

134. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Confidential minutes of the PCR Commission, May 1974.

135. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, 5th meeting of PCR Commission, Programme developments, 29 April to 3 May 1974 (document no. 1).

136. N.L. Clark and W.H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (London: Pearson Education, 2004), p. 80.

137. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Minutes of meeting 5th PCR Commission, 29 April to 3 May 1974.

138. R.K. Massie, ‘Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation: A Study of Eight Institutional Investors’ Approaches to South African Disinvestment’ (PhD thesis, Harvard University, 1989), p. 12. See also Mbali, *The Churches and Racism*, pp. 34, 146.

139. This revelation embarrassed the Japanese government, which had good relations with the Afro-Asian bloc in the UN. See PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Report by Peter Hazelhurst, *The London Times*, 8 July 1974.

140. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Correspondence from Tim Smith (project director of the Interfaith Centre on Corporate Responsibility) to Baldwin Sjollema, 1 February 1975.

The PCR contribution in co-publishing the study exposing 'backdoor' Japanese bank loans to the apartheid government was significant in many respects. It demonstrated the effectiveness of its network with the US-based ICCR and Japanese anti-apartheid movement in carrying out the WCC's struggle against racism. The WCC itself was in the early stages of embarking on a bank loan campaign; this is the subject of the next section. The PCR distributed the publication widely to member churches, including the Japanese Christian agencies and solidarity groups, in an effort to mobilize them to oppose institutions doing business with the apartheid government.

The WCC membership was uncertain how to react to the NP policies on détente and the Bantustans that the government pursued during this period. The PCR commissioned Don Morton, Tami Hamilton and Reed Kramer to compile a research paper on the détente policy; the paper was to be discussed by the Commission members at their annual meeting.<sup>141</sup> Not surprisingly, the research paper, 'Détente or Delusion?' found Vorster's policy to be delusional. Hamilton and Kramer (US-based civil rights activists) visited South Africa in the early 1970s to assist Alex Boraine with his multiracial training course for young South African Christians. The Minister of the Interior labelled the training as 'communist' and promptly deported Hamilton and Kramer.<sup>142</sup>

Hudson, who had been following the relationship of the WCC with South Africa disagreed with Morton, Hamilton and Kramer's conclusion. He found the PCR's critical style towards the apartheid government unduly confrontational. He felt that the conciliatory and cooperative response from certain African leaders contradicted the findings of the paper commissioned by the PCR.<sup>143</sup>

These different conclusions touched on the credibility of the détente policy are significant. The researchers who expounded these views were all intellectuals probing the apartheid government's validity. The qualitative difference is that Hamilton and Kramer were both activists who wanted to end the apartheid system. Hudson's participation was purely for academic reasons. Pertinently, the PCR sent Kramer and Morton's findings on Vorster's delusional détente policy to the WCC member churches.<sup>144</sup> The aim was to mobilize member churches to resist the image the South African government was creating that it was tolerated by other states on the African continent.

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141. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Confidential minutes of meeting of PCR Commission, Cartigny, 2–6 March 1975; Minutes of 6th meeting of PCR Commission, WCC Unit II, 2–6 March 1975.

142. Boraine, *A Life in Transition*, pp. 55–56.

143. Hudson, *WCC in International Affairs*, p. 115.

144. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Confidential minutes of meeting of PCR Commission, Cartigny, March 1975; Minutes of 6th meeting of PCR Commission, WCC Unit II, March 1975.

The PCR conducted research on the Transkei, the area that Vorster wanted to turn into an ‘independent homeland’ for blacks, i.e. a Bantustan.<sup>145</sup> The research findings were available in 1976 and are discussed in the next chapter. Tourism was another area of action-research interest. The PCR began exploring ways to discourage tourism in South Africa.<sup>146</sup> The outcome of this venture is another issue that will receive attention in chapter 5. In 1975 a consultation on ‘Racism in Theology and Theology against Racism’ was held jointly by the WCC’s Faith and Order division in collaboration with the PCR. The delegates reached a significant conclusion. They agreed that it was the theological justification of apartheid that constituted a heresy and not the ideology itself. This was after the delegates agreed that the ‘concept of “heresy” was not in practice a very helpful standpoint from which to consider racism, especially since this could mislead into academic discussions of what was or was not formal heresy’.<sup>147</sup> The impromptu PCR activities were responses to the unfolding political developments in South Africa and other parts of southern Africa. They were ongoing attempts to mobilize the ecumenical Christians worldwide to resist the apartheid system. Pekka Peltola, a Finnish scholar, has acknowledged the role the WCC played in mobilizing the Christian community in his country to support the liberation struggles against apartheid.<sup>148</sup>

### Political action

The transformation of South Africa into a just society remained the main concern of the WCC. The political action the WCC took to dismantle apartheid was therefore to rally foreign Christians who were representatives in citizenry, clientele, governments and businesses, to withdraw their investments from South Africa. The foundation for disengagement from South Africa can be traced back to Chief Albert Luthuli. He made the call for economic sanctions in 1958 and his appeal was largely ignored in the intervening years,<sup>149</sup> certainly by the WCC. The call to the WCC was repeated at numerous forums in the 1960s.<sup>150</sup> The PCR finally acceded to this request when it committed itself to explore all available means, including economic sanctions by member churches, to bring racial justice. But certain WCC members were disturbed by this development.

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145. PCR Collection: Box 4223.9.6; Document by Baldwin Sjollema on the Transkei, undated.

146. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Letter from Sjollema to friends on plan to discourage tourism to South Africa, 1975.

147. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Minutes of meeting PCR Executive Group, May 1976, Report on ‘Racism in Theology and Theology against Racism’ consultation; Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, p. 95.

148. He made the acknowledgement at a conference organized by the Nordic Africa Institute, on ‘Documentation Initiatives on the Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa’, held at Unisa, 26–27 November 2009.

149. C. Yeats, *Morality and Economic Sanctions*, Grove Ethical Studies, no. 76 (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1989), pp. 1–2.

150. The calls were made at Mindolo in 1964; at Geneva during the Church and Society Conference in 1966; at Uppsala in 1968; and Notting Hill, London, in 1969.



At its first meeting after the inauguration of the PCR, the Central Committee decided to ask WCC members to review their investment portfolios in South Africa. It instructed them, beginning with the WCC staff and committee members, to begin an immediate investigation and analysis of their involvement in perpetuating racism in apartheid South Africa. It asked them to scrutinize their employment, training and promotion schedules as well as their possession, management and control of property in South Africa and the ownership, administration and control of church and church-related institutions. It wanted them to report back via the PCR.<sup>151</sup>

Further, the Central Committee instructed the member churches to investigate and analyze the military, political, industrial and financial systems of their own countries. They were to do this either as individual member churches or through their respective national councils. The aim was to determine whether their respective countries had any links with South Africa and were thereby sustaining apartheid. The findings of these investigations by member churches were to be coordinated through the PCR. Furthermore, it directed that all the WCC's partners, their staff, committees and their member churches should cooperate with the PCR in efforts aimed at eliminating apartheid in church and society.<sup>152</sup> Although this directive attracted less attention than the financial support given to the ANC and the PAC from the Special fund, its implications were far reaching.

Foreign investment in South Africa was seen by some as a catalyst of economic growth, which would then narrow inequalities between black and white labour.<sup>153</sup> The plea by the WCC to its membership to reconsider their investments therefore presented a complex moral and political problem. Some felt that sanctions would be ineffective, but on the other hand there were those who believed that a withdrawal of investments would resolve the South African crisis because it would end white supremacy and lead to a sharing of power between all her citizens.<sup>154</sup> The counter argument was that disinvestment would lead to economic hardship and that poverty-stricken blacks would be the hardest hit. Furthermore, the white minority government insisted that international law discouraged interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state.<sup>155</sup>

The decision by the Central Committee was significant in many respects. It indicated a preference for isolating South Africa to end apartheid. It permitted the PCR to inspect the WCC's in-house investments. It also gave its approval for the PCR to coordinate this process with the rest of the member churches. Two

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151. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 24th meeting of CC of the WCC, Addis Ababa, January 10–21 1971, pp. 54–59.

152. *Ibid.*

153. Coker, 'Constructive Engagement', p. 140.

154. Legum and Legum, 'Power in South Africa', p. 31; C. Jenkins, 'Sanctions, Economic Growth and Change', in N. Nattrass and E. Ardington, eds, *The Political Economy of South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 275.

155. Yeats, *Morality and Economic Sanctions*, pp. 3–4.

months later, in March 1971, the PCR Commission held its second annual meeting. The following is an extract of the resolution. It agreed

that a thorough investigation be made of the portfolio of investments owned by the WCC in order to discover any direct or indirect investment in companies operating in southern Africa; any investment in subsidiary companies operating in that region; any investment in banks operating in that region; and any investment in any other financial interests in that region.<sup>156</sup>

The resolution was the outcome of their discussion on whether the WCC itself had investments in the region. The feeling in the Commission was that this would be a good place to begin the PCR research projects. According to Eugene Blake, the general secretary, it transpired that the WCC did not have direct investments but did indeed have investments in companies with interests in the region. With Blake's blessing, the Commission thus directed the PCR staff to investigate companies with investments in southern Africa.<sup>157</sup>

The Cunene River Dam scheme was part of the wider investment links between the white-controlled governments in southern Africa and the major Western powers. The apartheid government and the Portuguese both claimed that the scheme would be of great benefit to the people of Namibia and Angola. The PCR investigated the financial structure of the scheme and the research findings indicated that the opposite was true. It discovered that the two governments were not only exploiting the natural resources but were also encouraging the development of exclusively white settlements along the Cunene River in both Namibia and Angola.<sup>158</sup>

Dawood convened a symposium in Arnoldshain, West Germany to deliberate on the Cunene scheme. The symposium revealed the political and military connection between several major Western powers and the white regimes in southern Africa.<sup>159</sup> Prexy Nesbitt was present at this symposium, representing the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), an anti-apartheid group.<sup>160</sup> He explained that the discussions brought a better appreciation of why the liberation movements called for the withdrawal of foreign investments in the region. He also mentioned that he persuaded the PCR staff to take a stand on the Angolan question by recognizing the MPLA (and not UNITA, which was being funded and

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156. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, WCC/PCR Resolution on southern Africa, March 1971.

157. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Confidential summary record of 2nd meeting of the PCR Commission, 22–23 March 1971.

158. PCR Collection: Box 4223.11.1, Dawood Nawaz's documentation on the Cunene River Dam Scheme, December 1971. See also WCC/PCR, *Cunene Dam and the Struggle for the Liberation of Southern Africa* (Geneva: WCC, 1971).

159. PCR Collection: Box 4223.11.1, WCC Unit II – Justice and Service PCR, Cunene River Scheme Symposium, Evangelical Academy Arnoldshain, 29 February–3 March 1972.

160. W. Minter and S. Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States–South Africa Relations: From the Margins to the Mainstream', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity*, Part 2 (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008), p. 755.

supported militarily by South Africa) as the legitimate representative of the oppressed.<sup>161</sup>

After the symposium, the PCR started a campaign on stockholder action, boycotts and disinvestment, to get companies and banks involved in the scheme to withdraw their financial interests from southern African white-controlled states. The campaign received support and approval from the WCC Central Committee although the PCR activities against apartheid were not guaranteed endorsement by the WCC authorities; there was a great deal of lobbying that had to be done by the PCR staff and commission members. The Central Committee called upon the member churches to inform their congregations and the wider public about the scheme and the potential danger it posed for race relations. More importantly, it urged the WCC member churches as well as the Roman Catholic Church not only to support the campaign but to ensure that they themselves were not in any way benefactors to systems of oppression and exploitation.<sup>162</sup> The campaign did not go further. The PCR'S over-commitment to educate the WCC members was not matched by its manpower. Mbali, who has studied the PCR activities, described this campaign as a 'rehearsal' for the larger WCC campaign on disinvestment.<sup>163</sup>

A record of investments in southern Africa was produced and was submitted to the PCR Executive Committee in August 1972. The investigation focused on South Africa for scope and depth, but its conclusions, which advocated a complete withdrawal of investments, also applied to Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau. The PCR Executive recommended that the WCC give a clear and dramatic lead by immediately selling its holdings in any corporation directly investing in southern Africa. It wanted the WCC constituency to use all its influence in stock-holder meetings, to force corporations to withdraw their investments. It proposed that the WCC Central Committee adopt the following resolution:

The WCC, in accordance with its own commitment to combat racism, considering that the effect of foreign investments in southern Africa is to strengthen the white minority regimes in their oppression of the majority of the peoples of this region, and implementing the policy as commended by the Uppsala Assembly (1968) that investments in 'institutions that perpetuate racism' should be terminated:

- a) Instructs its Finance Committee and its Director of Finance to sell forthwith existing holdings and to make no investments after this date in corporations which, according to information available to the Finance Committee and the Director of Finance, are directly involved in investment in or trade with any of the following countries: South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. And to

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161. Interview with Nesbitt Prexy, Johannesburg , 29 November 2008.

162. PCR Collection: Box 4223.11.1, Correspondence from Dawood on the Cunene River Dam Scheme Documentation, December 1971.

163. Mbali, *The Churches and Racism*, pp. 31–36.

- deposit none of its funds in banks which maintain direct banking operations in those countries
- b) Urges all member churches, Christian agencies and individual Christians outside southern Africa to use all their influence, including stockholder action and divestment, to press corporations to withdraw investments from and cease trading with these countries.<sup>164</sup>

The motion the PCR put forward to the WCC authorities was important. It advised both divesting and disinvesting against South Africa by the WCC and its member churches. Håkan Thörn explains divesting as being the sale of stock in multi-national companies with subsidiaries in South Africa, where such withdrawal represents forms of political pressure that bypass the nation state. Disinvestment he defines as the passing of legislative measures to enforce the withdrawal of companies from South Africa that were seen as bolstering the power of the nation state. This, in his view was the ultimate instrument for putting pressure on the government. He argued that both these strategies were crucial in the transnational anti-apartheid struggle.<sup>165</sup> The approval of the PCR proposal signalled the heightened activism of the WCC.

Members of the WCC Central Committee were divided on this issue, just as they were on funding the liberation movements. The Rev. George Balls of Scotland proposed an amendment to point (b) dealing with disinvestment and stockholders. He suggested that member churches be left with an open choice for alternative action. He recommended that point (b) should read:

... urges all member churches, to use all their influence, including stockholder action and disinvestment, to press corporations either to operate policies which will promote inter-racial social justice or to withdraw investments from and cease trading with these countries.<sup>166</sup>

Submissions were also made proposing that reform rather than economic sanctions should be used to change racial discrimination in South African society. The final decision, taken in Utrecht in August 1972, was that the WCC was to implement the policy of withdrawal without delay.<sup>167</sup> The WCC duly sold its holdings in corporations that had southern African trade links. From then onwards, it also stopped purchasing commodities from these countries. One investment manager refused to handle a WCC investment portfolio under these restrictions and the WCC promptly liquidated the portfolio.<sup>168</sup> The contested WCC decision was vitally significant. It was a victory for the PCR in canvassing for disinvestment against apartheid. It was also a milestone in the overall standing of

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164. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Summary record of 1st meeting of the PCR Executive Committee, 5–6 August 1972.

165. Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, pp. 60–61.

166. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 25th meeting of CC of WCC, Utrecht, 13–23 August 1972, pp. 28–29.

167. *Ibid.*

168. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of Executive Committee meeting of WCC, Helsinki, 1973, 'Implementation of Decision Regarding Investments in SA', pp. 38–39.

the WCC because it marked its determination to end its rhetorical commitment to racial equality.

There was external and internal reaction to the Utrecht WCC decision. The European Conference of Justice and Peace Commissions requested the Pontifical Commission in Rome and the national commissions in Europe to study it.<sup>169</sup> Trade unions in the UK withdrew their investment in companies with South African interests such as Barclays, Distillers, and Unilever. In the Netherlands, trade unions debated this decision together with various UN boycott resolutions in their Commission on Foreign Relations.<sup>170</sup>

Several member churches began to examine their investment portfolios and others set up working groups to study the issue. The Swiss working groups published a comprehensive study on Swiss investments in southern Africa with the help of the PCR staff.<sup>171</sup> In Great Britain, the Methodist Conference instructed its trustees to attend shareholder meetings of companies in which the Methodist church held stock. The trustees were told to express the church's concern about their implicit support of apartheid. Finally, after negotiation with the church's central financial board, the Methodist Conference welcomed the WCC's decision to sell investments in companies helping to maintain apartheid. It urged the Methodist church to move out of those firms.<sup>172</sup>

Some governments and big business with trade links favoured a constructive engagement policy towards South Africa to dismantle apartheid. The Nixon administration was already adopting this approach and applying positive sanctions in the form of lifting some of the restrictions on the sale of arms and export-import bank loans.<sup>173</sup> The perception was that in the long run economic growth in South Africa would inevitably erode apartheid. There were also people who abhorred apartheid but were equally opposed to revolutionary change. This category supported a constructive engagement with apartheid South Africa and included people within the church and sections of trade union movements.<sup>174</sup> The official WCC position did not support this approach.

The names of corporations directly involved in investment or trade with South Africa were disclosed to the WCC Executive Committee and member churches were asked to support this political strategy. A consultant from the US Committee

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169. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of WCC Executive Committee meeting, Utrecht, 1972, p. 19.

170. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Minutes of 2nd meeting of PCR Executive Committee, Geneva, Appendix II, of the Geneva, December 1972, 'Implementation Decision Central Committee on Investments in Southern Africa', by BSC/Ki, 29 November 1972.

171. *Ibid.*

172. D. Haslam, 'Mobilizing the European Churches', in P. Webb, ed., *A Long Struggle: The Involvement of the WCC in South Africa* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), p. 73

173. Coker, 'Constructive Engagement', pp. 83–87; Hasselblad, 'United States Foreign Policy on South Africa', p. 67.

174. Gurney, 'In the Heart of the Beast: The British Anti Apartheid Movement', pp. 290–291.

on Social Responsibility in Investments (CSRI)<sup>175</sup> spent several weeks in various countries advising churches, action groups and the WCC on investments in southern Africa. Commissioned publications on southern African investments were also distributed to the churches and anti-apartheid action groups.<sup>176</sup> All these were attempts by the PCR to empower the WCC members to support the new political action. The following illustrates how the WCC decision was covered in publications and the media:

#### Church Council Blacklists Firms with South African Ties

Since the formation of the PCR in 1969, the WCC has attempted to 'empower minority groups in the 'Third World'. It recently blacklisted 650 companies from the US, Britain, the Netherlands and Switzerland for their involvement with South Africa and announced that the council has sold all holdings in these companies. The WCC estimated the market value of the stock held in the companies to be \$1.5 million ...<sup>177</sup>

Further, the identity of banks directly involved in loans to the apartheid government was disclosed to the WCC Central Committee. The PCR recommended that these banks be pressurized to account for how they were using the funds from their clients to support the apartheid government. After deliberations in West Berlin in August 1974, the WCC Central Committee

1. Instructed the Finance Department to communicate to the EABC and its members, namely: the Deutsche Bank of the Federal Republic of Germany; the Societe Generale of France; the Midland Bank of the UK; the Amsterdam-Rotterdam Bank N.V of the Netherlands; the Societe Generale de Banque S.A. of Belgium; and the Creditanstalt-Bankverein of Austria, and to solicit assurance that they will stop granting loans to the South African government and its agencies. It instructed the Finance Department to report the results to the Executive Committee and authorized the Executive Committee if assurances are not forthcoming to ensure that no WCC funds are deposited with those banks.
2. Urged all member churches, Christian agencies and individual Christians to use their influence to press these above-mentioned banks and other banks

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175. For additional detail on the CSRI, see Massie, 'Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation', pp. 124–128.

176. The WCC Finance Department published a list of foreign corporations investing in white-ruled southern African countries. The PCR gave financial support to the study on *Church Investment, Corporations and Southern Africa*, which was published by the Corporate Information Centre (CIC) for the National Council of Churches in USA. The CIC originally aimed to collect relevant information but became an advocacy group that coordinated shareholder resolutions filed by various denominations. The CIC later became the ICCR<sup>176</sup> that was the PCR's co-partner in publishing the study on 'Japanese Economic Involvement in South Africa', mentioned above. The PCR also co-published (with the Counter Information Service (CIS) in London), a booklet *Business as Usual: International Banking in Southern Africa*; and an article, 'The Function of Foreign Investment in Southern Africa', by economist H. Lineman. This was translated into English and German and distributed widely by the PCR: PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Minutes of 4th PCR Executive Committee meeting, Geneva, December 1973; PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Minutes of 5th meeting of PCR Commission, Staff report on programme development, April/May 1974 (Document no. 1).

177. J.H. Johnson, 'Church Council Blacklists Firms with South African Ties', *Jet*, 43, 21 (February 1973), p. 5.

participating in the loans to cease granting loans to the South African government and its agencies.<sup>178</sup>

The step the WCC took was significant. It had not shirked from naming and shaming the banks that were giving the apartheid government a lifeline. It also signalled that the WCC was serious about not depositing its own funds in those maintaining direct banking operations in southern Africa.

The general secretary conveyed the WCC's West Berlin decision to the European–American Banking Corporation (EABC), which was still consulting its board members and other banks when the WCC Executive Committee met in April 1975, to consider the feedback it had received. The EABC was given until 31 October 1975 to respond to the decision.<sup>179</sup>

In the interim, some of the WCC member churches, national councils of churches, Christian agencies and actions groups pressed the EABC banks to stop providing loans to the South African government and its agencies. The WCC Executive reached out to member churches in countries which had not responded to the initiative. It also instructed the PCR to conduct a survey profiling the reaction by member churches and related agencies to the WCC disinvestment stance against the apartheid government. The 1972 Utrecht and the 1974 West Berlin decisions formed the basis of this survey which later informed the discussions at Nairobi in December 1975.<sup>180</sup> The EABC banks' response to the WCC and the outcome of the survey form part of the discussion in the next chapter.

At its final annual meeting before the Nairobi General Assembly, the PCR Commission members made three recommendations to the WCC. The first was to intensify the pressure for withdrawal of investments and exposure of collaboration by Western companies with white regimes in southern Africa. The second was to maintain its support for the liberation movements there. The third recommendation was that the Executive Committee should in future denounce all WCC visits, official or otherwise, to South Africa.<sup>181</sup> The recommendations indicated that the Commission members were confident that this programme would be renewed, although this was not yet guaranteed.

## **Bridging**

Isolating the apartheid government was a key concern for the WCC. The rationale behind the PCR bridging strategy was therefore to provide a platform for dialogue for South African anti-apartheid activists, so that they could confront

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178. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 27th meeting of WCC CC, Berlin, 11–18 August 1974.

179. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Minutes of 7th meeting of PCR Executive Committee, 3–6 September 1975.

180. *Ibid.*

181. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Confidential minutes of PCR Commission meeting, Cartigny, 2–6 March 1975; Minutes 6th meeting of PCR Commission, WCC Unit II, 2–6 March 1975.

their differences and could discuss strategies and tactics. These were activists who were resident in South Africa as well as those who were politically exiled. Apartheid was always an item on the agendas drawn up for the WCC's general assemblies, the annual meetings of the Central Committee, the bi-annual or tri-annual meetings of the Executive Committee and the occasional WCC consultations focusing on specific trouble-spots.

Such forums presented opportunities for exiled and non-exiled South Africans who were alienated from one another by law in their own country, to integrate socially over a period of a week or two at one venue, in various parts of the world. They were held relatively regularly, although the same South Africans did not necessarily always attend these gatherings.

The underpinnings of the bridging strategy can be traced to numerous forums during the 1960s. It was at Mindolo in 1964 that the call was made to the WCC to initiate a dialogue between South African Christians and political leaders. Participants from all over the world included South Africans Z.K. Matthews, Beyers Naudé and Albert Geysler; despite their different racial and political backgrounds, they shared a platform at Mindolo.<sup>182</sup> It was at Mindolo that the suggestion for dialogue between South African Christians and political leaders emerged.

At Uppsala in 1968, Joe Matthews, Francis Wilson, Selby Taylor and Brigalia Bam held useful talks on the need to act against apartheid. At Notting Hill in 1969, Michael Scott, Oliver Tambo, Bill Burnett, Trevor Huddleston, Ian Thompson, Matthews and Bam had the opportunity to shape what eventually became the PCR. In other words, the WCC provided South Africans the space to confront major issues such as the armed struggle, violence, the communist threat and economic sanctions as a means to end apartheid. The Uppsala forum provides a good example of South African Christians (Selby Taylor and Bill Burnett) engaging with South African political leaders (Oliver Tambo and Joe Matthews).

From 1970 onwards, the apartheid debate continued to take centre stage in the WCC forums held in various parts of the world. The PCR Commission afforded annual opportunities at venues in Switzerland and New York for South African anti-apartheid activists to explore strategies and policies in this five-year period. Alex Boraine a member of the PCR Commission, and Brigalia Bam, who was a Staff Coordinating Group member were always invited. Abdul Minty attended several of these meetings as a consultant. Masabalala Yengwa and Raymond Kunene of the ANC attended occasionally as guests.

The five South Africans were a miniature representation of apartheid activists across the racial and political divide. Boraine and Bam knew one another from

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182. They discussed, among other things, the armed struggle, 'positive apartheid' and economic sanctions.



the Christian organizations they led. Boraine was an advocate of social justice,<sup>183</sup> while Bam pioneered the struggle against racism and sexism both nationally and abroad.<sup>184</sup> She claims that she recruited Boraine into the PCR Commission.<sup>185</sup> Bam's involvement in the WCC led to her banishment from South Africa by the apartheid government. She was unable to return home after her WCC employment contract expired.

Minty, Masabalala and Kunene were politically exiled. Minty worked in various committees of the UN, the OAU and the Commonwealth. He wrote extensively on southern Africa for the UN as well as for various apartheid and solidarity movements. He was recognized for his authoritative research on contentious issues and he prepared numerous documents for conferences and inter-governmental meetings on the military and nuclear capacity of the apartheid regime and international collaboration with Pretoria. He was also one of the founders of the British AAM.<sup>186</sup> Masabalala was a distinguished religious leader, based in London. An ordained deacon, in 1970 he represented the ANC at the World Congress on Religion in Japan.<sup>187</sup> He expressed his interest in the PCR to Pauline Webb, the WCC Central and Executive Committee member based in London.<sup>188</sup> Kunene was also one of the founders of the AAM in London, and the South African Vocational Programme for South African political refugees in Tanzania and Zambia. He represented the ANC in Europe and the USA and was its director of finance in 1972.<sup>189</sup>

Profiling these South African individuals is significant in many respects. It illustrates the PCR's consultative approach of bringing a medley of political opinion to influence the WCC's anti-apartheid struggle. It also shows the relevance (to the PCR), of Abdul Minty's specialized knowledge and experience in military nuclear collaboration between South Africa and foreign countries.<sup>190</sup>

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183. <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ssw/news/feb04/boraine>, 'Dr Alex Boraine Comes to CUSSW as Part of Distinguished Visiting Scholars Program', accessed 16 June 2010. He was also the president of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

184. <http://www.whoswhosa.co.za/user/957>, accessed 16 June 2010. Brigalia Bam, was the South African national secretary of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). Interview with Brigalia Bam, 11 December 2008; E. Sisulu, 'Born into the Church', *Agenda*, 25 (1995), pp. 21–25.

185. Interview with Brigalia Bam, 11 December 2008.

186. <http://www.pmg.org.za/docs/2006/061010/abdul.htm>, Abdul Minty, accessed 16 June 2010.

187. [www.anc.org.people/mbyengwa.anc.html](http://www.anc.org.people/mbyengwa.anc.html), 'Masabalala Bonnie Yengwa, 1923–1987: An Obituary', *Sechaba*, September 1987.

188. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1.02, Letter from Webb to Sjollema re M.B. Yengwa's interest in the PCR, 19 April 1970; and response from Yengwa to Sjollema, accepting the invitation to serve on the PCR Committee, 20 May 1970.

189. <http://www.literaturfestivl.com/participants/authors/2002/2020-mazisi-raymond-kunene>, 'Mazisi Raymond Kunene Biography'; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/mazisi\\_kunene](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/mazisi_kunene); and <http://www.enotes.com/contemporary-literary-criticism/kunene-mazisi>, websites accessed on 16 June 2010.

190. AAM and the UN, *Statements, Papers and Letters of Abdul S. Minty, Honorary Secretary of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa* (New Delhi: Sanchar Publishing House, 1994).

Furthermore, it reflects the PCR organizational jigsaw where numerous interlocking organizations and individuals worked together to solve the apartheid problem.

Bam confirmed that other than Borraine, she met Minty, Masabalala and Kunene for the first time at PCR forums. She validated Minty's wide influence in the PCR and its struggle against racism and agreed that her own understanding of the global anti-apartheid struggle had deepened by conversing with Minty and reading the reports he compiled. Bam also attested to the advice Minty gave the PCR on the strategic research areas it should focus on. He also updated the PCR on the thinking and concerns in the international and continental bodies and solidarity movement he was in touch with. His input was therefore significant in the coordination of the global anti-apartheid struggle.<sup>191</sup>

In the 1970–1975 period that the PCR afforded an annual week-long opportunity for South African activists to connect, Borraine was present only once.<sup>192</sup> Political pressure and his personal career prevented him from attending WCC platforms as a PCR Commission member. Despite his absence he made useful comments on the strategies the PCR employed in fighting the apartheid system. The pertinence of this is that a rare opportunity to confront the differences among them as opponents of apartheid was lost as far as Borraine was concerned. Nor did the South African delegates by any means always agree. The issue of the funding of the liberation movements and the political strategy of disinvestment by the WCC, for example, raised sharp disagreement.

In South Africa during this period, Borraine was particularly concerned about the welfare of black mine workers. He recounted how he often flew in private aircraft to the various mines to assess the conditions of the miners. He also travelled with Bobby Godsell, a key Anglo-American executive, to countries such as Italy, Japan, Germany and Sweden learning different approaches to labour relations. In Sweden they were boycotted because the trade unions there refused to speak

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191. Interview with Brigalia Bam, 11 December 2008. Minty also had an impact on Sam Kobia, a Kenyan who later became the general secretary of the WCC. Kobia said that it was from Minty that he learnt more about the liberation struggles in southern Africa. This was during his first trip to Geneva in 1971, when Minty addressed a youth orientation programme under the auspices of the Frontier International Mission: Interview with Sam Kobia, 4 June 2010, Johannesburg. Brigalia Bam and Sam Kobia were both attending a Tiso Foundation function at Sandton Convention Centre that I also attended. Brigalia Bam arranged for me to meet with Kobia, who from 1984 became the vice-moderator of the PCR Executive Group.

192. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Letter from Alex Borraine of the Methodist Youth Department, Durban, to Helga Reisenaner, responding to an invitation to attend the meeting of the PCR Commission, 21–27 March, in Geneva, 24 February 1971; Sjollema reported that Borraine was unable to attend because of harassment from the apartheid regime. See minutes of 2nd meeting of PCR Commission, 21 March, 1971; letter from Borraine to Sjollema, 21 April 1972; PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Minutes of 4th PCR Executive Committee, Geneva, 13–16 December 1973. Borraine indicated that he was happy to be replaced if need be, but the Commission felt that he should stay.

with white businessmen from South Africa.<sup>193</sup> In exile during the same period, Kunene, an ANC fundraiser, was similarly worried about the welfare of the cadres living under trying circumstances in Tanzania. He expressed his anguish in a heart-rending letter to Oliver Tambo. The following is an excerpt of what he wrote:

I remember how I continued to be frustrated at the unfinished episode in France [trying to raise funds for the ANC camps] I wondered for instance how you [Tambo] eventually managed with no plane to London, late at night, with only Africa's great humanitarian and paternal civilization as the sole hope in the situation.<sup>194</sup>

These were contrasting experiences expressed by two activists, sharing a common purpose to improve the circumstances of fellow South Africans who were suffering because of the inequalities of the apartheid system.<sup>195</sup> They had an exclusive opportunity at the WCC forums to debate the Special Fund grants and the support for disinvestment the PCR was promoting to dismantle apartheid. Both Borraine and Kunene criticized the Special Fund grants the WCC allocated to the ANC – but for different reasons.

On the one hand, Borraine 'understood the WCC's intention to aid dependants of the liberation forces and to offer educational opportunities to political exiles'. However he thought that 'this might have been a fairly naïve objective'. He felt that 'once money was given to a liberation movement, its leaders understandably made their own decision on how that money was used'.<sup>196</sup> On the other hand, Kunene criticized the amount of money the WCC allocated to the ANC. He demanded more. Significantly, the opportunity the PCR made available for Borraine to hear directly from Kunene how the ANC spent the grants, was lost. So too was the opportunity for Minty and the others to hear first hand from Borraine on the negative aspects of disinvestment<sup>197</sup>. Borraine was quoted as saying:

It would have been more positive had the WCC embarked on a campaign to persuade investors in its countries to be fairer with black workers and to share profits.<sup>198</sup>

South Africans added value to the PCR and its anti-apartheid struggle in other ways too. Bam mobilized women in East Germany who raised money for the PCR Special Fund and campaigned for the boycott of South African products.<sup>199</sup>

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193. Borraine, *A Life in Transition*, pp. 81, 74, 76, 77.

194. Ndlovu, 'The ANC and the World', pp. 566–567.

195. *Ibid.*, p. 567; Borraine, *A Life in Transition*, pp. 76–77.

196. Ndlovu, 'The ANC and the World', p. 566; Borraine, *A Life in Transition*, p. 59.

197. At the time, Borraine was an executive manager of the Anglo-American Corporation. His connection with this powerful mining company that employed millions of black mine workers made him reluctant to support financial withdrawal from the country.

198. [www.aluka.org](http://www.aluka.org). 'First Reactions to WCC Investment Vote', no. 25, 14 September 1972.

199. Interview with Brigalia Bam, 11 December 2008, Pretoria. Bam was head of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), and the interview in her office was interrupted due to preparations for the general elections due in April 2009. She was also preoccupied with her trip to Germany, to meet with some of these women to thank them for their solidarity.

Minty contributed to mobilization and political action, the two PCR pillars that aimed to conscientize the WCC Christian constituency about apartheid and encourage it to support foreign investment withdrawal.<sup>200</sup> Yengwa, the director of the Luthuli Memorial Foundation, exchanged resource material of mutual benefit for their respective political educational programmes to counter apartheid propaganda.<sup>201</sup> Most importantly, all these individuals were part of the organizational jigsaw that connected PCR to activist women in East Germany, to the UN, AAM and the ANC, in the global struggle against apartheid.

The annual Central Committee meetings and bi-annual Executive Committee meetings were held in different parts of the world from 1971 to 1974 and South Africans were thus able to become acquainted with the direction the WCC followed to fight apartheid.<sup>202</sup> Two of their main concerns were the PCR radical approach in providing financial support for liberation movements engaged in an armed struggle and WCC support for foreign investment withdrawal.<sup>203</sup>

Bishop Zulu's reaction was the most curious. He was one of the WCC presidents and had endorsed the PCR inauguration at Canterbury. When the announcement was made about the ANC grant, he was reported to have encouraged the SACC leadership to lodge an immediate protest against the WCC.<sup>204</sup> Risking detention under Vorster's Terrorism Act of 1967,<sup>205</sup> he capitulated and joined the chorus which castigated the 'infamous' decision to fund the ANC by the WCC. Yet when he was outside the country, he spoke freely to the WCC Central and Executive Committees. He discussed the South African churches' reluctance to act against apartheid<sup>206</sup> and highlighted the disservice done to Africans by white migration and tourism in southern Africa.<sup>207</sup> Both the Central and Executive Committee meetings in 1972 were particularly crucial in the official launch of the WCC's disinvestment campaign against apartheid and yet Zulu (as the president of the

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200. Telephonic interview with Abdul Minty, 4 October 2009.

201. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.01, Correspondence between the Luthuli Memorial Foundation and the PCR headquarters, 11 January 1971; 7 April 1971; 10 June 1972; 12 July 1972; 18 August 1972.

202. Those who benefited from these opportunities included Alpheus Zulu, Brigalia Bam, John Rees, Abel Hendricks (a Methodist), Edwin S. Pons (a Presbyterian), Philip Russell of the CPSA, John Thorn (a Congregational), D.W. Giesekke and Desmond Tutu. See WCCRS, Minutes and reports of meetings of WCC Central Committee, 1971–1974.

203. The general perception was that the liberation movements were to use the money to wage a terrorism campaign in South Africa rather than develop the ANC in exile. See De Gruchy, *Church Struggle*, pp.130–131; Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, p. 49; Ryan, *Beyers Naudé: Pilgrimage*, p. 136; Mbali, *The Churches and Racism*, p. 22.

204. 'Church Militant', *The Manchester Guardian*, 4 September 1970; Clarke, *Anglicans against Apartheid*, pp. 257–258, citing *New York Times*, 5 September 1970.

205. J. Allen, *The Authorized Biography of Desmond Tutu; Rabble-Rouser for Peace* (Johannesburg: Rider, 2007), p. 117.

206. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 25th meeting of CC of WCC, Utrecht, 13–23 August 1972, pp. 30–31.

207. WCCRS, Meeting of the Executive Committee of WCC, Utrecht, 12 August 1972.

WCC) reportedly refused to support proposals for violent solutions to South African problems.<sup>208</sup> His response to the PCR was thus ambivalent.

John Rees was present at some of the WCC Central Committee meetings. He represented the view taken by the SACC members who were enraged at the idea of an ANC grant.<sup>209</sup> It was at the Addis Ababa meeting in 1971 that the structural violence inherent in the apartheid system came into sharp focus. Rees returned home sombre and thereafter encouraged his white fellow Christians to reflect on the lives of black people working in their homes and gardens.<sup>210</sup> The SACC also disapproved of the PCR joining the chorus of anti-apartheid voices that promoted the strategy of disinvestment. Rees called for selective engagement on the grounds that investment led to increased employment and greater financial and educational opportunities for blacks, all of which he felt would encourage peaceful rather than violent change.<sup>211</sup>

At one of the WCC forums, Desmond Tutu was asked whether the ANC and the PAC did not perhaps spend the WCC grants on arms.<sup>212</sup> He evaded the question and diverted it to the PCR director.<sup>213</sup> His support for economic sanctions was apparent only when he became the SACC general secretary in 1978.<sup>214</sup> Before that (1972–1975) his stance on disinvestments was unclear. Perhaps he subscribed to passive resistance.

Selby Taylor, the Archbishop of Cape Town, remained ambivalent about the WCC's support for freedom fighters. He wanted the WCC to revert to a policy of supporting needy black people locally. In 1973, he solicited support from the British Council of Churches (BCC) to persuade the WCC to reconsider its policy at the following Central Committee meeting. Consequently, the WCC suggested that the South African member churches send additional observers with their delegation to attend the meeting. This was seen as compensation for the

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208. N.E. Sonderling, ed., *New Dictionary of South African Biography, Volume 2* (Pretoria: Vista University, 1999): entry for A.Z. Zulu (1905–1988), p. 241; Mbali, *The Churches and Racism*, p. 56.

209. A meeting was suggested for the WCC and the SACC to confront the issue of the Special Fund grants to the ANC. Boraine negotiated with the government on behalf of the local churches to allow the WCC delegates entry to the country but the WCC rejected the restrictions Vorster imposed on its delegation and the meeting was aborted. See Boraine, *A Life in Transition*, p. 59.

210. Wits, SACC Collection (AC623), International Papers, Report by J. Rees to the SACC on the 24th meeting of the WCC CC in Addis Ababa, January 1971.

211. J. Rees, 'Investment in Southern Africa: The Stand of the WCC towards South Africa and the Reaction from South Africa', *South African Institute of International Affairs*, 5, 3 (1973), pp. 32–38; T.A. Borer, *Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa, 1980–1994* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), p.154.

212. The Central Committee meetings usually comprised about 100 delegates from all parts of the world where the WCC had member churches. As a black South African, Tutu was placed in a difficult position.

213. Interview with Baldwin Sjollema, 28 June 2006.

214. Borer, *Challenging the State*, p.155.

consultation Vorster had forestalled in 1971.<sup>215</sup> The meeting was described as particularly difficult, with the PCR being sharply criticized.<sup>216</sup> Alex Boraine, representing the observers' views, was quoted as follows:

„, we have come to represent the continued concern of the SA member churches towards the decision of the WCC to support movements operating in SA whose aim is to bring about social and political change through violence.

He went on to reaffirm 'solidarity with the world Church in its struggle against racism inside and outside SA and the wholehearted opposition of the SA churches to exploitation and dehumanization wherever it manifest itself.'<sup>217</sup> The PCR proponents within the WCC Central Committee pointed out to South Africans that there was violence on both sides (in both the apartheid regime and the liberation movements).<sup>218</sup> The choice, they said, was not always between violence and non-violence, but between engagement and non-engagement in the struggle against injustice.<sup>219</sup>

The SACC was clearly convinced that the WCC authorities were wrong to have put their faith in the liberation movements. Canon Collins of the London-based IDAF also approached the PCR director and warned him that 'a respectable organization like the WCC faced the risk of entanglement in unseemly conflicts with other agencies in the field'. He suggested that it was better that the WCC channel its money through the IDAF with the assurance that it would be 'spent creatively'.<sup>220</sup> Evidently, it was not only the SACC leadership that disapproved of the WCC's funding of the liberation movements. The PCR director explained to Collins that the reason for raising the money was for the Church to be seen to take a public stand. He went on to say: 'If we put our money where our mouth is, people might begin to hear what we're trying to say'.<sup>221</sup> The SACC nevertheless remained opposed to the WCC's funding of the liberation movements. Philip Russell, the newly-appointed Archbishop of Cape Town expressed disappointment that the WCC still continued to do so in 1974.<sup>222</sup>

Tristan Borer has studied the SACC churches as political actors in challenging the apartheid state. She comments on their attitude towards the PCR during this period and argues that the members of the SACC were distressed because the

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215. Clarke, *Anglicans against Apartheid*, p. 289.

216. Sjollema, *Involvement of the WCC*, p. 22.

217. Wits, SACC Collection, 20.7.3, Statement by delegation from SA churches attending CC of the WCC, 22 August 1973.

218. This opinion was based on the scientific study (referred to above) which the WCC had conducted on violence and non-violence in the struggle for social justice.

219. P. Webb, *The Worldwide Webb: Memoirs of a Life in the Universal Church* (Norwich and London: Canterbury Press, 2006), pp. 115–116.

220. D. Herbstein, *White Lies; Canon Collins and the Secret War against Apartheid* (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2004), pp. 228–229.

221. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

222. His disquiet was published in the *Daily News*, 22 August 1974 in 'New Bishop Opposed to WCC Grant', cited by Clarke, *Anglicans against Apartheid*, p. 289.

Special Fund grants were given to groups that the SACC and the apartheid government labelled as 'terrorists'. She discounts the violence issue as the key problem on two counts. Firstly, because most of the SACC members continued to provide chaplains to the South African Defence Force (SADF) fighting the liberation movements, while at the same time condemning the PCR grants. They had not embraced pacifism and had readily accepted the 'just war' argument in the context of the Second World War. Secondly, they proved to be less radical than the WCC in supporting economic sanctions to end the apartheid system. It was only later in 1976 that they changed their attitude towards disinvestment, under the influence of more radical thinking.<sup>223</sup> Her argument reinforces the point this study has already made.

South Africans had another chance to connect at the AACC General Assembly held in Lusaka in 1974. The PCR staff facilitated the platform for Christians from the SACC and the politically exiled ANC and PAC to meet.<sup>224</sup> John Rees was amongst those present.<sup>225</sup> The significance of this occasion is captured in the following comment by Barney Pityana:

Following a visit to Lusaka in 1974, John Rees was magnanimous enough to confess how moved he was by the testimony of South Africans in exile. They told of their efforts to maintain Christian life in their military camps, including the training of Methodist lay preachers. He discovered that there were real Christians among the freedom fighters who shared the same confession as Christians at home. They were fully aware as Christians that they were responsible to God for their actions; and far from glorifying war, they bemoaned that it had become necessary to eliminate apartheid.<sup>226</sup>

The attempts to bridge the gulf between South African anti-apartheid activists did not bring about instantaneous results. They were nonetheless vital steps towards building the relationship between the South African churches and the liberation movements.

## Conclusion

The six-year span under the Uppsala mandate witnessed the WCC turning to more radical and activist methods in its fight against racism, operating through the PCR. These methods polarized the WCC membership across the board in the PCR organizational jigsaw. The PCR was as strong as its weakest link. Its effectiveness or ineffectiveness was dependent on the support or lack thereof from the various organizational layers.

The contradictions in the PCR organizational jigsaw were personified by Andrew Young, the African American US congressman. He was outspoken in his criticism

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223. Borer, *Challenging the State*, pp.153–155.

224. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Minutes of PCR Commission, May 1974 (Document no. 1), Staff Report on Programme Development.

225. See also Mbali, *The Churches and Racism*, p. 54.

226. Pityana, 'Tumultuous Response', p. 97.

of the apartheid government yet he supported peaceful change and felt that the armed struggle would be impractical in southern Africa. At the UN he competed loudly against those who advocated armed resistance. His non-violent alternative was based on his firm belief in the power of the capitalist system to effect positive social and political change, through the economic empowerment of workers. He believed in majority rule through an evolutionary process that was to come about not as a 'black takeover' but as a matter of blacks and whites learning to live together.<sup>227</sup> He disapproved of the funding of the liberation movements and disinvestment in South Africa. He visited South Africa, 'the bastion of apartheid', at a time when the WCC was banned because of the PCR.<sup>228</sup> This left some of the PCR Commission members feeling betrayed.<sup>229</sup> More significantly, the PCR chain had elements with common and contradictory views to those of Young.

The essence of this is that in the final analysis the PCR's four-pronged strategy against apartheid was not, by any means, reached effortlessly. This was very evident in the reaction to the PCR's symbolic small grants to the liberation movements. There is no doubt that violence was embedded in the apartheid system. Yet the WCC's choice to abandon the principle of non-violence was considered highly ill-advised by some of its Christian constituency. In addition, foreign investments in South Africa were central to the continuance of racial domination and exploitation of the black population. Yet the WCC's decision to encourage divestment (including its own) and disinvestment of all foreign funds in South Africa was seen as unprincipled by many ecumenical Christians.

The attempts to mobilize the global Christian community to join the struggle against the apartheid system were uneven. The PCR's strategy was not 'neat', with a clearly defined scope and structure; it was a mixture of reactions to existing problems and current political developments. Occasionally, the fulltime staff was overstretched and there was a lack of cooperation from other organizational layers. Yet the strongest link provided knowledge about the crime of apartheid to Christians in foreign countries.

Attempts to bridge the gap among South African opponents of apartheid resident in the country and those in political exile, yielded mixed results. Opportunities

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227. Hasselblad, 'US Foreign Policy on South Africa', pp. 133–138.

228. The PCR Commission was distressed that as a PCR commissioner he could accept an invitation to South Africa and be the recipient of hospitality from a government which did not disguise its contempt for its black citizens and its determination to retain power. He was aware that the leading representatives of the WCC were denied entry into South Africa. Pauline Webb was refused admission and was deported. The WCC and the PCR staff members were banned. He was pledging his effort to assist in mobilizing opinion in the US as well as in the international community so that the government of SA would at least accept moderation of its apartheid policies as the only reasonable course. He was also criticized for not attempting to meet leaders of the liberation groups who were forced to operate in exile so that his insight was enriched by direct contact with them. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Minutes of meeting of PCR Executive Committee, 6–7 March 1975.

229. *Ibid.*



were lost, suspicion lingered, but others connected and the seeds for further strengthening of ties were sown.

The PCR's underlying purpose was the radical transformation of all systems based on racist ideology. Its ultimate goal was to form a just society; this was not negotiable. Strategies that merely attacked the symptoms of racism without getting to the root of the problem were unacceptable.<sup>230</sup>

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230. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Confidential minutes of PCR Commission, 2–6 March 1975.

## Chapter Five

### The PCR struggle against apartheid under the Nairobi mandate, 1975–1982

By 1975, the white minority South African government was anomalous in a world where black majority governments had replaced white colonial rule. The international community grew increasingly aware of apartheid's inhumane system.

<sup>1</sup> These perceptions influenced the WCC members in Nairobi who came from different parts of the world to decide the fate of the PCR. The programme was initially intended to last for five years. The renewal of the PCR implied the WCC's continuation of activist methods to fight racism in South Africa and elsewhere. It also marked the triumph of the radical approach which rested on a four-pillared strategy (discussed in the previous chapter), by the PCR advocates. The battle to modify the approach was however not yet over; the need to campaign effectively against the threat of apartheid remained.

The chapter concentrates on the PCR debate at the Nairobi General Assembly in December 1975 and the PCR activities during the seven years after that to 1982. The Nairobi tenure brought a nuanced arrangement of the budget and the officials who administered the PCR during this period. This chapter argues that the PCR retained the character of its organizational jigsaw (discussed in the preceding chapter). The PCR comprised independent-minded individuals with differences in their level of activism, some of whom were connected to powerful global institutions with influence to persuade the world community to become involved against racism in South Africa and elsewhere.

It contends that the PCR maintained its four-pillared tactics against apartheid, despite continual contestation from the moderate element in the layers of the PCR organizational structure. The radical element resumed the redistribution of power by means of limited (but symbolic) funding to representatives of the racially discriminated who were engaged in armed struggle; it carried on informing foreigners to be alert of and to resist the apartheid system; it maintained its efforts to dislodge apartheid by political action; it insisted that the WCC close its accounts with banks linked to South Africa; and it also continued to bridge the distance between South African opponents of apartheid resident in the country and those who were politically exiled.

The implementation of these inter-connected strategies against apartheid led to a progression of disharmony among the WCC policy-makers and the broader ecumenical Christian community. It was in the last two years of this seven-year period that the moderate element ultimately succeeded in altering the PCR focus

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1. N.L. Clark and W.H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (London: Pearson Education, 2004), p. 80.

on South Africa and this had implications for the WCC's campaign against apartheid.

Hope and fear characterized the mid 1970s to early 1980s. The end of the wars in Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea which reaffirmed the victory of various countries against foreign domination, brought optimism in the world. The achievement of political freedom in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and Zimbabwe from the Portuguese and the British yoke respectively, gave hope that liberation in other parts of West Africa would prevail.<sup>2</sup> Yet the Soweto uprising, Steve Biko's death and the invasion of neighbouring countries of Zambia, Mozambique, Lesotho and Zimbabwe by apartheid forces searching for suspected ANC camps, had adverse effects.<sup>3</sup> The FRELIMO government in Mozambique did not guarantee unconditional help to South African liberation movements in their struggle for freedom.<sup>4</sup> Paul Maylam described this as 'a period when South Africa became an increasingly embattled, besieged pariah state. He argued that it was the internal and international pressure which eroded the apartheid system, with its contradictions'.<sup>5</sup> This was the geo-political background that galvanized the WCC to pursue the PCR agenda against apartheid with vigour, using all available resources.

## Nairobi

The policies the WCC adopted against apartheid were based on decisions by the delegates at its general assemblies. The Fifth Assembly, held in Kenya in December 1975, symbolized the WCC's seriousness in tackling the continent's problems. Its theme was 'Jesus Christ Frees and Unites'. The assembly provided another fortnight for reflection, re-planning, refreshing and charting the way forward for many of its programmes, strategies and actions, in the WCC's endeavour to end racial discrimination in the world community.

Emissaries from various member churches, and some who had fled the country into exile, represented South Africa at Nairobi. The apartheid government refused Desmond Tutu a passport to travel, so he was unable to go to Nairobi.<sup>6</sup> The PCR

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2. World Council of Churches, *Nairobi to Vancouver: 1975–1983: Report of the Central Committee to the 6th Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1984), Introduction, p. ix; Clark and Worger, *Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 80.
  3. D. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid: Ecumenism in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1989), pp. 83–86; J.W. de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979), pp. 168–171; R.K. Massie, 'Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation: A Study of Eight Institutional Investors' Approaches to South Africa' (PhD thesis, Harvard University, 1989), pp. 13–14; Clark and Worger, *Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 82.
  4. D. Herstein, 'Why FRELIMO Can't Help in South Africa', *The Times* (London), 2 February 1975.
  5. P. Maylam, *South Africa's Racial Past: The History and Historiography of Racism, Segregation and Apartheid* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 203–204.
  6. This government attempt to silence resistance was a repeat of what happened to Bishop Zulu in 1966 when he was invited to attend the Church and Society conference at Geneva.

director also invited Oliver Tambo, the ANC president, to attend.<sup>7</sup> At the assembly, the delegates singled out South Africa for its 'blatant and God-defying' racism'. They criticized local Christians for 'enabling an oppressive, violent and racist system to function, especially when it justified itself on biblical grounds'.<sup>8</sup> They supported the continuation of the PCR and its campaign against the apartheid system. At the same time, they emphasized the need for the PCR to widen its scope beyond southern Africa from then onwards.<sup>9</sup> In the view of J.H. Jackson, this assembly 'took the side of liberation and was to go down in history as a significant milestone on the highway to universal freedom'.<sup>10</sup>

The message for the South African state was obvious. The WCC pledged to continue its fight against racism. This meant continuing the four-pronged tactic of funding, mobilization, political action and bridging, in its attempt to achieve a non-racial democratic South African society.

The negative response from the European-American Banking Corporations (EABC) banks and the outcome of the disinvestment survey the PCR conducted, formed part of the discussions at the Nairobi Assembly. The EABC banks refused to stop lending to the South African government and its agencies. Their response was technical and clinical in nature. Their argument as commercial banks was that they were apolitical and therefore provided a service to all, irrespective of moral or other considerations. The Executive Committee of the WCC finally decided that none of the WCC funds should be deposited with these six banks.<sup>11</sup> This was crucial. The WCC acted on its commitment to pressurize foreign banks that retained links with apartheid. It set an unequivocal example – even big business could be challenged.

The WCC's Executive Committee had instructed the PCR to study how member churches responded to the decisions, taken at Utrecht in 1972 and in West Berlin in 1974, that the WCC would support disinvestment in South Africa. According to the PCR, the survey report had inaccuracies and circulation was consequently discouraged.<sup>12</sup> It is conceivable that what were described as inaccuracies were in fact legitimate views from those who disapproved of the decision. It is also possible that the PCR advocates censored what it did not want the public to know.

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7. He explained to Tambo in detail how the WCC functioned. He also made it clear that if Tambo or the ANC were to apply, they would have to make their own travel and accommodation arrangements. See PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Letter from Baldwin Sjollema to Oliver Tambo, 10 October 1975.
  8. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Letter from Baldwin Sjollema to Professor Shamuyarira, 6 April 1976.
  9. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, PCR Policy and Programme, Appendix to Unit II paper, 5 May 1976.
  10. J.H. Jackson, *Nairobi: A Joke, a Junket, or a Journey* (Nashville: Townsend Press, 1976), pp. 39–40.
  11. WCC Main Library, Reference Section, Geneva (hereafter WCCRS), Minutes of meeting of Executive Committee of WCC, Geneva, 7–9, 15 and 18 August 1976, pp. 6–7.
  12. *Ibid.*

Significantly, it turned out that the observation made against the PCR advocates was accurate. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of the member churches rejected the decision spearheaded by the PCR that there be a withdrawal of foreign investment from South Africa. This was the verdict from the survey report. The PCR Geneva office promptly destroyed its copies, but a German professor managed to obtain a copy and spent the whole night reading it in Nairobi. He later raised his concern about the turn of events with the WCC Central Committee members. They duly reproached the PCR staff and advocates involved in the misconduct. Philip Potter, the WCC general secretary who was a staunch PCR supporter, was reportedly upset and thoroughly disappointed. Brigalia Bam, one of the culprits, owned up.<sup>13</sup> She was strongly in favour of the PCR and was present at this WCC Central Committee meeting.

The misdemeanour by the PCR advocates was significant. It demonstrated the extent to which they were prepared to sway the churches to dismantle the economy of the apartheid government. Despite the transgression, the PCR was officially approved as an ongoing WCC programme. The dissenting voices were defeated.<sup>14</sup> The WCC Executive Committee called upon churches to confess their involvement in perpetuating racism. It also urged churches to review their investments in order to determine the degree to which their financial practices, domestic as well as international, supported racially oppressive governments, discriminatory industries and inhumane working conditions.<sup>15</sup> More importantly, the imperative to fight against the apartheid system was revived.

Meanwhile, the situation was deteriorating in South Africa and Beyers Naudé, the director of the Christian Institute warned whites to take heed of mounting black anger. He called for a national convention between black and white South Africans. He predicted increasing polarization and hostility if this call was ignored.<sup>16</sup> John Rees, the general secretary of the SACC, also predicted that 'the future of South Africa was firmly in the hands of the black man', in his address to the SACC conference held before the assembly.<sup>17</sup> The attitude by these two leaders marked the direction in which the South African churches were moving in their struggle against apartheid.

### **PCR organizational jigsaw**

The Nairobi General Assembly brought in a crop of new individuals to carry out the responsibilities of the WCC. Some of the personalities had however served in the previous years. In the first layer, the previous PCR director and the

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13. Telephonic interview with Brigalia Bam, 13 May 2010.

14. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, PCR Policy and Programme, Appendix to Unit II paper, 5 May 1976.

15. WCCRS, WCC Executive Committee meeting, Nairobi, 20–22 November 1975.

16. C. Ryan, *Beyers Naudé: Pilgrimage of Faith* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990), pp. 171–172.

17. D. Thomas, *Christ Divided: Liberalism, Ecumenism and Race in South Africa* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2002), p. 209.

programme secretary carried on until the last two years of the 1975–1982 before the next assembly.<sup>18</sup> Anwar Barkat succeeded Baldwin Sjollema in 1981 as the new PCR director.<sup>19</sup> Alexander Kirby, who was appointed as the research secretary, suddenly resigned.<sup>20</sup> The subsequent appointments were on a short-term basis.<sup>21</sup> The unstable staff impacted negatively on the activities of the PCR, in this seven-year period, particularly in the latter years.

The new WCC Central Committee appointed the new PCR Commission members. The approach remained that of selecting various personalities who were connected to centres of influence that could assist in defeating racism. The responsibilities of the PCR Commission members were spelt out more clearly than before.<sup>22</sup> African representation was an issue of concern. There was also an attempt to have a South African in the PCR Commission.<sup>23</sup> The new PCR Executive Committee comprised both old and new people.

The WCC continued to experience budgetary constraints. Philip Potter introduced innovative measures to make up for the shortfall. A new core group system resulted in cost effectiveness and cooperation by colleagues not only within all

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18. In both cases their terms of service ended in November 1980. The director's term was extended for another year until the appointment of Anwar Barkat in 1981. The programme secretary had been with the WCC for nine years. He had expanded the work of the PCR to Latin America and Asia. He resigned in 1980 and returned to Angola. See PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.05, Confidential minutes of the PCR Executive Group, 2–4 February 1981.

19. *Ibid.*

20. A suitable candidate for such a post had to be a university graduate, fluent in spoken and written English, plus another international language. He or she had to be familiar with action groups, and be well aware of international politics. It was essential for such a person to be a team player. The job entailed conducting action-oriented research work in the field of racism. The duties involved keeping well informed of new developments in the area of racism through reading, travelling, consultation, etc. Such a candidate had to interpret, coordinate, and evaluate research work done by other bodies and record relevant documentation and information. The preparation and editing of publications was also required. Together with a team, s/he had to propose actions and policy to the WCC constituency and interpret and communicate WCC policy to member churches. See PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Confidential minutes of the Core Group on the PCR, 15 November 1976.

21. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.05, Minutes of the PCR Commission, Harare, 12–25 July 1981, Staff report by Prexy Nesbitt.

22. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Core Group meeting, Bossey, Geneva, WCC Unit II, PCR, 16–21 May 1976.

23. Criteria were to be set up to find a way of making African representation on the Commission more effective. There was a suggestion that there should be a South African who belonged to the church constituency and who was on good terms with the liberation movements. Ms Laurette Ngcobo's name was suggested. She was based in the UK. Additional names were suggested on 17 May 1976. By 1977 there was still a vacancy for a South African Commission member. It was preferred that this person be someone living in West Africa who had continued contacts in South Africa so that the Commission could be kept informed about developments and trends there. In addition, this person had to see her/his future in South Africa. See PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Confidential minutes of the Commission on the PCR, Egham, England, 17–23 April 1977.

the divisions and departments, but also among member churches.<sup>24</sup> It was a better version of the previous ad hoc Staff Coordinating Group which consisted of individuals based in Geneva. The people the new Central Committee appointed, as core members were a good balance of youth, gender, race, denominational, clergy and laity representation and came from all parts of the world. Their task was to advise the Central Committee about the value and relevance of the WCC commissions and working groups.<sup>25</sup> As official appointees, the core members had direct influence in the highest decision making structure of the WCC. Significantly, the PCR Commission benefited from the new system which included South African core members such as Desmond Tutu and Gabriel Setiloane.<sup>26</sup> Their involvement ensured that the campaign the PCR waged against apartheid received adequate attention in the WCC.

Unit II on Justice and Service safeguarded the PCR budget for its administration and its projects during this period.<sup>27</sup> The contributors to the operational budgets for the entire unit were mainly from the Federal Republic of Germany, USA, Canada, the Netherlands, and the UK.<sup>28</sup> The unit financial officer collaborated and coordinated with other finance personnel within the WCC on money matters and made sure that the PCR functioned as smoothly as possible.<sup>29</sup> This was significant because it meant that the PCR had financial resources to carry out its programmes and projects.

Members of the WCC Central and Executive Committees remained divided on the radical approach the PCR adopted to transform racialized societies. The division still cut across all layers in the PCR organizational structure. The PCR chain was still only as strong as its weakest link.

## Funding

The WCC's efforts to redistribute power to the racially discriminated was steady during this period. They continued to receive symbolic funding from the PCR

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24. A significant advantage of this core group system was the strengthening and improvement of the SACC-WCC relationship (and equivalents elsewhere). The nomination of Tutu was made to achieve this purpose. See PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Philip Potter's letter to member churches, 2 January 1976.

25. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Minutes of the staff programme coordination and planning meeting, 4 November 1975; Box 4223.2.03, A memo from Konrad Raiser to heads of sub-units re nominations for full commissions and working groups, 6 April 1976.

26. Tutu and Setiloane were nominated as core group members for Faith and Order; and for Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, respectively. See PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Nairobi, document no. 2, revised, with membership of Core Groups of future commissions as proposed by the nomination committee, 11 December 1975.

27. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Confidential minutes of the Core Group meeting in Bossey, 16–21 May 1976.

28. Both the capitalist-West and communist-East Germany contributed towards the PCR. The money from East Germany could not be channelled directly to the Special Fund, because of transfer regulations, but the liberation movements benefited directly from the amount.

29. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Confidential minutes of the PCR Commission meeting, Egham, England, 17–23 April 1977.

Special Fund. It was mainly the member churches, local congregations, councils of churches, church agencies, anti-racism groups, private individuals and governments (through ecumenical councils) which sustained the income level in the Special Fund.

Some of these monies were paid in the form of annual donations.<sup>30</sup> Several of the WCC members needed assurance that their money was not distributed to 'terrorists'. The donations were therefore administered through a separate account, with donors contributing an extra 10 per cent for this purpose. It became the PCR policy that the government support should not to exceed 50 per cent of the total amount coming to the Special Fund. The logic was that it was the churches and not governments which should shoulder the responsibility. More importantly, the income rose every year during this 1975–1982 period.<sup>31</sup> This meant that the WCC was able to fulfil its pledge.

The procedure followed in disbursing the grants improved over time. An example of an ANC application illustrates the procedure: The ANC treasurer submitted a written request to the Geneva PCR office. The PCR director wrote to the ANC president, Oliver Tambo, to confirm the application.<sup>32</sup> Tambo responded in writing. From there, the PCR staff sought information and advice from bodies such as the OAU, AACC, SACC and individual PCR Commission members.<sup>33</sup> These were institutions and individuals familiar with and knowledgeable about the ANC projects for which the funding was applied.

During the annual PCR Commission meeting, the ANC application was discussed and members were able to express differing opinions. The PCR Executive Committee decided on the application and in turn made a recommendation to the WCC Executive Committee. The latter made the final decision on whether the application would be granted or not. Tambo received a letter and the treasurer was sent a cheque if the application was successful.

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30. An example is Thierry Verhelst in Brussels, representing the Projects Commission which donated an amount to the Special Fund. The second amount was earmarked for the following year. Grants were made on 12 February 1980 and in September 1982.

31. The financial report indicated a record amount of US\$914 000 by 1980, as there were more contributions made to the Special Fund. The provisional records indicated an actual expenditure of US\$645 233 against US\$655 110 approved for the Special Fund. The income was approximately US\$590 000 which was received in 1981. By 1982, the ceiling for the Special Fund was put at US\$500 000. There was also a record income of US\$451 000 in 1980 from special donors, and an amount of US\$455 000 in 1981. This was reported by Mr Turnbull who was the new finance officer. He explained that income was rising every year. See PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Confidential minutes of the PCR Commission meeting, Netherlands, 22–23 June 1980; and Box 4223.2.05, Confidential minutes of the PCR Executive Group, Geneva, 2–4 February 1981.

32. ANC members were scattered worldwide, which meant that there might well have been some miscommunication between them.

33. The AACC and the SACC were continental and national associate members of the WCC. The SACC was more supportive of the liberation movements at this point than had previously been the case.



Some of the applications were rejected. A document detailing the grants made and a brief description of each organization, was distributed to member churches and to the media with a press release.<sup>34</sup> Press releases were later stopped because of the negative publicity they generated.

It was the ANC, the PAC and the South African Congress of Trade Unions, (SACTU) which benefited from 1976 until 1982. In 1976, all three applied and received US\$50 000, US\$50 000 and US\$5 000 respectively. In 1977, they applied again and received US\$25 000, US\$25,000 and US\$5,000 respectively. There was a repeat of the same applications and the same amounts were received in 1978. However, in 1979 the pattern changed. It was only SACTU that received a grant of US\$5 000. Of the three, the ANC was the only recipient in 1980, with an amount of US\$150 000. In 1981 the ANC, PAC and SACTU received US\$65 000, US\$45 000 and US\$15 000 respectively. And in 1982 the ANC and the PAC were both granted funds, receiving US\$65 000 and US\$45,000 respectively.<sup>35</sup>

The PAC reacted angrily when the WCC rejected its application in 1980. Its leadership was riddled with conflict. Thami Plaatjie claimed that the OAU Liberation Committee tried to bring peace and stability within the PAC to no avail.<sup>36</sup> It was Prexy Nesbitt, the PCR staff member who sought OAU advice about the PAC application. When Nesbitt's report was critical, the PAC branded him an 'American communist' who favoured the ANC.<sup>37</sup> The PAC's unpopularity in WCC circles meant that it received far less support. However, the People's Republic of China offered the PAC facilities for military training.<sup>38</sup>

Nesbitt revealed that it was his colleague, Annette Hutchins-Felder, who leaked his report to the PAC. The prevalent perception internally was that the PCR was biased towards the ANC. This was common, especially as far as African Americans and Africans from independent African countries were concerned. These individuals were suspicious of the ANC's non-racial outlook and therefore regarded the PAC as a genuine representative of the majority of black South

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34. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Confidential minutes of the PCR Commission meeting, Portugal, 14–19 May 1978.

35. The racially oppressed groups from southern Africa remained the main beneficiaries. See K. Warr, 'The Normative Promise of Global Civil Society: The Role of the World Council of Churches in the Transition to and Maintenance of Democracy in South Africa' (PhD thesis. American University, 1998), pp. 271–283.

36. T. ka Plaatjie, 'The PAC in Exile', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970–1980* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2006), pp. 737–746. Note that Thami Plaatjie, a former secretary general of the PAC, is now known as Thami ka Plaatjie. He wrote his chapter in the above book under this name.

37. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.05, *Azania Struggle*, 2, 2 (1980/81) This was the newsletter of the Support Committee for the PAC of SA, New Zealand.

38. 'South Africa: Trouble for PAC', *Africa Confidential*, 19, 28 April 1978, p. 3. Cited by M.R. Maimela, 'Black Consciousness and White Liberals in South Africa' (PhD thesis, UNISA, Pretoria, 1999), p. 201.

Africans.<sup>39</sup> The WCC defended the procedure followed and the PAC was not precluded from applying in the future.<sup>40</sup> Although the PAC received grants in the years indicated, there was no evidence of any form of relations with the PCR staff.

The international solidarity groups also benefited from the Special Fund. These included the Anti-Apartheid Movement of Osaka in Japan; the Southern Africa Liberation Centre in Australia; the National Anti-Apartheid Committee in New Zealand; the New Zealand Anti-Apartheid Movement; the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the UK; the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee in the UK; the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa; the *Africa News* in the US; the Washington Office on Africa; the Southern Africa Committee in the US; the Boycott Outspan Aktie in Belgium; the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Switzerland (Zurich and Geneva sections); the Anti-Apartheid Bewegung in Germany; the Anti-Apartheid Movement/Information Centre on Southern Africa in Germany; the Campaign Anti-Outspan of France; the Movement Anti-Apartheid in France; the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Austria; the Holland Committee on Southern Africa; the SACTU Solidarity Committee in Canada; the Southern Africa Support Project in the USA; and the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement.<sup>41</sup>

The internationalization of the anti-apartheid struggle grew apace. The Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement at the time collaborated with the Dutch, French and New Zealand Anti-Apartheid Movements in their campaigns against apartheid.<sup>42</sup> The extent of financial support from the PCR Special Fund rested on the association the WCC developed with these groups. This was evidence of the global nature of the anti-apartheid movement and the PCR provided a platform for its consolidation.

During this period, the ANC and the PAC embarked on new initiatives to end white rule. The ANC aimed at building mass organizations within the country and also escalated armed attacks.<sup>43</sup> The PAC initiated plans to send arms and guerrillas into South Africa. From 1976, in the aftermath of the Soweto uprising, resistance intensified as hundreds of young people slipped across South Africa's borders. They volunteered to join the armed resistance for either one of the two national liberation movements. By the late 1970s, some of them began to re-enter the country secretly to carry out carefully orchestrated sabotage attacks on various targets symbolizing apartheid oppression. The government-owned SASOL plant and the Koeberg nuclear power station were blown up in 1980 and

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39. Interview with Prexy Nesbitt, Johannesburg, 11 December 2008.

40. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Confidential minutes of the PCR Executive Group, Kandy, Sri Lanka, 10 October to 6 November 1980.

41. Warr, 'The Normative Promise', pp. 271–283.

42. L. Asmal and K. Asmal, 'The Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity*, Part 1 (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008), pp. 384–393.

43. Clark and Worger, *Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, pp. 81, 83.

1982 respectively, causing millions of rands worth of damage.<sup>44</sup> The tactics employed by the liberation movements included an armed offensive, while the WCC exemplified the international solidarity drive in support of the black majority's struggle for liberation.

Despite the endorsement of the PCR in Nairobi, its Special Fund grants remained controversial. Dr David Russell of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland expressed his objections during and after the assembly. He criticized the WCC for failing to persuade the rank-and-file Christians to commit financially and morally to the PCR and the Special Fund. He insisted that the Special Fund recipients be made to account for the grants they received. He proposed that racism be understood and opposed as human sinfulness rather than in economic and social terms. He disapproved of the PCR emphases on white institutional racism, a re-distribution of social, economic, political and cultural power, multiple strategies and the need to analyze and correct the church's complicity in white racism.<sup>45</sup> His views had been debated and defeated at the Uppsala discussions. This was the beginning of a new mandate with new personalities entering the debate, so the possibility arose of changing past controversial policies.

The core group members of the WCC met and deliberated on Russell's concerns.<sup>46</sup> Their final recommendation to the Central Committee was that the PCR and its Special Fund should not be changed. They reminded the Committee of the September 1970, AACC statement, which welcomed particularly the 'resolution in the thinking of donors in being prepared to trust people who are taking radical action against racism'.<sup>47</sup>

In the opinion of Charles Villa-Vicencio, the debate about the Special Fund grants 'exposed a disconcerting willingness by Christians to live with violence'. This reflected a 'high tolerance of killing by the majority of the Christian churches'. It implied a 'preparedness to accept the political suffering of human beings as inevitable'. He argued that the 'tolerance of suffering by those who did not themselves suffer contributed to a milieu within which revolution was seen by the oppressed as the only alternative to oppression'.<sup>48</sup>

The PCR conducted a mini survey to determine the following: (i) the extent to which the grants became almost automatic to the recipients (ii) their dependency on the grants (iii) the impact of repeated grants to the recipients (iv) whether the recipients thought receiving continuous grants was a healthy thing for both themselves and the donor (v) and whether certain countries or parts of the world

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44. *Ibid.*

45. PCR Collection: Box 4223. 2.03, Letter D.S. Russell to Philip Potter, 14 January 1976.

46. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Reply Philip Potter to D. S. Russell, 3 February 1976.

47. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Confidential minutes of Core Group meeting in Bossey, 16–21 May 1976.

48. C. Villa-Vicencio, 'The Church and Violence', in P. Webb, ed., *A Long Struggle: The Involvement of the World Council of Churches in South Africa* (Geneva: WCC 1994), pp.104–113.

had been overlooked. The response indicated that most groups did not depend on the grant. The amount was too small to meet their needs. However, they appreciated the funds for the material and moral support they symbolized, and needed the grants to leverage more support from other donors. At the time, conditions under the apartheid government had worsened. The following were responses from the ANC, PAC and SACTU respectively:

Due to the new situation since Soweto, we require urgently tremendous material and financial aid. Our previous requests which were so generously granted will pale into insignificance when we take our [full] needs into account ...The annual allocation for liberation movements from the Special Fund, whilst it is not taken as automatic, but we look forward to such grants to ease our pressing financial needs, and in a sense it may be said that we are dependent on such help. The grants from the WCC are only a small fraction of what we have to raise through the various sources and your continued assistance does not in any way create an unhealthy development insofar as our effort to devise ways and means to meet the every growing demands of the revolution.

Our task and responsibilities have multiplied many times since the middle of 1976. As the presentation indicates, our facilities to cope with our work are completely exhausted. In the coming year we expect even greater volume of work because of the prevailing situation inside SA.

We were able to raise a certain amount of money from the trade union movement internationally. [Because] the amounts received are not large to cover our budget requirements for 1977, we are to embark on a major fund raising campaign. Events in SA are moving extremely rapidly and SACTU has vital tasks to perform in carrying the struggle forward. The fulfilment of these tasks places a heavy financial burden upon SACTU. It is for this reason that we regard continuing financial support from WCC as important.<sup>49</sup>

The survey also indicated inadequate attention to Latin America and Asia. The PCR conceded its failure to educate member churches to fully grasp the witness and commitment to these Special Fund grants for South African representatives of the racially oppressed. At the same time, it recognized their importance in popularizing the anti-apartheid cause and bolstering the morale of the racially discriminated.<sup>50</sup> Zolile Mbali examined both the church and secular press about the impact the token grants had. He thought that the greatest value was educating the West about liberation movements. He therefore did not believe that the PCR had failed to communicate effectively with its church constituency.<sup>51</sup>

The controversy about the Special Fund grants to liberation movements was fuelled in 1978 when liberation activists killed white missionaries at Elim in

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49. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Confidential minutes of PCR Commission meeting in Egham, England, Appendix 7: Confidential evaluation of the Special Fund to Combat Racism, 17–23 April 1977.

50. *Ibid.*

51. Z. Mbali, *The Churches and Racism: A Black South African Perspective* (London: SCM Press, 1987), p. 161.

Zimbabwe.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, the WCC continued to redistribute power to the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe by providing it with symbolic financial support. Furthermore, the controversy coincided with a period of a global recession. The Fundamental Evangelical Association editor, M.H. Reynolds, urged Christians to immediately withdraw their financial support and membership from the WCC. He condemned the PCR and labelled it as a 'Programme to Continue Revolution'.<sup>53</sup> This was an attempt to justify the resistance against the funding of liberation movements and to influence moderate elements to halt the PCR's radical approach to transform racialized societies.

Derrick Knight wrote about the crusade the Christian and political groups waged against the WCC. He maintained that the timing of the attacks on the WCC was calculated. Many people were uneasy about the economic crisis.<sup>54</sup> Then in South Africa a scandal arose and caused world media hype when it was discovered that government funds from the Department of Information (under Minister Connie Mulder) were used to manipulate the international news media and to buy newspapers overseas.<sup>55</sup> The eruption of the so-called Muldergate scandal helped to clarify the hostility towards the PCR.<sup>56</sup> The Central Committee encouraged its member churches to be more critical when reading reports about the PCR activities.<sup>57</sup> The PCR critics both outside and within the WCC were forced to recognize the role propaganda agencies played in the media.

Towards the end of the 1970s, the WCC once again faced the dilemma of violence versus non-violence in its campaign against racism. Violence from militant groups was threatening support for the PCR's radical approach against racism and in 1980, in an attempt to stabilize the situation, the WCC called for a consultation on combating racism.<sup>58</sup> It was at this juncture that the PCR threatened to split the ecumenical movement.

## Mobilization

In this 1975–1982 period there was continuity in mobilizing Christians and churches around the world to become aware of the dangers of racism and to join the political struggle against apartheid. Political developments in South Africa determined the direction taken by PCR researchers. Suspicious of the

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52. 'The Murder of Missionaries in Rhodesia', *Sunday Mail* (Rhodesia), 24 June 1978, available at <http://www.rhodesia1890-1980com/pdf/murderofmissionaries.pdf>

53. M.H. Reynolds, 'The Truth about the WCC', *Fundamental Evangelical Association (FEA) News and Views*, (1997). Reynolds was the editor of the newsletter.

54. D. Knight, *Beyond the Pale: The Christian Political Fringe* (London: Kogan Page, 1981), p. 11.

55. D. O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948–1994* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1996), pp. 244–248.

56. *Ibid*, pp. 100–101.

57. WCCRS, Minutes of the 31st meeting of Central Committee (hereafter CC) of the WCC, Kingston, Jamaica, 1–11 January 1979, pp. 54–58.

58. *Ibid*.

government's Bantustan policy, the PCR researched the situation in Transkei, where 'independence' was imminent in 1976. The PCR study covered the motive behind the policy; its implications for the majority of black South Africans outside Transkei; how they viewed it; the opinions of the exiled political refugees; those of the OAU and the UN, as well as the views of individual Christians and churches throughout the world. The findings were published in a booklet *South Africa's Bantustans: What Independence for Transkei?*<sup>59</sup> The booklet was widely distributed before the official inauguration of the 'independence' in June 1976. It was produced in English, French and Italian for wider readership.<sup>60</sup> The liberation movements received free copies.<sup>61</sup> The UN Special Committee against Apartheid published a condensed version and extracts of this were noted in the USA Congressional record. In addition, the Council of Foreign Ministers decided not to recognize the Transkei.<sup>62</sup>

To generate more support for the condemnation of so-called Transkei independence, especially in most European Economic Council (EEC) member countries, the PCR director arranged a press conference with the church and secular press in Britain. Further, the PCR collaborated with the British Council of Churches (BCC) and the Community of Race Relations Unit (CRRU). Their aim was to inform the public about the negative impact the homeland system would have on black South Africans.<sup>63</sup> The CRRU was part of the interdenominational pressure group against apartheid in South Africa and it helped to promote awareness of the churches. Christians addressed their specific contribution to the wider issues of race and racism.<sup>64</sup>

The significance of this was that the PCR spread information about the mendacity of the Transkeian 'independence' within the broader Christian community. It did so with a set of contacts to educate individual Christians in Western churches. Supporting the PCR, the WCC Central Committee called on the member churches to urge their governments to oppose the Bantustan policy. Their governments were to withhold recognition of the Transkei as an independent state. They were not to have direct or indirect diplomatic, commercial or other relations with it.<sup>65</sup>

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59. A. Kirby, *South Africa's Bantustans: What Independence for the Transkei?* (Geneva: WCC, 1976).

60. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Confidential minutes of the PCR Commission, England, April 1977.

61. Alexander Kirby, the author, offered 100 copies to the ANC on 8 October 1976.

62. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Confidential minutes of the PCR Commission, England, April 1977.

63. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Letter from Baldwin Sjollema to Rev. Elliot Kendal (director of CRRU, BCC in London), 24 September 1976.

64. G. Parsons, 'The Growth of Religious Diversity: Britain from 1945', *Traditions*, 1 (1993), p. 130.

65. WCCRS, Minutes of 29th meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 10–18 August 1976, pp. 46–48.

Despite these objections, the apartheid government proclaimed the Transkei's independence in 1976. Thereafter it was the turn of Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei, in 1977, 1979 and 1970 respectively.<sup>66</sup> However, the government's attempts to force acceptance of apartheid only served to radicalize opposition. Soweto students were growing increasingly restless about the inferior quality of the Bantu Education system, notably the insistence that arithmetic and social studies lessons be given in Afrikaans.<sup>67</sup> This erupted in Soweto in June 1976, and the police opened fire indiscriminately on the unarmed protestors. The result was widespread chaos that rapidly spread throughout the country. More than this: the cry of Soweto in June 1976 was heard throughout the world. The following is John de Gruchy's explanation:

Soweto became an international symbol. For the outsider, it stood for the total rejection of apartheid by blacks. It suggested that revolutionary change was only a matter of time. It reinforced all that the anti-apartheid movements in the Western world had been claiming through the years, in their attempts to expose South Africa. It had done more than to damage the reputation of white SA. It awakened more sympathy and support for black South Africans than any political rhetoric has managed in the councils of the nations. It was a symbol of violence. The average white person had confused law and order with genuine peace, and was caught by surprise when violence erupted in Soweto in 1976. This was a myopic condition of many whites, which was not surprising given the movement towards isolation, the growth of censorship and an unwillingness to face reality. Finally, Soweto was a powerful symbol of black protest against the church itself when it identified with white power and white domination. Soweto was an indication of the anguished plea of black people, resulting in violence.<sup>68</sup>

Demonstrations and shootings, arson and sabotage, strikes and boycotts followed the uprising. The government responded with extreme force and repression.<sup>69</sup> On 12 September 1977, the world awoke to Steve Biko's death. He was not only the leader of the Black Consciousness Movement. He was a committed Christian whose leadership role began in the Student Christian Movement at the University of Natal.<sup>70</sup> Andrew Young, the US ambassador to the UN had befriended him.<sup>71</sup> Whilst under police custody, Biko suffered brain bleeding from the brutal torture meted out to him.<sup>72</sup> The circumstances surrounding his death 'became a flashpoint for continuing resistance as well as increasing international attention'.<sup>73</sup>

The PCR produced and published *South Africa's Hope – What Price Now?* which strongly condemned the violence the apartheid government had perpetrated and

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66. Clark and Worger, *Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 66.

67. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, p. 84.

68. De Gruchy, *Church Struggle in South Africa*, pp.170–173.

69. Clark and Worger, *Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 76.

70. De Gruchy, *Church Struggle in South Africa*, p. 155.

71. *The Citizen*, 1 May 1979.

72. J. Matyu, 'While we Commemorate Biko, Let's Not Forget the Other Martyrs', *The Herald*, 9 September 2009, p. 6.

73. Clark and Worger, *Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, pp. 78–79.

its iron-fist tactics in dealing with political unrest. It also criticized South African white Christians for their complacency.<sup>74</sup> The book attracted diverse reactions. Mbali, representing the black Christian voice, appreciated its frank challenge to white Christians who in his view were prepared to bear the cost of resistance to injustice.<sup>75</sup> The German Evangelical Church Federation described the publication as 'irresponsible', accusing the PCR of politicizing the WCC. Manas Buthelezi headed the central diocese of the same Evangelical Church. He criticized it for showing such insensitivity to the injustice black South Africans endured under the apartheid government.<sup>76</sup> As for the WCC, it continued to urge all foreigners who believed in justice to end their military, economic, diplomatic and cultural support of South Africa's white minority government.<sup>77</sup>

Robert Massie reported on the wave of church-sponsored resolutions and student activism that Biko's death generated in the US. The first demonstrations and sit-ins broke out at Stanford, University of California, Yale, Princeton, Harvard and Columbia. In addition, some colleges began to divest from South Africa. The trustees of the University of Massachusetts voted to sell the stock of companies invested there in September 1977.<sup>78</sup> The US government proposed that 'an international group be appointed to examine South African laws and practices relating to political detention and Biko's death in particular'.<sup>79</sup>

It also drew the following comments from the *Pro Veritate* editor:

It reveals government policy which sought to impose white domination on South Africa, with power and violence... It revealed the position of those who support the status quo. By their votes, their acquiescence, their investments, their excuses or nauseating fascist-type enthusiasm of their political rallies, they support this oppressive regime and share responsibility for the deaths it causes ... It reveals the weak folly of those who think in terms of trying to reform the Government. A false gospel, an evil blinding ideology cannot be reformed. It must be rejected. The only acceptable reform is total and fundamental change.<sup>80</sup>

This view echoed the radical approach the WCC adopted to fight apartheid. The PCR was already probing the extent that foreign tourism contributed to the local economy. It discovered that tourism was the second largest earner of foreign exchange for South Africa by 1976. It consequently discouraged individual Christians in Western churches from travelling to South Africa. It put pressure on

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74. World Council of Churches, *South Africa's Hope: What Price Now?* (Geneva: WCC, 1977).

75. Mbali, *Churches and Racism*, p. 55.

76. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Confidential minutes of PCR Executive Group meeting, Geneva, 10–12 September 1978. Theology professors in West Germany were reported to have criticized the EKD's insensitivity on this issue. See WCC, Ecumenical Press Service (EPS), 'Issue Discussion Paper on South Africa', 12 January 1978.

77. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, WCC Communication, Dr Philip Potter's statement on the death of Steve Biko, 16 September 1977.

78. Massie, 'Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation', pp.13–14.

79. Clark and Worger, *Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 79.

80. *Pro Veritate*, Editorial, 16, 5 (September 1977), pp. 2–3.



the travel agencies, including the South African Tourist Corporation which had offices around the world. The PCR also produced flyers with factual information on the racist legislation in force against black South Africans. These free flyers were widely distributed from December 1975 onwards, after Nairobi.<sup>81</sup>

At its general assembly the WCC also adopted a resolution against nuclear collaboration with South Africa. While the PCR was busy with its research on Western military strategy towards South Africa and the Indian Ocean region,<sup>82</sup> in 1977 news broke out that the government was planning to detonate a nuclear device in the Kalahari. The facts were purposely kept very vague because the Western countries wanted to continue their nuclear collaboration with South Africa for commercial reasons.<sup>83</sup> Tambo sent a copy of *Conspiracy to Arm Apartheid Continues: FRG–SA Collaboration*, to the WCC.<sup>84</sup> The publication detailed how the FRG government (i.e. West Germany) was helping to build up the arms industry in South Africa. The information gleaned enabled the WCC to help the ANC expose the arms conspiracy. Philip Potter, the WCC general secretary, then initiated a collaborative effort with Tambo to strengthen the campaign for the imposition of a comprehensive and mandatory arms embargo.<sup>85</sup>

The PCR distributed additional copies of this publication to ecumenical church groups. It also insisted that the West German churches and ecumenical groups take a stand against their government, corporations and trade unions that were implicated in this secret cooperation with Pretoria. More significantly, the WCC Central Committee, with more authority, urged its member churches to call for the imposition of mandatory and complete arms embargo against South Africa. It also asked them to call for the withdrawal of licences for the manufacture of arms from the FRG, USA, Britain, France, Italy, Israel and Belgium, all of whom were involved in arms exports to the apartheid state.<sup>86</sup> This church mobilization occurred just a few months before the UN passed Resolution 418 (1977) on 1 November, instituting a mandatory embargo on arms to South Africa.<sup>87</sup> Frankel has argued that despite their 'publicly stated aversion to apartheid, many

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81. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Letter from Baldwin Sjollema to friends regarding plan of action to discourage tourism in South Africa, 1975; Confidential minutes of the Core Group meeting of May, submitted by Sjollema in November 1976.

82. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Minutes of the Core Group meeting, Bossey, 15–21 May 1976.

83. Mbali, *Churches and Racism*, p. 27.

84. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.07, No author, 'Conspiracy to Arm Apartheid Continues: FRG–SA Collaboration', an ANC document sent to the WCC, 22 August 1977.

85. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Reply from Philip Potter to Oliver Tambo, 22 September 1977.

86. WCCRS, Minutes of 30th meeting of the CC of WCC, Geneva, 28 July to 6 August 1977, p. 38.

87. E.S. Reddy, 'The United Nations and the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 73; Mbali, *Churches and Racism*, p. 27, gives the date of the resolution as 4 November 1977.

governments such as the FRG adopted a cavalier attitude towards the flow of military materiel, technology and personnel to apartheid South Africa'.<sup>88</sup>

Furthermore, the PCR assisted the Norwegian based World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa to publish and distribute its booklet on the export of arms and components to Pretoria. This was the area of expertise of Abdul Minty, a South African PCR consultant. He was closely involved when the AAM in London (where Minty was based, at the ANC London office) launched its own World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa, with Minty as its director.<sup>89</sup> The PCR also co-sponsored the UN seminar on Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa in London which was held in February 1979.<sup>90</sup>

There was little exposure on developments in southern Africa elsewhere in the African continent. This prompted the PCR to partner with the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation to disseminate information on the region. Together they arranged events with the respective national councils of churches. A week-long programme saw the Kenyans commemorating the Sharpeville massacre. They listened on air to a Sunday morning service dedicated to southern African liberation struggles. They were also able to view exhibitions of pictures, books and posters that the African liberation movements and action groups provided. The Kenyans even met with some of the FRELIMO leaders whose travel the PCR sponsored. In Ghana, discussions were held on the liberation efforts of Amilcar Cabral and various forms of oppression in colonial societies were highlighted. Pictures of struggle heroes were also exhibited.<sup>91</sup>

Furthermore, the PCR purchased copies of the documentary *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, to church groups in various countries. The documentary was an account of the experience of black people who were forcibly removed from their residential areas near their workplaces and taken to a barren and distant resettlement area in order to create residential areas for whites.<sup>92</sup> It was shown at the AACC Assembly, at the WCC Central Committee meeting as well as to the World Conference on Religion and Peace, held in Belgium.<sup>93</sup> The PCR also offered financial help to students who participated in a world conference of Youth and Students in the Struggle of the Peoples, Youth and Students of Southern

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88. P.H. Frankel, *Pretoria's Praetorians: Civil-Military Relations in South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 133.

89. C. Gurney, 'In the Heart of the Beast: The British Anti-Apartheid Movement', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 312.

90. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of PCR Executive Group meeting, 27–29 August 1979.

91. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Confidential minutes of PCR Commission meeting, Egham, England, 17–23 April 1977.

92. The documentary was compiled from D. Cosmas, *The Discarded People: An Account of African Resettlement in South Africa*. See P. Platzky and C. Walker, *The Surplus People: Forced Removals in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985), pp. 344, 345.

93. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Confidential minutes of PCR Commission meeting, Egham, England, 17–23 April 1977.

Africa, held at UNESCO in February 1979.<sup>94</sup> The purpose of all these initiatives was to rally individuals around the world to join the effort to transform racialized societies in southern Africa and elsewhere.

In South Africa, the Christian Institute (CI) showed solidarity with the poor and the oppressed. It pledged to contribute to the public debate, stressing the biblical demands for social justice. Its members also promised to strive to bring about change in the country through non-violent action. After the Soweto uprisings, the CI and the SACC launched an emergency fund to help victims of the violence.<sup>95</sup> The government decided that certain CI activities constituted a danger to the state. It declared it 'an affected organization' and barred it from receiving funds from abroad.<sup>96</sup> The PCR called upon foreign Christians to empathize with members of the CI and the South African Christians generally, during the Africa Day celebrations held on 25 May 1976.<sup>97</sup>

For its Racism in Theology programme, the PCR arranged forums which discussed overt and covert racism in the churches.<sup>98</sup> It called upon black theologians to explore the psychological effects of racism. It also established dialogue with relevant institutions to support theologians interested in identifying bias in the theology of the main Protestant and Anglican churches.<sup>99</sup> These efforts corresponded with the Pan African Conference of Third World Theologians, held in Accra in 1977. According to South African theologian, Mokgethi Motlhabi, Accra's significance was putting African anthropology and African realities behind the Bible and Christian heritage in the development of African Theology.<sup>100</sup> Significantly, the PCR provided financial support for this conference.<sup>101</sup>

Notably, there was no evidence in the PCR records of a direct and consistent link between the PCR officers and the South African theologians. As a result, a satisfactory assessment of the impact of the Racism in Theology programme run by the PCR could not be made. This was a programme which had a huge influence on the ecumenical movement. The same applies to the influence of the

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94. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Confidential minutes of PCR Commission meeting, Portugal, 1978; Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of PCR Executive Group, 27–29 August 1979.

95. Ryan, *Beyers Naudé: Pilgrimage of Faith*, pp. 171, 178.

96. P. Randall, *Not without Honour: Tribute to Beyers Naudé* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982), p. 38.

97. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, J. Chipenda, 'May 25 as Africa Day', unpublished two-page document, dated March 1976.

98. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Memo from Jose Chipenda of the PCR and Geiko Muller Fahrenholz of Faith and Order, to member churches and national Christian Councils, March 1976.

99. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Letter from Jose Chipenda to friends informing them about the PCR financial needs, January 1977.

100. M. Motlhabi, *African Theology/Black Theology in South Africa: Looking back, Moving on* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008), p. 32.

101. PCR Collection: Box 4223. 2.04, Minutes of PCR Commission, Egham, April 1977.

programme on racism in school textbooks. This PCR programme created awareness about overt and covert racism in institutions of learning in various parts of the world.

The WCC established a study-action programme on the controversial role of transnational corporations in the world economy and their impact on sustaining apartheid. The Rev. Leon Sullivan, a leading civil rights leader, put forward a six-point code of conduct for American corporations doing business with the apartheid government. The code called for 'de-segregation in the workplace; fair employment practices; equal pay for equal work; training for black workers; promotion of Africans to managerial posts; and welfare programmes for all workers'.<sup>102</sup> The Sullivan principles were of course fully compatible with President Jimmy Carter's foreign policy on South Africa. Advocates of the Sullivan principles as an alternative to disinvestment included the former PCR Commission member Andrew Young, who was at the time one of the chief architects of US policy in Africa. The idea was that the US corporates operating in South Africa could serve as constructive agents for change there. Advocates saw the implementation of these principles as leading to political empowerment of black South Africans. They believed that this in turn would encourage a gradual and peaceful transformation of the country.<sup>103</sup>

The transnational corporations investing in South Africa were found not only to be flouting the Sullivan code, but the principles themselves were considered inadequate. This view derived from two consultations the WCC arranged in January and June 1977. They brought together an array of representatives from transnational corporations, trade unions, church treasuries, social ethics departments, action groups, research institutions and theology divisions. Further research done by the Interfaith Centre on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) corroborated this view.<sup>104</sup> Significantly, the PCR produced and published a booklet on this, which was distributed to member churches and solidarity partners.<sup>105</sup>

Those who advocated the benefits of transnational corporations accused the WCC of venting its biblical rage and abandoning its concern about spiritual matters. They criticized it for assaulting the democratic values of the West and embracing African and Latin American liberation movements. They advised that 'without the capital know how of the great American, Western European and

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102. Massie, 'Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation', p. 13; K.S. Hasselblad, 'The United States Foreign Policy on South Africa: Leon Sullivan and the Sullivan Principles, 1948–1980' (MA thesis, Pacific Lutheran University, 1994), pp. 78–79.

103. Hasselblad, 'US Foreign Policy', p. 125.

104. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Minutes of the PCR Commission, Egham, 1977, Staff report on programme developments; Box 4223.2.04, Memo from Baldwin Sjollemma re: follow-up process of consultation decisions by the CC, 27 October 1980.

105. B. Sjollemma, *Isolating Apartheid: Western Collaboration with SA. Policy Decisions by the WCC* (Geneva: WCC, 1982).

Japanese corporations, the underdeveloped countries were doomed to economic chaos and everlasting darkness'.<sup>106</sup>

The criticism was significant in many respects. It indicated the failure of the mobilization strategy in some sectors of the Western world. It showed resistance to the blending of business and biblical concerns. It also demonstrated aversion to the perceived relegation of Western worth, in the attempt by the WCC to promote the underdeveloped world.

### **Political action**

This period saw political action by the WCC against banks who extended loans to the apartheid state. After Nairobi, the general secretary notified the six EABC banks about the Executive Committee's decision to stop depositing WCC funds with them.<sup>107</sup> The Algemene Bank Nederland also had loan agreements with South African banks so it too received a resolution similar to that sent to EABC banks. The resolution read as follows:

The Executive Committee recalls the decision of the WCC Central Committee taken in August 1972 to deposit none of its funds in banks which maintain direct banking operations in SA; recalls the decision of the WCC Executive Committee, taken in November 1975, to deposit none of its funds with the European American Banking Corporation and its six banks in the light of their refusal to give assurance that they would stop granting loans to the South African government and its agencies; learns from the Dutch PCR support group 'Prepaid Reply' that the Dutch bank with which the WCC has an account – the Algemene Bank Nederland – admitted in the autumn of 1976 that it had been making loans to the South African government and its agencies under the conditions similar to those which obtained in the cases of the EABC loans, despite its earlier denial that it had not made any such loans; commends the initiatives taken by the 'Prepaid Reply' to uncover and discourage Dutch banking operations which directly support apartheid; expresses deep disappointment about the ABN having made loans to the SA government and its agencies and about the fact that ABN has given incorrect information about these loans; decides that an assurance be solicited from the ABN that it will stop granting loans to the SA government and its agencies until legally enforced racism in SA has been abolished; authorizes the WCC officers, if a satisfactory assurance is not forthcoming by 1 May 1977, to withdraw WCC funds deposited with the ABN after that date.<sup>108</sup>

The resolution was of vital importance in many respects. The WCC was resolved to stop investments in institutions ancillary to perpetration of racism. The financial sector was challenged to account publicly on how it spent its clients' funds. Its decision elevated the economic sanction campaign against the apartheid government.

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106. *San Francisco Examiner*, 7 September 1977; *The Guardian*, 6 September 1977.

107. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Letter from Philip Potter (WCC general secretary) to chairman of the Board, Amsterdam-Rotterdam Bank, 4 February 1976.

108. WCCRS, Minutes of the meeting of Executive Committee of WCC, Geneva, 7–9, 15 and 18 August 1976, pp. 6–7.

The PCR had shared the correspondence between the WCC and the EABC with member churches. It wanted them to consider the issues in order to put pressure on these banks.<sup>109</sup> H.M. de Lange observed the impact of the bank loan campaign by the WCC and its PCR. He argued that it led to extensive discussion and greater awareness about foreign investment in South Africa, inside and outside the churches.<sup>110</sup> The UN Special Committee against Apartheid revealed that certain banks in the Netherlands, the USA, Canada and Britain still maintained their relationship with South Africa.<sup>111</sup> The UN and its family of agencies had already undertaken not to provide facilities for banks which made loans to South Africa.<sup>112</sup> Include in the list

In the Netherlands, ecumenical action groups such as the Prepaid Reply; Self Tax Movement X minus Y; Kairos; Boycott Outspan Actie: and other anti-apartheid organizations started discussions with Amsterdam Rotterdam Bank (AMRO), part of the EABC consortium. The Dutch Council of Churches had problems with the arguments AMRO put forward.<sup>113</sup> AMRO condemned the WCC for targeting a few banks unfairly while the rest carried on providing a service to the apartheid government. It cited the rejection of the South African economic boycott by its government in the UN Security Council, Although it admitted that the apartheid policy was iniquitous, AMRO refused to assume responsibility to isolate South Africa. It also capitalized on the divided church opinion on this matter and challenged the WCC to reconsider its decision.<sup>114</sup>

The response AMRO received from Philip Potter suggested that the WCC would give further attention to the ethical and theological implications of their dialogue. This disappointed the Netherlands ecumenical and action groups which had already started a boycott campaign against AMRO. Potter's response was perceived as 'conciliatory' and did not help their dialogue with AMRO.<sup>115</sup> To the outsider, Potter's suggestion created the impression that the WCC itself was not absolutely convinced of its decision. In an attempt to control the damage caused, the members of the Core Group decided to publicize the WCC's correspondence with the lending banks.<sup>116</sup> As a result of mounting pressure from the Dutch

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109. WCCRS, WCC Executive Committee, Nairobi 25 November 1975.

110. H.M. de Lange, 'Foreign Investments in Southern Africa: The Beginning of Dialogue', *Ecumenical Review*, 29 (1977), pp. 383–393.

111. P. Leuenberger, 'Switzerland and Apartheid: The Swiss Anti-Apartheid Movement', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 712.

112. Reddy, 'The United Nations and the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa', p.100.

113. WCCRS, Minutes of the Executive Committee of WCC, Kenya, Nairobi, 20–22 November 1975, West-Berlin Central Committee Resolution on the WCC and International Banking in SA; Progress report: Action by member churches and action groups. See also S. Bosgra, 'From Jan van Riebeeck to Solidarity with the Struggle: The Netherlands, South Africa and Apartheid', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 583.

114. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Letters from AMRO to WCC, 18 March and 29 April 1976.

115. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Letter from H.A.M. Fiolet, (general secretary) and A.H. van den Heuwel, (Board member) of the Raad van Kerken to Philip Potter, 26 April 1976.

116. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Minutes of the Core Group meeting, 17–22 May 1976.

Prepaid Reply Group, AMRO capitulated. In 1977, it agreed not to extend loans to South Africa until such time that there was evidence of fundamental transformation of apartheid.<sup>117</sup>

In South Africa after 1976, the Christian Institute supported the call for economic sanctions. It sided with many black organizations opposed to foreign investment. Its view not only upset the apartheid government and the business community but also caused a number of white members to withdraw from the CI.<sup>118</sup> Some of the local ecumenical leaders altered their earlier stance and supported economic sanctions at this point, aligning themselves with the PCR drive.<sup>119</sup>

In the UK, a group of individual Christians initiated the End Loans to Southern Africa (ELTSA). Included in the EABC was the Midland Bank. ELTSA called on church shareholders to demand that Midland Bank stop its loans to the South African government. The commissioners of the Church of England and the Methodist Church supported the call. Although ELTSA's call received only 6 per cent support, within a year Midland Bank announced that it was no longer lending to the Pretoria government.<sup>120</sup> AMRO in the Netherlands took a similar step marking significant progress in the campaign to withdraw financially from South Africa.

Ironically, during this period, the ANC treasurer, Thomas Nkobi, wrote to the PCR office, acknowledging receipt of the US\$ 50 000 grant from the Special Fund. He requested that the money be deposited into the ANC account held with the Midland Bank in London.<sup>121</sup> This posed an embarrassing problem. The WCC had closed its own accounts there and encouraged member churches and many others to follow suit. Yet it was requested to deposit funds into the very same Midland Bank. This demonstrated one of the many impracticalities involved in this campaign.

The next target for ELTSA was Barclays Bank, which had a substantial share in the largest bank in South Africa. Most churches held shares in Barclays and were reluctant to use them to exert any pressure on the bank. A group consisting of bishops, politicians, trade unionists and a film star monitored Barclays to ascertain its South African ties. The group published an 'alternative annual report' which revealed financial support for the apartheid government. The Caribbean

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117. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Minutes of PCR Executive Committee meeting in England, 17–23 April 1977.

118. Ryan, *Beyers Naudé: Pilgrimage of Faith*, pp.180–181. For more detail on the views of the black majority, see M. Orkin, *Disinvestment, the Struggle and the Future: What Black South Africans Really Think* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986).

119. For more information on how the SACC changed its stance against the PCR, see Thomas, *Christ Divided*, pp. 212–214

120. D. Haslam, 'Mobilising the European Churches', in P. Webb, ed., *A Long Struggle: The Involvement of the WCC in South Africa* (Geneva: WCC, 1884), p. 71.

121. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Letter from Thomas Nkobi to Baldwin Sjollema, 7 September 1976.

Conference of Churches withdrew its accounts from Barclay's and encouraged others in the Caribbean to do the same.<sup>122</sup> The PCR worked closely with ELTSA.<sup>123</sup> This was another significant breakthrough.

Some of the Canadian banks had been involved in direct loans to the Pretoria government and its agencies since 1970. The Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility (TCCR) supported the WCC bank loan campaign. It coordinated efforts of the Anglican Church of Canada; the United Church of Canada; the Roman Catholic Church; and the Young Women Christian Association. It held extensive discussions with senior officers of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce; the Toronto Dominion Bank; and the Bank of Montreal. It persuaded these banks to either cancel existing loans or to publicly commit themselves not to make further loans to South Africa and its agencies.<sup>124</sup> The campaign continued to advance.

The Swiss government condemned the South African government on moral grounds, yet supported it materially by granting Pretoria bank loans. The local anti-apartheid movement (MAAS) protested against the Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS), the Swiss Bank Corporation (SBC) and the Credit Suisse (CS). 'In September 1980, MASS and the WCC protested jointly against the loan of US\$250 million by UBS, City Bank, Barclays Bank and the Dresdner Bank.'<sup>125</sup>

The US, church and action groups such as the American Committee on Africa (ACOA); the American Friends Service Committee; the ICCR; the Washington Office on Africa (WOA); and Clergy and Laity Concerned, responded to the WCC's appeal for Christian solidarity. All agreed to support the campaign for stopping all bank loans to South Africa.<sup>126</sup> ACOA was founded by George M. Houser, a Methodist minister. It organized one of the first protests against bank loans to the Pretoria government.<sup>127</sup> The United Methodist Church held shares in Citicorp, a Citibank subsidiary which operated in the country. Its shareholders henceforth demanded detailed disclosures of every loan made. Citicorp consequently stopped making new loans to the South African government and its

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122. Haslam, 'Mobilising the European Churches', p. 72.

123. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Minutes of PCR Commission, April 1977, 'Bank Loans to the South African Government and its Agencies'.

124. WCCRS, Minutes of Executive Committee of the WCC, Kenya, Nairobi 20–22 November 1975, West-Berlin CC Resolution on the WCC and International Banking in SA; Progress report on action by member churches and action groups. See also J. Fairweather, 'Canadian Solidarity with South Africa's Liberation Struggle', in SADET, *Road to Democracy Volume 3*, pp. 846, 863, 868.

125. Leuenberger, 'Switzerland and Apartheid', p. 712.

126. W. Minter and S. Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States–South Africa Relations: From the Margins to the Mainstream', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 780; WCCRS, Minutes of Executive Committee of WCC, Nairobi, 20–22 November 1975, West-Berlin CC, Resolution on WCC and International Banking in SA; Progress report on action by member churches and action groups.

127. Massie, 'Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation', p. 274.



parastatals.<sup>128</sup> The ICCR was prominent for its publications which analyzed business practice in South Africa. Its support came from a coalition of 14 Protestant denominations and more than 150 Catholic dioceses and orders.<sup>129</sup> WOA played an active role in anti-apartheid solidarity. It was founded by the National Council of Churches in the early 1970s.<sup>130</sup> It was the layers of support behind this WCC campaign, enthusiastically championed by the PCR, which was of importance.

With the support of the PCR, the ICCR held a consultation on bank loans to the South African government by the USA and Canadian banks. This venture resulted in the publication and distribution of *The WCC and Bank Loans to Apartheid*.<sup>131</sup> Pressure mounted against the EABC consortium. International days of action against banks were held in Britain, the Netherlands and the US in June 1978. A demonstration in London targeted the headquarters of four German banks and three Swiss banks.<sup>132</sup> Peter Leuenberger credited the WCC for contributing to the formation of an international boycott movement of financial investments in South Africa.<sup>133</sup> Undeniably, the campaign kept gathering momentum.

The hostile international environment contributed to the official adoption of a 'total strategy' policy by P.W. Botha's government. According to Bernhard Schlenther, it involved the coordination of all the sectors of the state to combat the supposed threat of a 'total onslaught' by revolutionary communist elements.<sup>134</sup> P.W. Botha's accession to power signified a government anchored by military power. His tenure also witnessed the militarization of the South African economy. State and capital were in tune. Business leaders, including the chairperson of a leading bank, collaborated with senior military officers on the need to reform apartheid and make it militarily defensible.<sup>135</sup> From 1979 onwards, there was a huge

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128. E.J. Kahn Jr, 'Annals of International Trade: A Very Emotive Subject', *The New Yorker*, 55, 13 (14 May 1979) p. 124, cited by Hasselblad, 'US Foreign Policy', p. 150.

129. Hasselblad, 'US Foreign Policy', p. 150.

130. Massie, 'Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation', p. 272; Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in US-SA Relations', p. 775.

131. A. Kirby, ed., *The World Council of Churches and Bank Loans to Apartheid* (Geneva: WCC, 1977).

132. Leuenberger, 'Switzerland and Apartheid', p. 712; Haslam, 'Mobilising the European Churches', p. 72.

133. Leuenberger, 'Switzerland and Apartheid', p. 712.

134. B. Schlenther, 'Armcor and Denel: A History of South Africa's Arms Industry', *Ex plus Ultra*, 1 (September 2009), p. 5; and M. Swilling and M. Phillips, 'State Power in the 1980s: From Total Strategy to Counter Revolutionary Warfare', in J.H. Cock and L. Nathan, eds, *War and Society: The Militarization of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), pp. 135–136.

135. G. Simpson, 'The Politics and Economics of the Armament Industry in South Africa', in Cock and Nathan, eds, *War and Society*, pp. 217–231; O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p. 227; S. Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2002), pp. 73–74; W. Minter, *King Solomon's Mines Revisited: Western Interests and the Burdened History of West Africa* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), pp. 286–287; Frankel, *Pretoria's Praetorians*, pp. 82–85; B. Magubane, 'From Détente to the Rise of the Garrison State', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 2*, p. 88.

increase in state sanctioned violence. Arrests and mysterious deaths of those who opposed the government were intensified.<sup>136</sup> Solomon Mahlangu, an MK cadre accused of terrorism, was hanged on 6 April 1979.<sup>137</sup>

The WCC did not escape the attention of the apartheid state. The security forces and the Information Department orchestrated a vicious campaign against the PCR.<sup>138</sup> In addition to a front group created to attack the WCC, the South African government also sent secret agents to promote a right wing, pro-apartheid group in Norway.<sup>139</sup> Craig Williamson, the South African spy operated in Geneva after the Soweto uprisings. In the view of Al Cook, there is evidence to suggest that Williamson was behind the assassination of prominent anti-apartheid figures, notably Swedish prime minister, Olof Palme.<sup>140</sup> Williamson's application to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was to seek amnesty for the killing of Ruth First with a parcel bomb.<sup>141</sup> Pertinently, the years 1978–1979 coincided with Alexander Kirby's sudden resignation and Nawaz Dawood's mysterious death. Both were current and former PCR staff members involved in the research on bank loans extended to South Africa.<sup>142</sup> It was at this juncture that Nesbitt joined the PCR staff. He brought with him three years experience of coordinating the ACOA from 1976 to 1979, which was active in opposing bank loans to Pretoria from the US.

In May 1979, the UN Centre against Apartheid published a list of all banks known to have concluded business deals with the Pretoria government or its parastatals between 1972 and 1978. The list, the result of extensive research, included UBS, where the WCC maintained a current account. The Staff Executive Group requested the PCR to make a careful investigation of the banks the WCC used in May 1980. The findings revealed that UBS had transferred funds to Thor Communicators which was a front company for the South African Information Department, implicated in the 'dirty tricks' propaganda campaign. The inference was that the WCC funds made up part of the capital that financed a campaign of which it was a target. Further indications were that UBS was increasingly providing support to South Africa. The following is what Nesbitt reported to the WCC general secretary on this matter:

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136. Clark and Worger, *Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, pp. 81–82.

137. G. Houston and B. Magubane, 'The ANC Political Underground in the 1970s', in SADET, *Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2*, pp. 478–479.

138. Knight, *Beyond the Pale*, p. 16. See also, 'Rhodie Tells of Plan to Counter the WCC Propaganda on Apartheid', *The Star*, 15 August 1979.

139. W. Minter, *King Solomon's Mines Revisited*, p. 286.

140. A. Cook, 'The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 192. On Olaf Palme, see T. Sellström, 'Sweden and the Nordic Countries: Official Solidarity and Assistance from the West', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, pp. 525–529.

141. *Pretoria News*, 3 March 1999 p. 2.

142. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of PCR Executive Group meeting, John Knox, Geneva, 10–12 September 1978; Minutes of PCR Executive Group, 1979.

My own personal opinion is that our continued involvement with UBS is and has been a flagrant contravention of all that for which stand. Further, that given our position, a little work by an enterprising (not friendly) journalist could catch us in an awfully compromising position.<sup>143</sup>

These revelations were of vital importance. The WCC was spearheading the bank loan campaign against apartheid but was not practising what it was preaching. There was disagreement within the WCC, about the campaign to withdraw financially from South Africa. Involved in this difference of opinion were the PCR unit, which had formulated the WCC policy to close its own accounts with banks lending to South Africa; the Central and Executive Committees, which had given approval to this decision; and the Finance Department, which had not seen fit to implement the resolution. This meant that the radical political action the WCC took in support of the campaign for the international financial withdrawal from South Africa was ineffective. The breakdown was because of the lack of support from the Finance Department; it had not complied with the WCC banking policy. Significantly, this demonstrated the nature of the PCR organizational jigsaw where there were differences of opinion among officials who were instructed to carry out the strategy. This was a blot on the image of the WCC. The PCR Executive Committee was disappointed and regretted that the Finance Department had failed to implement WCC banking policy. It strongly urged that the matter be remedied before the international consultation on racism which was due to be held in June 1980.<sup>144</sup> The consultation is discussed below.

In the opinion of the assistant general secretary of Finance and Administration, it was difficult to implement WCC banking policy as desired by the PCR unit. This was because the banks that were in the clear as far as extending loans to South Africa was concerned, could not cope with all the banking transactions the WCC required. For example, the WCC staff travelled widely and inevitably used travellers' cheques. It was banks dealing with South Africa that issued or cashed some of these travellers' cheques. Yielding to the PCR's radical approach therefore made it virtually impossible for the WCC to function effectively as an international organization. The Finance Department claimed not to have been undermining what the Central Committee had laid down as WCC banking policy. It viewed the PCR pursuit of further research on banking policy as a problem the WCC had created for itself. It criticized the PCR for insisting that the WCC sever its relationships with UBS when it did not make suggestions for alternative banks in Switzerland.<sup>145</sup>

This was a clear indication of a clash between those who formulated policy and those who implemented it. On the one hand, the PCR and the Central Committee

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143. [www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za](http://www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za), Letter from Prexy Nesbitt to Philip Potter re WCC Banking with UBS, undated, p. 4.

144. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential PCR Executive Committee meeting in Bossey, 5–8 May 1980.

145. [www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za](http://www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za), Memorandum from W. Kenworthy to P. Potter, re WCC banking policy, 13 May 1980.

units who formulated and approved the WCC banking policy expected the Finance Department to act accordingly by closing WCC accounts in banks with links to the apartheid establishment. This was done in the interest of ending apartheid to achieve racial justice in South Africa. The Finance Department, on the other hand, found it impractical to adhere to the WCC banking policy, because this limited its ability to operate efficiently.

At their annual meeting in June 1980, the PCR Commission members recommended that the WCC Executive Committee instruct the Finance Department to terminate all relationships with the institutions that were regularly involved in financial dealings with South Africa.<sup>146</sup> The Executive Committee obliged and both the Finance Department and the PCR staff members collaborated to develop criteria which guided the WCC's relationship with its banks. Those where the WCC held current accounts included UBS; Schroder, Munchmeyer, Hengst & Co; Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken; Bankers Trust New York; Algemene Bank Nederland; American Express; and Morgan Guaranty Trust.<sup>147</sup>

Beate Klein, an American researcher, was appointed to undertake research on banks that had dealings with the apartheid government. The criteria on which she was to advise the WCC included banks which:

1. maintained facilities in South Africa
2. regularly appeared as a manager of loans and or bonds issued to South Africa
3. continued substantial lending since the 1976 Soweto uprisings
4. granted loans having direct or indirect military purpose
5. made loans which benefited the nuclear industry<sup>148</sup>

Her research findings identified about 32 major lenders to the apartheid government or were substantially involved in dealings with South Africa. In Switzerland the UBS maintained a representative office in Johannesburg and together with its subsidiaries, participated in at least 38 different loans to South Africa between 1972 and 1981. In 29 of those cases UBS acted as a manager of the loan. The identifiable loans, which totalled a massive US\$1 479million, comprised numerous credits of a military and nuclear nature to borrowers such as the apartheid government. Since the Soweto uprisings in 1976, the UBS had been involved in loans totalling US\$727million, including a US\$15.4million loan to

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146. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Minutes of the PCR Commission meeting, Netherlands, 22–23 June 1980; [www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za](http://www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za), Memorandum from B. Sjollega to K. Raiser, 28 July 1980.

147. WCCRS, Confidential minutes of the WCC Executive Committee meeting, 11–13 August 1980; [www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za](http://www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za), Memorandum from W. Kenworth to Staff Group on Racism, 27 October 1980.

148. The WCC Executive Committee approved five criteria to apply to banks to determine whether or not to continue its relationships with them. See [www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za](http://www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za), Letter from B. Sjollega to members of the PCR Commission, 24 February 1981.

the Iron and Steel Corporation (ISCOR) in March 1981. Klein established that the UBS had no intention of terminating its services to its clients.<sup>149</sup>

Dresdner Bank maintained a representative office in Johannesburg and was identified as participating in 27 loans totalling US\$1.4 billion to the country between the years, 1972 and 1980. It had also acted as a manager for 17 of the 27 loans including the 6 made since the Soweto uprising. It was involved in loans of about US\$882.4 million to local borrowers of a military nature and nearly US\$ 300 million went to ESCOM. In 1980 alone, Dresdner managed US\$370 million worth of loans to the apartheid government and ESCOM. It had not responded to the WCC investigation and had never made a policy statement on South Africa.<sup>150</sup>

The other major lenders were Barclays, Standard Chartered, Hill Samuel & Co. and Hambros Ltd in the UK. In the USA the banks included Citibank, Bank of America, First Chicago Bank Corporation and numerous investment banks. There were a few in France, Switzerland, Canada and FRG.<sup>151</sup>

Based on the findings from Klein's research, the PCR Executive Committee recommended to the WCC Executive Committee that the WCC withdraw its funds from any banks that were lending to South Africa.<sup>152</sup> It also co-sponsored a banking seminar which highlighted developments on loans and financial assistance to South Africa. This was held in Zurich, in April 1981.<sup>153</sup> Four months later, in September 1981, the WCC finally ended all its dealings with UBS, SBC and Dresdner. It also announced that it was closing its one million Swiss Francs account and transferring its 20 million investment portfolio from UBS. It did not have funds at SBC and Dresdner, but applied its decision not to have any dealings with these two banks. The six banks known to be involved with South Africa to a far smaller extent were the Algemene Bank Nederland; the Bankers Trust; Banque Scandinave en Suisse; Lloyd Bank Ltd; Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken; and the Union Bank of Finland. They met the WCC criteria and dealings with these banks, where relevant, continued.<sup>154</sup> The WCC closed its account with Citibank in 1981.<sup>155</sup> This was a significant victory for the PCR proponents. It also saved the reputation of the WCC, preventing any negative publicity had the public known about the lack of action to pursue this policy earlier.

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149. Klein's findings, see WCCRS, Confidential minutes of the WCC Executive Committee meeting, 11–13 August 1980.

150. *Ibid.*

151. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.05, Minutes of the PCR Commission meeting, Harare, 12–25 June 1981, Staff report by Prexy Nesbitt.

152. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of the PCR Executive Group, Sri Lanka, 30 October to 6 November 1980.

153. [www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za](http://www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za), Memorandum from W. Kenworthy to B. Sjollema, 5–7 April 1981.

154. Ecumenical Diary, 'World Council Ends Relations with Three Banks over Apartheid' *Ecumenical Review*, 34, 1 (January 1982), pp. 82–83.

155. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.05, Minutes of the PCR Commission meeting, Harare, 12–25 June 1981, Staff report by Prexy Nesbitt.

The UN Anti-Apartheid Committee commended the WCC for breaking its links with the three major lenders. It expressed the opinion that the WCC decision would set an example for other organizations committed to morality and justice. It also trusted that the banks the WCC had identified would soon be persuaded to disengage from South Africa.<sup>156</sup> By 1982, there was progress on the boycott of several banks as a result of Klein's research on behalf of the PCR. African missions in Geneva began to close their accounts with UBS and other lenders.<sup>157</sup> By March 1981, Tutu was quoted as saying the following to the British Council of Churches:

Those who invest in South Africa should please do so with their eyes open. They must not delude themselves that they are doing anything for the benefit of blacks. Please let us at least get rid of this humbug. They must understand that they are buttressing one of the most vicious systems since Nazism.<sup>158</sup>

Tutu was the SACC general secretary and was influential within the WCC Central Committee. The South African government accused the SACC of engaging in 'massive psychological warfare' to discredit it and covertly encouraging disinvestment. It charged the SACC with working for the revolutionary rather than the evolutionary process of change.<sup>159</sup> At this point, both the WCC and the SACC were in accord about the withdrawal of foreign investment from the country.

Baldwin Sjollema, the director who had headed the PCR for more than ten years and Prexy Nesbitt, the research secretary who had uncovered the WCC's ongoing dealings with UBS, both retired from their service to the PCR in mid 1982. These two staff members and the PCR Executive Committee wanted the issue of banks extending loans to South Africa to be discussed at the next WCC general assembly due to be held in Vancouver. They suggested that the youth and women at the pre-assembly meeting should carry forward the WCC banking policy in the campaign against apartheid.<sup>160</sup> This was because they wanted to leave a legacy of this particular PCR strategy against apartheid.

Their wish to leave a positive legacy on this issue was understandable, given that this particular campaign against apartheid was the PCR's flagship achievement. It meant a great deal to the two retiring staff members and the PCR Executive Committee because they had pioneered the process that had culminated in the WCC closing its accounts with banks linked to apartheid. It was also evidence

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156. [www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za](http://www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za), Anti-Apartheid chairperson commends WCC, 17 September 1981.

157. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of the PCR Executive Group, John Knox, 14–16 June 1982.

158. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.05, Minutes of PCR Commission meeting, Harare, 1981, Staff report by Prexy Nesbitt.

159. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, p. 91.

160. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of the PCR Executive Group, John Knox, 14–16 June 1982.

that the efficacy of the PCR was vulnerable in the context of its organizational jigsaw. Its radical approach was always contested and there was therefore no guarantee that this particular WCC banking policy would be able to survive in the WCC in the future.

In conducting this research, I found no recognition or affirmation of this PCR campaign in the documentation of the WCC Central Committee. Indeed, the minutes of the WCC Central Committee of July 1982 are silent on the campaign against bank loans to South Africa. This is surprising because the matter was regularly discussed in previous meetings of the Central Committee, and the progress of the PCR features in the report of the Committee on Unit II Justice and Service.<sup>161</sup> This suggests a dwindling consideration of the PCR's focus on South Africa by the WCC authorities, despite the public accolades the WCC enjoyed and the progress made by the PCR in subsequent bank boycotts. But the new PCR director and the moderate element behind the PCR organizational structure were now taking over. They had different views on where the focus of this worldwide programme should be placed.

## **Bridging**

There was continuity in this period towards bridging the gulf between pro-liberation South Africans across the racial and political divide, including those who were resident in the country and those who were political exiles. Opportunities for dialogue against apartheid among these geographically isolated compatriots were made available at the Nairobi General Assembly, at the three consultations in 1976, 1980 and 1982 and also during the meetings of the WCC Central Committee and the PCR Commission.

At the Nairobi Assembly, the exiled South African Brigalia Bam was able to meet with the South African non-exiled delegates, including Desmond Tutu, John Rees, Philip Russell, John Thorn and David Gwetha. The exiled South African Oliver Tambo was unfortunately unable to attend but he sent an ANC proxy.<sup>162</sup> The assembly had a section on structures of injustice and the struggle for liberation, which Brigalia Bam prepared.<sup>163</sup> Significantly, Nairobi enabled them to confront their diverse views about the campaign against apartheid via the renewal, or not, of the PCR.

During this period, the influence of the Cold War played itself out in southern Africa. The USA was an economic partner of the apartheid government whilst the

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161. WCCRS, Minutes of the 34th meeting of WCC CC, Geneva, 19–28 July 1982, pp. 64, 86. For a regular discussion of the bank loan issue, see Minutes of 30th meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 28 July to 6 August 1977, p.38; Minutes of 31st meeting of WCC CC, Kingston, Jamaica, 1–11 January 1979, p. 59; Minutes of 32nd meeting of WCC CC, Geneva, 14–22 August 1980, p. 58.

162. Telephonic interview with Brigalia Bam, 13 May 2010.

163. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Confidential minutes of 6th PCR Commission meeting, Cartigny, Switzerland, 2–6 March 1975.

Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc supported the liberation movements and their armed struggles. Christopher Saunders and Sue Onslow argue that the apartheid government exploited the perceived threat of communism from this region. It demonized the liberation movements as 'communists' in order to justify its actions against them. It did this to divert attention from the legitimate resistance to its racist policies.<sup>164</sup> The WCC was aware of the misinformation about the PCR activities that supported the liberation movements in the region. By way of a solution, it facilitated contact between black and white churches in southern Africa. The purpose was to discuss justice, reconciliation and ways of ending apartheid.

In South Africa, Winnie Mandela, Linda Mbeki and Lindiwe Sisulu were among those detained after the Soweto uprisings. Mapetla Mohapi died in police custody. Namibian refugees were killed in Angola by the South African Defence Force (SADF), because South Africa prolonged its illegal occupation of South West Africa (Namibia). Meanwhile, in Zimbabwe, constitutional talks had collapsed. By the end of November 1976, the PCR jointly with the AACC, brought together representatives from the church and liberation movements of southern Africa for a consultation on the liberation of southern Africa, held at Kitwe in Zambia.<sup>165</sup>

The South African non-exiled participants included John Rees and Maurice Ngakane. The South African exiles were Abdul Minty, Ranwedzi Nengwekhulu and Siphso Buthelezi, among others. They had an opportunity to meet and to dialogue about the state of affairs in their country. Minty had expert knowledge on the nuclear collaboration between South Africa and foreign countries. He spoke about how the apartheid government was building itself up militarily.<sup>166</sup> Nengwekhulu was known for his radical views and his distrust of white liberals to lead the liberation struggle.<sup>167</sup> He shared information about the contribution of South African Student Organization (SASO) in the struggle to liberate the country.<sup>168</sup> Buthelezi discussed the work of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in South Africa. He was honest about existing problems in the liberation movements and appealed for co-operation in order to bring down apartheid.<sup>169</sup> Other issues the participants discussed included the fraudulent policies of

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164. C. Saunders and S. Onslow, 'The Cold War and Southern Africa, 1976–1990', in M. Leffler and O.A. Westad, eds, *Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 2.

165. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Minutes of the Core Group meeting, Bossey, 15–21 May 1976; and WCCRS, Minutes of WCC CC, document no. 23, Resolution on southern Africa, 10–18 August 1976.

166. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, A. Minty, 'South Africa's Military Build-Up', Mindolo Consultation, November 1976.

167. Maimela, 'Black Consciousness and White Liberals', pp. 184, 211, 212.

168. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, R. Nengwekhulu, 'The Role of SASO in the Struggle for Liberation', Mindolo Consultation, November 1976.

169. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, S. Buthelezi, 'The Role of the BCM in the Struggle for Liberation', Mindolo Consultation, November 1976.



détente; the Bantustans; and development alternatives for Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.

The participants called for co-operation between the churches and the liberation movements. They came up with a list of priorities, ways in which the churches could assist the liberation movements, including a research study on the role of multinational corporations operating in southern Africa. The churches were also requested to respond favourably to the urgent needs of the liberation movements such as food, shelter, clothing, healthcare and financial aid for administration. The church's role was seen theologically in four ways: *kerugma*, prophecy, *diakonia* and *kenosis*. Basically, this means that God determines that all men shall be free. The Church has an obligation to cry out loud and clear against injustice. Jesus's work identifies closely with the plight of the poor and the Church of Christ represents self-sacrifice as the embodiment of this cause.<sup>170</sup>

The consultation was significant. It enabled fellow citizens who were isolated from one another by the apartheid system to bridge this isolation. Pro-liberation South Africans from white suburbs, African townships and foreign host countries were able to connect. It afforded them a platform to tackle their differences; to collaborate on transforming their home country. Another opportunity for bridging was afforded them in 1980 at the world consultation on racism in the Netherlands. Here the WCC was evaluating the first ten years of the PCR and the Special Fund as well as assessing the current state of world racism. Its national and regional structures such as the SACC and the AACC (and their equivalents in other continents) held pre-conference meetings. Notably, the PCR sought the views of the ANC and also commissioned a research paper from a South African scholar.<sup>171</sup>

At the SACC consultation, Rees spoke about the gross inequalities between the racial groups. He rejected the tendency by whites to point to their achievements in building South Africa. Stanley Mogoba remarked on the failure of Christianity as a liberating force in the black community.<sup>172</sup> Overall, the SACC churches supported the need for the PCR. This drew adverse criticism from the South African government and its media.<sup>173</sup> At the AACC consultation held in Nairobi, Desmond Tutu reflected on the sense of revulsion the world had expressed when

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170. PCR Collection: Box 4223.11.2, Final report of Joint AACC–WCC Consultation on the church and liberation struggle of West Africa, Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, Kitwe, 25–30 November 1976; Article from the Ecumenical Press Service (EPS), 16 December 1976.

171. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08 Confidential minutes of the PCR Executive Group, 27–29 August 1979.

172. Some of the black delegates called for the formation of a black confessing militant church. See 'Statement Issued by Black Delegates to the Consultation on Racism, 14 February, 1980', *Ecunews*, 4, 27 February 1980, p. 11.

173. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, 'South African Churches Consider Combating Racism', EPS, no. 5, 21 February 1980.

the PCR, was launched.<sup>174</sup> He urged the churches to play a more meaningful role in moving South Africa towards an open, non-racial society.<sup>175</sup>

Tambo represented the South African Christian political refugee constituency. He made several proposals to the WCC. He expressed the view that the South African churches should stop their supportive role in state oppression. The WCC had to continue its encouragement of active and conscientious participation of member churches in the liberation struggle, so that its gospel teachings served the just cause of the masses. A Christian movement had to be created with all urgency as an integral part of a broad democratic, anti-fascist front movement. Such a movement, resting on a sound and relevant theological basis, would provide a clearly reasoned advocacy of its faith in the context of the demands of the people and the objectives of the liberation movement. To facilitate such a movement, the entire Christian community of all races had to be mobilized to accept the need for radical change. The message of the churches had to be seen and understood by all in order to deal with the fundamental questions of social justice. In his view, this was the only way the Christian practice could assume a positive relevance for a black majority determined to replace injustice with justice, to destroy racism, and to achieve national liberation.<sup>176</sup>

Reviewing the future of apartheid, Ben Magubane warned against the application of the Sullivan codes of conduct in South Africa. His research paper expounded the interlinked interests of South African racism and international imperialism. It drew attention to how the USA and countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) worked tirelessly to find ways to retain their influence in South Africa. He argued that by supporting the so-called reform of apartheid, the Western powers were doing their best to thwart the South African national liberation movements.<sup>177</sup>

These were the pro-liberation views of politically exiled black and white South Africans as well as those who were still living in the country. John Rees, Stanley Mogoba and Desmond Tutu expressed the views of South African church leaders resident in South Africa, while Tambo and Magubane, both of whom were resident in foreign countries, represented the opinion of an exiled South African political leader and an academic respectively. Pertinently, they all supported the need for the PCR. They called for the churches to play a major role in transforming South Africa into a non-racial society. They encouraged the

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174. The apartheid government's withdrawal of Tutu's passport to travel to Nairobi attracted negative reaction. The AACC conveyed a message to P.W. Botha that the time had come for white South Africans to realize that their country was next on God's liberation agenda, whether they liked it or not. Representatives from the European regional consultation described Tutu as an official spokesperson of Christians of all races in South Africa and a figure of world stature. See PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, 'Churches React to Withdrawal of Tutu's passport', EPS, no. 8, 3 March 1980.

175. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, D. Tutu, 'The Challenge of the 80s', undated. Tutu, general secretary of the SACC, presented this paper at the Africa Regional Consultation in 1980.

176. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Letter from Tambo to Sjollem, 25 January 1980.

177. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, B. Magubane, 'The Future of Apartheid'.

Christian masses in South Africa and worldwide to rise up against apartheid. Across the board, they objected strongly to any suggestion that apartheid be reformed. Their views were part of the preamble to the world consultation on racism. The consultation per se was to serve as a referendum; the Christian community had to decide whether or not combating racism was still necessary going forward. The inputs from these prominent South Africans were distributed worldwide to individual Christians representing member churches and solidarity groups attending the world consultation.

In June 1980, South Africans living in the country, such as Dan Vaughan (who was resident in a coloured township) and Charles Villa-Vicencio (from white suburbia), met with Ruth Mompati and Alfred Nzo, who had travelled from their host countries to the world consultation on racism held in the Netherlands. Racist legislation had separated them and yet they were united in their purpose to end apartheid under the aegis of the WCC. The participants at the consultation called for an uncompromising witness by the churches and Christians against apartheid.<sup>178</sup> More importantly, the WCC Central Committee resolved to affirm the existence and work of the PCR. It further declared the doctrine and practice of apartheid an unacceptable perversion of the Christian Gospel.<sup>179</sup>

The next occasion on which the WCC could facilitate bridging between pro-liberation South Africans, was in 1982. It was at the time when the newly independent Zimbabwe and the neighbouring governments with Marxist leanings in Mozambique and Angola, were presenting a distinct threat to the apartheid government. P.W. Botha planned to introduce cosmetic reforms in South Africa in the form of a tri-cameral parliament. He also resorted to destabilizing the frontline states which were acting as host countries to many South African freedom fighters.<sup>180</sup> Against this background, the PCR arranged a consultation in Zambia on how the churches and the international community could realize racial justice in the southern African region.

For the PCR, the consultation was an opportunity to confront the future of apartheid head on. It was also a step towards preparing for the 6th WCC General Assembly which was expected to give a fresh and stronger mandate against apartheid.<sup>181</sup> The SADF raids in the frontline states created a highly volatile situation. The PCR reacted to this by posing the following question to the churches. 'South Africa: Whose side are we on?'<sup>182</sup>

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178. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.04, Minutes of PCR Commission meeting in the Netherlands, August 1980.

179. WCCRS, Minutes of the 32nd meeting of the Central Committee of WCC, Geneva, 14–22 August 1980, pp. 57–61, 70–71.

180. Clark and Worger, *Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 82.

181. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of the PCR Executive Group meeting, 2–4 February 1981.

182. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.05, Minutes of PCR Commission meeting, Harare, 12–25 June 1981, Staff report by Prexy Nesbitt.

The consultation was held under the auspices of the AACC and the WCC at the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Kitwe. Wesley Mabuza, Cecil Bejbie and Charles Villa-Vicencio represented African, coloured and white South Africans resident in the country. Oliver Tambo and Thabo Mbeki represented the South African political refugees. From the airport, all the South Africans drove together to Tambo's house in Lusaka. The first big surprise for Rev. Wesley Mabuza was to see 'normal people and not terrorists with guns ready to shoot'. Zanele Mbeki, Thabo Mbeki's wife, was in her white tennis dress, looking relaxed after a game. In South Africa, blacks did not have facilities to play such sports. Mabuza's next surprise was to be flown by a black pilot from Lusaka to Kitwe. He requested Cecil Bejbie of the Cape Town Methodist Church to take a photograph of him with the pilot. He wanted his black congregants to be inspired and to widen their outlook. There were no black South Africans who trained as pilots in those years.<sup>183</sup>

The participants spent a week together tackling issues such as African struggles; liberation theology; the ecumenical movement structures and the struggle to combat racism; and the churches' response to the growing violence in racism. The opportunity allowed the South Africans to talk openly and frankly from diverse perspectives on how the apartheid system remained a menace to world peace.<sup>184</sup> At the time, the apartheid government was about to carry out the death sentence on MK cadres Naphthali Manana, Petrus Lubisi, and Tsepo Lubisi. The three had attacked the Soekmekaar police station to prevent the authorities from forcefully removing local Africans from their homes to an outlying area.<sup>185</sup>

The participants shared thoughts on how the role of the South African churches could be enhanced in the struggle against apartheid. They discussed how liberation theology could flourish by preaching about political issues of the day and praying in regular church services for those who were in detention and in exile. The representatives of South African churches were specifically asked to initiate a national convention representing all citizens. It was to draft a democratic constitution for a free and just country. They were requested to include representation from exiled leaders as well as political prisoners, so that the draft constitution would be recognized as legitimate both nationally and internationally. They were also asked to support the needs of the liberation movements.<sup>186</sup>

The discussions were a build-up to Tambo's earlier suggestion that the South African churches and the WCC should mobilize the Christian masses to fight apartheid. Beyers Naude had already called for a national convention between

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183. Interview with Rev. Wesley Mabuza, Johannesburg, 1 July 2010.

184. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of PCR Executive Committee, June 1982.

185. Houston and Magubane, 'The ANC Political Underground', pp. 489–491.

186. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of PCR Executive Committee, 1982, Consultation on churches' involvement in southern Africa, Kitwe, Zambia, 24–28 May 1982.

black and white South Africans in 1975.<sup>187</sup> In addition, in 1976, the call for the churches to support the needs of the liberation movements was repeated.

For Mabuza, the consultation was significant in many respects. It debunked the myth that the ANC was a terrorist organization led by demagogues. He was taken aback by Tambo's humility. Despite being soft-spoken, Tambo had a strong personality and his opinions on relevant issues were expressed clearly and incisively. Mabuza found that the consultation helped him become more aware of the damage the apartheid system had inflicted upon South Africans. When he returned to South Africa from Zambia he felt encouraged, strengthened and conducted his sermons with more conviction.<sup>188</sup>

However, the PCR's report to the WCC Central Committee on the consultation was negative. Anwar Barkat, the new PCR director suspected Tutu's motives with his choice of South African delegates. Furthermore, some of the new PCR staff members who attended the consultation felt that the liberation movements' representatives were arrogant. They accused them of monopolizing the struggle for human rights. Consequently, they wanted to reconsider the PCR's relationship with the liberation movements and the meaning of their partnership. They wanted the boundaries between the church constituency and the liberation movements clarified. Barkat emphasized that the PCR's number one constituency was the member churches. By implication, the PCR's priority was certainly not the liberation movements. He asserted that the PCR had a place and a right to function as it chose in the anti-apartheid struggle. The PCR Executive Committee endorsed this new position.<sup>189</sup>

The PCR's disquiet about the consultation was of vital significance. It marked a shift in the direction of its campaign against racism in southern Africa. The previous staff members had always embraced and heeded the Christian views held by the South African political exiles and had enjoyed a convivial relationship with them – with the notable exception of the PAC. They treated all PCR constituencies, the member churches, the racially oppressed groups and the solidarity groups, equally. The fight against apartheid was always their priority. More importantly, they had been nurturing the relationship between the politically exiled South Africans and those still resident in the country, for over a decade. Their exit from the PCR coincided with this consultation just at the time when the PCR/liberation movement relationship was showing signs of growth. The new PCR staff members wanted to overhaul the existing PCR stance, particularly in respect of its relationship with the liberation movements.

The annual meetings of the WCC Central Committee had provided extra platforms for the South Africans across the racial and political divide to confront

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187. Ryan, *Beyers Naudé: Pilgrimage of Faith*, pp. 171–172.

188. Interview with Rev. Wesley Mabuza, Johannesburg, 1 July 2010.

189. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of PCR Executive Group, 14–16 June 1982.

their differences about apartheid. In Nairobi in December 1975, the exiled Brigalia Bam had met with the non-exiled John Rees, David Gwetha, Maurice Nyembezi and Gabriel Setiloane. Gwetha had advised the WCC to recognize Transkei on the grounds that without its 'independence', its citizens would suffer even more. Nyembezi opposed this and argued that most black South Africans rejected the Bantustans. A Transkeian herself, Brigalia Bam, also rejected the so-called independence.<sup>190</sup> Gwetha was defeated in a vote and the members finally adopted the following statement:

The Central Committee of the WCC, recalling that the WCC has on many occasions declared its opposition to apartheid and racism, therefore condemns the deceptive manoeuvre of the SA government to perpetuate and consolidate apartheid by the creation of the so-called independent Transkei by which three million South Africans will be made foreigners in their own country.<sup>191</sup>

The non-exiled Philip Russell, the Archbishop of Cape Town who was unable to attend this Central Committee meeting, requested a review of the criteria for making the Special Fund grants by the WCC.<sup>192</sup> His opinion reflected his doubts about the PCR funding strategy. It was contrary to that held by fellow non-exiled and exiled South Africans such as Brigalia Bam and Gabriel Setiloane partaking in the same forum. The two approved and supported the Special Fund grants which benefited the ANC and the PAC.<sup>193</sup>

Villa-Vicencio had interacted directly not only with leaders of white and black churches in South Africa, but also with those of the WCC and the PCR, as well as with those of the liberation movements who benefited from the Special Fund grants. In his explanation of the negative reaction to the grants, he argued that it emphasized the extent to which the theological agenda was set by church leaders essentially unaffected by racism. He asserted that the financial power and the political influence of the dominant forces in the church, state and academia were such that they were able to ensure that the debate was waged on their terms, answering their questions, and addressing their constituencies on the basis of their presuppositions.<sup>194</sup>

In 1977, non-exiled South Africans such as John Thorn and Maurice Nyembezi met with exiled Brigalia Bam for a week in Geneva at the WCC Central Committee. Their debate about apartheid resulted in the Central Committee making the following statement:

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190. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.02, Confidential minutes of PCR Commission meeting, Cartrigny, 2–6 March 1975.

191. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.03, Minutes of 29th meeting of CC of WCC, 10–18 August 1976, Geneva, pp. 46–48, 85, 87.

192. WCCRS, Minutes of 28th meeting of CC of WCC, Nairobi, 7 and 11 December 1975, pp. 8, 15, 18, 19, 32.

193. The previous chapter (chapter 4) discusses the views of Brigalia Bam and Gabriel Setiloane on the Special Fund grants.

194. Villa-Vicencio, 'The Church and Violence', pp. 104–105.

The Central Committee of the WCC ... calls upon the member churches within and outside SA to press the SA regime urgently to end violence against the oppressed majority; to recognize immediately their full human rights; to release at once all political prisoners, and to abandon apartheid including the existence of Bantustans. It urges member churches to work for the imposition of mandatory and complete arms embargo against SA and the withdrawal of licences for the manufacture of arms, noting in particular the significance of arms exports from the USA, Britain, the FRG, France, Italy and Israel and Belgium, and the continued existence of cultural accords between SA and Belgium, the Netherlands and the FRG. [It] rejects as irrelevant changes such as those proposed in the Statement of Principles issued in March 1977 by US companies operating in SA, because they only achieve special treatment of a few while ignoring the continued exploitation of the majority. [It also] calls on member churches to urge their governments and regional groupings, especially the European Economic Community, North American and the Commonwealth, to take specific steps which will ensure the stopping of export credit guarantees and bank loans to and investments in RSA.<sup>195</sup>

The next venue for the WCC Central Committee forum was at Kingston, Jamaica, in January 1979. The South African representation (again comprising both exiled and non-exiled persons) included among others David Gwetha, Samuel Arends, Desmond Tutu, and Chris Aitken. The name of the exiled Brigalia Bam was not included in the minutes of this 1979 meeting. The four mentioned were all non-exiled, but represented the 'racially and political divided South Africans. They discussed the ongoing and systematic repression of black South Africans; the proposed transfer of thousands of blacks from Crossroads near Cape Town; and the SADF raids in the neighbouring countries. The WCC Central Committee viewed these developments in South Africa as a threat to world peace.<sup>196</sup> The critical point about these annual forums was the WCC's consistent attempt to confront the problem of apartheid. More importantly, it was about rallying all South Africans present, with their differing perspectives, to unite against their racist government.

In 1980, it was Donald Cragg, Evelyn Mahlatsi, Wolfram Kistner and Stanley Mogoba, South Africans from different racial groups and with different political views on apartheid, who attended the WCC Central Committee in Geneva. Cragg conveyed the Methodist Church of South Africa's objection to the Special Fund. He emphasized that his church did not reject the PCR, but it questioned the criteria and operation of its Special Fund. Again, this was a view not shared by all the South Africans present at the forum. Ultimately, they played a part in urging all members of the WCC to isolate and enforce comprehensive sanctions against the South African state.<sup>197</sup>

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195. WCCRS, Minutes of 30th meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 28 July to 6 August 1977, pp. 38, 75, 79.

196. WCCRS, Minutes of 31st meeting of CC of WCC, Kingston, 1–11 January 1979, pp. 73–74, 124, 125, 127, 129.

197. WCCRS, Minutes of 32nd meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 14–22 August 1980, pp. 56, 98, 99, 102, 123.

The following year, South Africans Syd Smuts, Peter Storey and Evelyn Mahlatsi arrived at Dresden, DRG, from white suburbia and the African townships to review the Nyanga police raid by the South African police. They were able to influence the WCC to reaffirm its solidarity with the victims of apartheid and to support the liberation struggle.<sup>198</sup> Their contribution was crucial at this juncture, because the dominant mindset of the new PCR members and staff (and some in the WCC Central Committee), was to concentrate the campaign against racism elsewhere. The South Africans present reminded the WCC of the seriousness of apartheid back home.

The 1982 WCC Central Committee meeting discussed the negative report the new PCR staff had submitted on the Kitwe consultation of the churches' involvement in southern Africa earlier that year. It was attended by South Africans such as Peter Storey, Evelyn Mahlatsi and Allan Boesak, from across the racial and political spectrum. Members of Unit II on Justice and Service, where the PCR was located, urged the Assembly Preparation Committee represented at this forum to take the recommendations made at the Kitwe consultation seriously at the next General Assembly in Vancouver – especially as far as highlighting southern African issues was concerned. They appealed that provision be made for:

...arranging for liberation leaders to participate; by ensuring that southern African concerns are fully on the Assembly Agenda; by giving the liberation of South Africa and Namibia the highest visibility at the Assembly e.g. through the provision of a special plenary session relating to southern African issues; [and] by providing suitable mechanisms for a steady flow of information to delegates. The Central Committee [should] request the General Secretary to take the necessary steps in following up the various recommendations which have implications for the WCC programs. The Central Committee [should] authorize the PCR in collaboration with the AACC to prepare for the early publication of a full consultation report and assure its wide distribution to the churches and councils in the region and outside. The Central Committee [must also] reinstate and re-emphasize its continuing commitment to the struggle for the liberation in southern Africa. This ... [is vital] in view of the accelerated militarization of South Africa and its attempts at destabilization of the countries in the region, and the intensification of liberation struggles in South Africa and Namibia.<sup>199</sup>

Canon E.P.M. Elliot of the Church of Ireland opposed the participation of the liberation leaders at the next assembly. He wanted his abstention recorded unless the resolution specified that only church leaders would participate. The PCR director explained the historic relationship the WCC had with southern African liberation movements and that it was only the groups the Central Committee supported who were to be invited. Pertinently, the non-exiled South African, Evelyn Mahlatsi seconded the recommendation to invite the exiled South

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198. WCCRS, Minutes of 33rd meeting of CC of WCC, Dresden, GDR, 16–26 August 1981, pp. 88–89, 127, 128, 130, 132.

199. WCCRS, Minutes of 34th meeting of the CC of WCC, Geneva, 19–28 July 1982, pp. 72–73.



African liberation leaders.<sup>200</sup> Again, her views did not necessarily represent those of all South African delegates present at this particular gathering. The point underscored is that these WCC forums provided unique opportunities for South Africans opposed to apartheid, to face up to their differences in the interest of transforming their country.

The participants at this meeting condemned the apartheid government's cession of Ingwavuma and Kangwana areas to Swaziland.<sup>201</sup> The intention was to have Swaziland as an ally in altering the South African borders in the pursuit of apartheid. This was once more a reminder to the WCC, whose outlook on racism was focused elsewhere, that apartheid was still a menace in southern Africa and thus called for close attention.

The last two years (1981 and 1982) of the WCC Central Committee forums in the seven-year span under discussion in this chapter, were significant. The appeal for the reinstatement and re-focusing of the WCC commitment to the struggle for liberation in southern Africa and the call for the participation of the liberation leaders were evidence of the declining emphasis on this region by the WCC authorities and the new staff members of the PCR. It signalled a shift of emphasis in the direction the WCC wanted the PCR to concentrate on. This had implications for the quality of the campaign the WCC and its PCR were able to wage against racism in South Africa in the years ahead.

The exiled African and Indian South Africans, Brigalia Bam and Abdul Minty, provided input on the anti-apartheid struggle at the annual meetings of the PCR Commission during this period.<sup>202</sup> In addition, the non-exiled white and coloured South Africans, Charles Villa-Vicencio and Allan Boesak assisted the previous PCR staff members to plan for the Kitwe consultation at the 1981 Commission meeting in Zimbabwe.<sup>203</sup> (This was the consultation that caused some concern among the new PCR staff members.) Zimbabwe had just won its independence and had opened up new political and social space for anti-apartheid forces.

The connection between Villa-Vicencio and Boesak was strong as is evident in their publications focusing on the WCC and its role in the global anti-apartheid struggle. In 1982, Villa-Vicencio wrote an article 'Why are we Afraid of the PCR?: Reflections on the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism'.<sup>204</sup> He challenged theologians, church leaders and others in South Africa to ponder on the PCR. Boesak wrote about the PCR advocates, pointing out that they,

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200. *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10, 72–73, 121, 122, 124, 126, 128.

201. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

202. The preceding chapter (chapter 4) discusses the contributions of Brigalia Bam and Abdul Minty at PCR Commission annual meetings. Their input also extended to the 1975–85 period.

203. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of PCR Commission meeting, Harare, 12–18 July 1981.

204. C. Villa-Vicencio, 'Why are we Afraid of the PCR? Reflections on the WCC PCR', *South African Outlook*, 112, issue 1327 (February 1982).

'better than most others in the churches, understood the political and economic dimensions of apartheid'. He analysed their determination to 'translate solidarity into actual political support'. This 'caused havoc in WCC circles and shook the Western churches to the core'.<sup>205</sup> Importantly, the two theologians collaborated several times in their outspoken efforts to confront injustice and demand that human rights violations in the country be curbed. Their common experiences with the WCC and its PCR, (although not exclusively) arguably contributed to shaping the history of the South African churches in the anti-apartheid struggle.

The occasional general assemblies, consultations and the annual meetings of the WCC were valuable for the progress of the anti-apartheid struggle in many respects. They fostered a relationship between fellow South African citizens that the apartheid system, by means of legislation, had tried its utmost to prevent. Under the tutelage of the WCC, they were able to come to terms with a future multiracial South Africa. The annual meetings of both the PCR Commission and the WCC Central Committee meant that the problem of apartheid received consistent attention from the WCC. Further, the annual week-long opportunities for interaction steadily promoted rapport among previously alienated black and white, non-exiled and politically exiled South Africans.

## Conclusion

The extended services the director and the programme secretary rendered to the PCR until the last two years of the 1975–1982 period meant that the PCR made considerable progress. However, the sudden resignation of Alexander Kirby was a distinct setback as far as the PCR's research work was concerned. Furthermore, information that was leaked to outsiders revealed the rivalry among certain PCR members of staff. The new staff members who joined the PCR in the last years of the Nairobi mandate brought a new approach, which did not elevate the anti-apartheid struggle above struggles against racism in other parts of the world.

This period exposed the susceptibility of the PCR's organizational structure. Perhaps the best example was the case of the WCC's moderator of the Investment Advisory Group, who was at the same time the vice president of the UBS bank (naming him would be a breach of confidentiality). He was an individual with business acumen beneficial to both institutions. In the opinion of the WCC assistant general for Finance and Administration, his association with this major bank was an irreplaceable attribute.<sup>206</sup> Yet as a member of the WCC, he had to support the PCR and implement the WCC banking policy, a policy which laid down that the WCC sever its ties with the UBS of which he was the vice president.

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205. A. Boesak, *Running with Horses: Reflections of an Accidental Politician* (Cape Town: Joho Publishers, 2009), pp. 93–96.

206. [www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za](http://www.aluka.org.oasis.unisa.ac.za), Memorandum from W. Kenworthy to P. Potter, re WCC banking policy, 13 May 1980.

The PCR funding strategy went ahead throughout the seven years. The WCC succeeded in generating enough money to sustain its pledged solidarity with the South African liberation struggle. The decision to espouse violence and make the liberation struggle an armed struggle preoccupied some of the members of the WCC and the broader ecumenical community. Ongoing objections to the PCR on the use of its Special Fund to finance violent resistance were made by powerful and influential individuals such as David Russell, Canon Elliot, Oscar McCloud and Heinz Joachim Held. Russell and Elliot insisted that the WCC statements should reflect the differences among the churches on moral and political problems such as funding militant groups. McCloud, from the USA United Presbyterian Church, had difficulty accepting the militant approach the PCR displayed. He was a member of both the Central Committee and the Finance Department, which had control over the endorsement and implementation of WCC policies that the PCR formulated against racism. Held represented the FRG churches, whose government was implicated in conspiring with the apartheid government. His own church, the EKD was reluctant to recommend that church tax money be given to the Special Fund.<sup>207</sup>

Allan Boesak made strong remarks against this EKD church, which was among the richest of the WCC member churches. He accused it of trying 'to cripple the WCC with its withdrawal of financial support'.<sup>208</sup> Sustaining the PCR funding strategy by the WCC was thus never a certainty.

There was improvement in the PCR mobilization strategy in this period. The experience gained in previous years made the PCR strategy more cohesive. The Christian community in various parts of the world learnt more about the destruction of apartheid from the literature and promotional material the PCR published and distributed. Then too, PCR's collaborative work with other solidarity groups helped to mobilize against the apartheid system more effectively. However, its success was not absolute. Some sectors of the Western world criticized the WCC for politicizing the church institution through its PCR.

The PCR's most successful campaign was the political action the WCC took against banks who were extending loans to South Africa. At its Geneva-based headquarters the WCC withdrew its funds and investments from such banks. Significantly, its example sparked a worldwide financial withdrawal campaign against the apartheid government. Yet its accomplishments in this regard might have been tarnished if the public had been aware of internal transgressions.

Firstly, the majority of the WCC member churches did not support this political action. They opposed the WCC stance to support foreign disinvestment in South Africa. Evidence of this was the destruction of the survey report by the PCR office in Geneva in December 1975. Secondly, the WCC deposited a Special Fund

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207. WCCRS, Minutes of 32nd meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 14–22 August 1980, pp. 55–56.

208. Boesak, *Running with Horses*, p. 94.

grant into the ANC account, which was held with the Midland Bank – one of the banks in the EABC consortium the PCR was targeting for lending to the apartheid government. Thirdly, the WCC's Finance Department continued doing business with the UBS which was also providing loans to the Pretoria government. This undermined the WCC banking policy for which the PCR had lobbied so enthusiastically.

At the same time, these transgressions reflected the impracticalities inherent in the financial withdrawal campaign. The feasibility of the ANC closing its Midland account, forfeiting accrued benefits and finding another bank which was not linked to South Africa, is questionable. Furthermore, it was not particularly practical that the WCC Finance Department had to terminate its dealings with the UBS which performed many of the services necessary for the WCC to function on a daily basis. Notwithstanding the internal sabotage, the WCC ultimately cut its ties with the UBS and other banks which were lending to the apartheid government. This is what was known to the public at large and what the WCC was remembered for.

The PCR bridging strategy saw steady progress in linking compatriots who were separated by apartheid legislation in South Africa and those who were compelled to leave the country because of political persecution. The PCR invited the banned ANC to be represented at the Nairobi General Assembly. The idea was for the exiled South Africans to meet with fellow non-exiled South Africans and exchange ideas and opinions with them, together contributing towards the renewal or not of the PCR and its campaign against apartheid.

The PCR brought non-exiled South African representatives from the local churches to meet with South African political refugees representing SASO, BCM and the ANC in Zambia in 1976. The SACC, for example, commended John Rees for promoting black leadership within the Council.<sup>209</sup> He was one of the individuals who benefited from these encounters with South African political refugees several times during the mid 1970s, namely at the general assembly in Nairobi in 1975 and the 1976 consultation in Kitwe. These opportunities for dialogue arguably played a part in influencing his vision about the future of South Africa.

When the WCC reviewed the ten years of its campaign against racism in 1980, the PCR made sure that the inputs from both non-exiled and exiled South Africans were considered. At the international consultation on racism in the Netherlands, the participants received the preparatory documentation which included the South African views on apartheid. These opinions were from people such as John Rees, Stanley Mogoba and Desmond Tutu who were resident in South Africa and from Oliver Tambo and Ben Magubane who were political refugees. Charles Villa-Vicencio, residing in South Africa and Alfred Nzo, banned

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209. 'Come Celebrate! 25 Years of the SACC: Chapter 8', available at <http://sacc.org.za/about/celebrate8.html>

in South Africa were part of the group of compatriots who attended this consultation.

In 1982 at Kitwe, in Zambia, the PCR again brought together South Africans from the local churches and from the liberation movements. The following is how a 'man of the cloth', the Rev. Wesley Mabuza, expressed the opportunity the WCC had afforded him at Kitwe:

Jesus is like the salt of the earth. The PCR acted like salt. We fellow South Africans, black and white, church ministers and politicians, experienced a meaningful and profound contact. The PCR's presence and help were inconspicuous but pleasant. The whole journey was a significant moment.<sup>210</sup>

The opportunities the WCC and its PCR provided for South Africans, black and white, resident in the country and exiled, provided for much tension. Yet many fruitful discussions arose from these encounters and these gradually led to better understanding among compatriots who were linked by a common cause – to end apartheid.

For most of the years under the Nairobi mandate the WCC made significant headway in that the PCR campaigned actively against racism in South Africa. The last years of this period signalled a revision of the PCR's radical tactics and saw a shift away from concentrating almost exclusively on southern Africa.

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210. Interview with Rev. Wesley Mabuza, Johannesburg, 1 July 2010.

## Chapter Six

### The PCR struggle against apartheid under the Vancouver mandate, 1983–1990

#### Introduction

The year 1983, saw the entrenchment of white domination through reforms introduced by the South African government that extended voting rights to Coloureds and Indians but not to Africans.<sup>1</sup> This raised the tide of revulsion at the injustice of apartheid nationally and internationally. Although these reforms had some limited support, they unleashed a new level of resistance from the black majority.<sup>2</sup> It was at this juncture that the delegates assembled in Vancouver to spell out how the WCC was to proceed with its campaign against racism. At the assembly, southern Africa was placed once more as the PCR's major focus, reversing the trend of 1981–1982, when the attention of the WCC and its PCR had shifted elsewhere, to Australian Aboriginal communities. However, despite this reversal, the PCR hesitated to campaign against apartheid from 1983–1984, in the aftermath of Vancouver. It was only in late 1984 to early 1985, when new people were appointed on the PCR staff, that it resumed its radical approach to resist apartheid.

This chapter focuses on the debate about racism at the Vancouver Assembly and the PCR activities thereafter, from 1983 until 1990. In this period the PCR's organizational jigsaw was manned by another set of people for the eight years of this assembly's mandate. It is their effectiveness or lack thereof, with the allocated budget that is considered here. Importantly, the chapter also argues that the contest in the WCC between the moderate and radical elements on how the WCC was to be involved in South Africa, remained an issue. The continuities and changes of the PCR's multiple strategies in its effort to transform the South African society are highlighted.

This period witnessed a political upheaval in South Africa. The government's attempt to modify apartheid by adopting a new constitution and a tri-cameral parliament galvanized opposition in the form of the United Democratic Front

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1. S.P. Lekgoathi, 'The United Democratic Front, Political Resistance and Local Struggles in the Vaal and West Rand Townships in the 1980s', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 4, 1980–1990* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010), pp. 555–556.
  2. D. O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948–1994* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1996), p. 320; R.K. Massie, 'Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation: A Study of Eight Institutional Investors' Approaches to South Africa' (PhD thesis, Harvard University, 1989), pp. 17–18; W. Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 254.

(UDF).<sup>3</sup> Jeremy Seekings has described the UDF as a structure that ‘drew together into nationwide campaigns and coordination, a host of locally and regionally based organizations’. It attempted to ‘unite diverse and often disparate elements into a regional and national organization, with a slogan, UDF Unites – Apartheid Divides’.<sup>4</sup> The UN advised the establishment of a non-racial democratic society based on majority rule and predicted inevitable conflict in the entire southern African region if the apartheid government enforced the constitutional reforms.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the Cold War played itself out in southern Africa when the SADF raided the ANC camps in its neighbouring frontline states.<sup>6</sup> The Soviet Union warned South Africa that it would not allow the Angolan government to collapse, while the US brokered the Lusaka and the Nkomati Accords (involving Angola, Mozambique and South Africa) in exchange for these countries evicting the so-called pro-communist liberation movements who were apartheid’s enemies.<sup>7</sup>

Inside South Africa, state repression fuelled the intensity of insurrection during the mid-1980s and this led in turn to an international backlash.<sup>8</sup> Local and global resistance against the apartheid state succeeded in isolating South Africa.<sup>9</sup> The late 1980s saw the end of the Cold War and the South African government entering into negotiations with the liberation forces for a settlement.<sup>10</sup> This chapter is about the specific contribution the WCC made in the broader global anti-apartheid struggle. Although the PCR’s pre-Vancouver intention was to focus elsewhere to fight racism, the events in southern Africa overtook that agenda.

The Preparatory Committee for the 6th Assembly in Canada had noted the request for an emphasis on southern Africa. The Central Committee had however not voted on the participation of the liberation leaders, a matter which

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3. D. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid: Ecumenism in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1989), pp.101–102.
  4. J. Seekings, ‘The United Democratic Front in Cape Town, 1983–1986’, in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 4, 1980–1990* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010), pp. 534–542.
  5. E.S. Reddy, ‘The United Nations and the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa’, in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity, Part 1* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008), p. 77.
  6. N.L Clark and W.H. Worger, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 87.
  7. C. Saunders and S. Onslow, ‘The Cold War and Southern Africa, 1976–1990’, in M. Leffler and O.A. Westad, eds, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 21–22.
  8. O’Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p. 329; Massie, ‘Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation’, p. 22; Clark and Worger, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 94.
  9. H. Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 61; Clark and Worger, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 95; Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, p. 103; S. Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2002), pp. 310–311; W. Minter and S. Hill, ‘Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States–South Africa Relations’, in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3*, p. 787.
  10. H. Schleicher, ‘GDR Solidarity: The German Democratic Republic and the South African Liberation Struggle’, in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 1149.

evoked wide disagreement.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, in the final programme of the Vancouver Assembly, southern Africa was included in the section on Peace and Justice. This created tension to the extent that some of the PCR Executive Committee members confronted the director, Anwar Barkat, about it. In his view, it was the Central Committee that restricted the PCR because it authorized the Preparatory Committee to decide on resolutions concerning the programme. The Preparatory Committee agreed in principle that the issue of southern Africa would receive high visibility throughout the assembly. However, it left it to the PCR on how that was to be achieved. In the end, when the Central Committee met again, it came up with a final proposal to bring southern Africa and Peace and Justice together. Importantly, Barkat did acknowledge that the PCR's major concerns were moving away from southern Africa and focusing increasingly on land rights issues in other parts of the world. PCR Executive Committee members rejected such a move. To them, the shift signified that the WCC's main concern was still with Western peace.<sup>12</sup>

The confrontation about the relative sidelining of southern Africa was significant. The criticism came from the PCR proponents who supported the radical approach the WCC adopted in its campaign against the apartheid system. It was their last meeting immediately prior to the Vancouver Assembly which was to usher in a new mandate with new appointees. It indicated their concern about the post-Nairobi revival of moderate policies by the WCC incumbents, some of whom were sympathetic towards the National Party's constitutional reforms in South Africa.

The US administration under President Ronald Reagan, at the time pursuing a policy of constructive engagement, was fully supportive of Botha and his reforms. Janice Love has observed that the Reagan administration promoted greater conciliation and cooperation with South Africa and slackened restrictions on the sale of non-military goods, computer and communications equipment, as well as aircraft and helicopters to the South African police and military. The US government also increased cooperation and exchanges on nuclear technology.<sup>13</sup>

Oliver Tambo had requested a representation in Vancouver in advance. Philip Potter, the general secretary, who had a long-standing and cordial relationship with him, welcomed the ANC participation. Forced to backtrack on southern Africa liberation leaders, the PCR and the Central Committee had been told to give the ANC church division representatives more attention. Now the PCR director had to ensure that the ANC representatives received maximum publicity and had the freedom to speak from the floor. Allan Boesak was requested to

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11. WCC Main Library, Reference Section, Geneva (hereafter WCCRS), Minutes and reports of 34th meeting of Central Committee (hereafter CC), Geneva, 19–24 July 1982, pp. 42, 72–73.

12. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of 15th meeting of PCR Executive Group, New World Foundation, New York, 20–24 June 1983.

13. J. Love, *The US Anti-Apartheid Movement: Local Activism in Global Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1985), p. 80.



address the assembly on the theme, 'Jesus Christ – Life in the World' and to emphasize the work of the PCR and its fight against racism.<sup>14</sup>

At the Vancouver Assembly, the South Africans present included more than 20 representatives from various denominations in the country.<sup>15</sup> There were also representatives from exile. The non-exiled Desmond Tutu and Alan Boesak as well as the exiled Alfred Nzo and Thabo Mbeki had the unique opportunity to address the rest of the WCC delegates on what was going on in their country.<sup>16</sup>

The SACC was at the time being subjected to the scrutiny of the Eloff Commission the state had set up<sup>17</sup> and the SADF was attacking Angola where some of the political refugees were based.<sup>18</sup> The assembly afforded them time and space to listen to one another, to clarify misunderstandings and to work together in their common cause against apartheid.

Significantly, the delegates demanded that southern Africa remain as the major focus of the PCR's agenda. They justified the urgency to concentrate on this region on the grounds that the apartheid government was defending itself in the name of Christian civilization. They argued that apartheid did not only challenge the integrity of the churches but violated the wholeness and credibility of the Christian faith.<sup>19</sup> The final statement on southern Africa adopted thus called on the churches:

To intensify their witness against apartheid and continuing oppression in South Africa and Namibia, and to deepen their solidarity with those forces which opposed apartheid and racism and which struggle for liberation.<sup>20</sup>

Tutu called for a clear statement which communicated that 'the loving care of the Church embraced whites in his country as well as blacks'. He requested the delegates to emphasize that 'the WCC was not anti-South Africa'.<sup>21</sup>

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14. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 34th meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 19–24 July, 1982, p. 128; PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Meeting of PCR Executive Group, New York, 20–24 June 1983.

15. WCC Archive Collection: Box 336/33/3, Africa/South Africa, Delegates, Vancouver Assembly, 1983, Geneva.

16. B. Sjollem, 'Eloquent Action', in P. Webb, ed., *A Long Struggle: The Involvement of the WCC in South Africa* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), p. 32.

17. T.A. Borer, *Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa, 1980–1994* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), p. 54.

18. H. López Blanch, 'Cuba: The Little Giant against Apartheid', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 1177; Saunders and Onslow, 'The Cold War and Southern Africa', p. 22.

19. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Report of the CC to the 6th WCC Assembly in Vancouver, an extract from WCC publication, *Nairobi to Vancouver: 1975–1983: Report of the Central Committee to the 6th Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1984).

20. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 36th meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 9–18 July 1984, p. 58.

21. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Report of CC to 6th WCC Assembly in Vancouver, 1983.

The mandate from Vancouver was clear. The WCC authorities and the PCR officers had to prioritize support for the struggle against apartheid in southern Africa. It was the pressure placed on the officers which was noteworthy. At the same time, the delegates emphasized that the PCR should continue with its work in other regions of the world.<sup>22</sup> There was even a call for the PCR to attack the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>23</sup>

### PCR organizational jigsaw

In the aftermath of Vancouver, administrators were appointed for the various WCC programmes. Anwar Barkat was re-appointed as the PCR director in March 1983.<sup>24</sup> Robert van Drimmelen was named as the new programme secretary for four years from February 1983.<sup>25</sup> He was an economist with a particular interest in the special meaning of 'economy' in traditional Christian theology.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, Leonard Jeffries was appointed as a research consultant for six months.<sup>27</sup> He was an American professor of Black Studies in New York.<sup>28</sup> Eva Militz's church made a financial contribution for her to carry on helping the PCR office with its documentation until 1985.<sup>29</sup> James Mutambirwa from Zimbabwe came as a consultant for a year, beginning on 17 June 1984.<sup>30</sup> His area of speciality was the rise of settler power in Southern Rhodesia from 1989 until 1923.<sup>31</sup> Jean Sindab accepted a position as a programme secretary from July 1986 for a period of three years.<sup>32</sup> She was an African-American activist who directed the Washington Office on Africa (WOA) which played a bridging role among diverse constituencies including African-American groups and multiracial (but predominantly white) institutions such as the major church denominations and labour unions.<sup>33</sup>

The PCR office faced many challenges. When its director fell ill, no new appointment was made to fill his post until 1988. The programme secretary sought a transfer to the Commission on the Churches' Participation in

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22. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Document on Joint meeting of the PCR and Racial Justice Working Group, 20–24 June 1983.

23. [www.aluka.org](http://www.aluka.org) 'Aid to Guerillas is Not Used for Guns, Says WCC'.

24. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 35th meeting of CC of WCC, Vancouver, 8 and 11–12 August 1983, p. 20.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

26. <http://www.faithineurope.org.uk/robvan.pdf>, accessed 30 October 2010.

27. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 35th meeting of CC of WCC, Vancouver, 8 and 11–12 August 1983, p. 24.

28. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonard\\_Jeffries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonard_Jeffries), accessed 30 October 2010.

29. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Memo on Eva Militz, undated (1983).

30. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 36th meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 1984, p. 79.

31. <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=3243600>, James Mutambirwa, accessed 30 October 2010.

32. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 38th meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 16–24 January 1987, p. 80.

33. [http://www.noeasyvictories.org/interviews/int13\\_waters.php](http://www.noeasyvictories.org/interviews/int13_waters.php), accessed 30 October 2010.

Development from 1 November 1985.<sup>34</sup> This was before his contract expired. The contracts for most of the officers were for a short term and were renewed from time to time, as was the case with Mutambirwa and Sindab. The high turnover of staff, particularly in the first two years, impacted negatively on PCR activities.

Progress was made in the PCR Commission with regard to African representation. The South African, Barney Pityana, and the Namibian, Zephaniah Kameeta, were appointed as Commission members, in addition to the other two from Kenya and Angola.<sup>35</sup> Pityana had a law and theology background. He was a member of the Birmingham Diocese Advisory Committee on Black Ministries in the United Kingdom.<sup>36</sup> He was appointed as the PCR director in 1988. Kameeta was a noted exponent of Namibian liberation theology. He said the following about apartheid in 1982:

Human Rights are almost a luxury for us. We are struggling for human lives. People are dying; people are being tortured to death. People are being humiliated every day. That's what people call apartheid. Apartheid is violence. When people react on that, they are judged as violent, but the policy itself is a policy of violence. It's a matter of life and death.<sup>37</sup>

Their appointment was crucial, given the attention the PCR needed to give to these two countries. The PCR Executive Committee consisted of Judge Annie Jiagge as the moderator, Paul Boateng and Sam Kobia as the vice-moderators, and a few PCR Commission members.<sup>38</sup> Jiagge was the first woman on the Supreme Court bench of Ghana. She was described as 'bold', given that the South African agents had no qualms about crushing apartheid opponents in those days, according to the WCC general secretary.<sup>39</sup> Boateng was the first black Briton to be elected to the House of Commons. He specialized in civil rights law while a student. He spoke out against racism in relation to their dealings with the black and Asian communities in the UK.<sup>40</sup> Kobia was the first African to be appointed the WCC general secretary.<sup>41</sup>

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34. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 38th meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva 16–24 January 1987, pp. 62–63.

35. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of PCR Commission meeting, Marseille, France, 11–16 August 1986.

36. [http://www.unisa.ac.za/contents/about/principle/docs/Prof\\_pityanabridged\\_cv\\_September\\_2009pdf\\_.B.N.Pityana](http://www.unisa.ac.za/contents/about/principle/docs/Prof_pityanabridged_cv_September_2009pdf_.B.N.Pityana) online resumé.

37. P. Katjavivi, P. Frostin and K. Mbuende, eds, *Church and Liberation in Namibia* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), p. 25,

38. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of 17th meeting of the PCR Executive Group, 10–12 June 1985.

39. <http://www.wfn.org/1996/08/msg00073.html>, WCC press release, Tribute to Mrs Justice Annie Jiagge, 27 June 1996.

40. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_Boateng,\\_Baron\\_Boateng](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Boateng,_Baron_Boateng), accessed 30 October 2010.

41. <http://www.answers.com/topic/samuel-kobia-rev>, accessed 30 October 2010.

Bishop Manas Buthelezi was nominated as a core group member for the Commission on World Mission Evangelism.<sup>42</sup> Core group members were responsible for making proposals for action to the Central Committee.<sup>43</sup> He was an advocate of voiceless South Africans and a leading exponent of Black Theology. Significantly, unlike his church, the EKD in Germany, he supported the PCR actions against his government. The Unit II on Justice and Service continued to maintain the PCR budget for its administration and projects during this period. Although there were financial challenges, the PCR was able to negotiate these and implement its programmes and projects.<sup>44</sup> The PCR radical approach against the South African government continued to divide not only the members of the Central and Executive Committees but the rest of the WCC churches. Even during this period, the PCR chain was as strong as its weakest link.

### **Bridging**

The PCR strategy to bridge the gap between South Africans (some of whom were in exile and others who were still resident in the country) who were active against apartheid but were forced apart by their race and political affiliation, was continued in this period. In addition to the encounter in Canada, other opportunities for dialogue arose in Harare in 1985 and 1986; in Lusaka in 1987; in Harare again in 1990; and at the annual meetings of the WCC Central Committee.

The Eloff Commission published its findings in 1984, after individuals such as Tutu, Boesak, Tambo, Nzo and Mbeki had met in Vancouver at the WCC General Assembly. Its findings indicated that the SACC action programmes promoted and contributed towards black majority rule in a united South Africa. The government accused the SACC of meddling in politics and closely cooperating and supporting the ANC. It accused Tutu of helping to improve the ANC's credibility.<sup>45</sup> The Rev. Peter Storey who testified at the commission, denied any allegiance to the ANC.<sup>46</sup> Tutu, who made no bones about the fact that he did not recognize the state's authority, informed the commission that he intended to defy the state. He was quoted as saying: 'I want to declare here as forthrightly as I can, that we will continue to do this work, come hell or high water'.<sup>47</sup> He further asserted that 'he wholeheartedly supported the aims of the ANC, if not its methods, and that nothing would stop him from talking to it'.<sup>48</sup>

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42. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 35th meeting of CC of WCC, Vancouver, 8 and 11–12 August 1983, p. 37.

43. WCCRS, Executive Committee, Geneva, sub-committee report on the review of structures, policies and working methods, February 28–March 4 1983.

44. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of the PCR Executive Committee, Geneva, 1985.

45. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, p. 91; Borer, *Challenging the State*, p. 57.

46. Borer, *Challenging the State*, p. 80.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

In the same year, Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Whilst he was in America, his appearance in newspapers made him the most visible and appealing spokesperson for the South African blacks, to many people in the US. Tutu articulated that 'apartheid was a moral outrage, constructive engagement had failed and American corporations should withdraw from South Africa'.<sup>49</sup> Inside South Africa, the SACC viewed the award as a call to all churchmen who were in any doubt about Tutu and the SACC, to confidently join hands and move forward to intensify the fight against apartheid.<sup>50</sup>

At the SACC national conference, Boesak called on 'all Christians to set aside a day on which to pray for the downfall of the government'. In his view, 'what the poor needed was not meaningless reforms but a new government that will love justice, hate evil and do what is right for all the people of South Africa'. The conference responded by calling on the churches to pray for the 'abolition of all apartheid structures' and later for 'the end to unjust rule'.<sup>51</sup> His plea was a progression of Tambo's previous call for a Christian movement where the South African masses were to be mobilized to accept the need for radical change.

Dan O'Meara argued that as a consequence of the government's constitutional reforms, there was an upsurge in MK operations against the state. He maintained that the so-called tri-cameral parliament (which allowed some limited voice to Coloured people and Indians, but made no provision for the African majority at central government level) merely reinforced the simmering internal anger in the various sectors of the black community. The ANC subsequently called on black South Africans to make the country 'ungovernable'. The unprecedented surge of resistance led to the government's declaration of a limited state of emergency. There were massive detentions, heavily armed troops patrolled the black townships in armoured vehicles, and the political violence claimed thousands of lives by 1985.<sup>52</sup> The highly volatile situation triggered the business sector to lead a delegation to Lusaka in September to meet with ANC leaders.<sup>53</sup>

The PCR arranged a global consultation in Harare in December 1985 to develop a strategy to deal with the South African crisis. Prior to this, there was a series of attempts to mediate. The WCC expressed its concern about the open brutality and repression the government continued to perpetrate against its opponents. It consulted with Tutu and Boesak on ways the WCC could help.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore,

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49. Massie, 'Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation', p. 22.

50. Borer, *Challenging the State*, p. 58.

51. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, p. 108; A. Boesak and C. Villa Vicencio, *When Prayer Makes News: Churches and Apartheid – A Call to Prayer* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), pp.138, 141.

52. O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, pp. 324–326.

53. Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa*, p. 260; Thörn, *Anti-apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, p. 57; Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in US', p. 800.

54. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Letter from Emilio Castro to Bishop Tutu, 21 August 1985; Letter from Anwar Barkat to Allan Boesak, 16 August 1985; Telex from Allan Boesak to Emilio Castro, undated (1985).

Beyers Naudé visited Geneva in October and reported on the grave political crisis in South Africa.<sup>55</sup> The WCC officials also wrote to the South African state president and the minister of police, requesting clemency for those who had been handed down the death sentence; those who were conducting a hunger strike; and the many workers who had been summarily dismissed because of their resistance against the state.<sup>56</sup> The situation remained untenable and prompted the 1985 Harare consultation.

Present in Harare were world church leaders from North America, Europe, Australia and other parts of Africa. They included the general secretaries of the Lutheran World Federation; the World Alliance of Reformed Churches; and the All Africa Conference of Churches. Also in attendance were delegates from foreign governments which had diplomatic and business ties with South Africa. More pertinently, the PCR brought together South African representatives from the SACC; the newly formed COSATU; the ANC; the PAC; and students from Stellenbosch University and the University of Cape Town. There were also youths who were not formally invited but wanted their voices heard; their names were not recorded for reasons of security. They declared that they were no longer afraid to die to end apartheid and defended the slogan of 'liberation before education'.<sup>57</sup>

The SACC argued that the apartheid structure was 'morally indefensible' and against God's will.<sup>58</sup> Its delegates operating in the townships conveyed that they had no choice but to become involved in the political struggle.<sup>59</sup> The ANC demanded the transfer of power to the people and both instigated and supported the peoples' war against the government. At the ANC conference at Kabwe, also held in 1985, delegates vowed that their next conference in five years' time would be held in a free South Africa. For its part, the PAC called for a united front of all forces fighting against apartheid.<sup>60</sup>

At Harare, the world church leaders heard first-hand what ministry and witness meant in apartheid South Africa. Most importantly, they heard what kind of support South Africans expected of them. On the last day of the consultation, the participants unanimously adopted the Harare Declaration. It called for an immediate end to the state of emergency; the release of political prisoners; the return of exiles; and the unbanning of liberation movements. Although the PAC

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55. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Memo from James Mutambirwa to Emilio Castro re Beyers Naudé's visit, 2 October 1985.

56. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Letter from Anwar Barkat to State President Botha, 16 October 1985; Letter from James Mutambirwa to Minister Louis Le Grange, 15 November 1985.

57. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Report by James Mutambirwa on the Harare meeting, 8 January 1986.

58. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, pp. 103–104.

59. Borer, *Challenging the State*, p. 62.

60. Schleicher, 'GDR Solidarity', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 1037.

expressed reservations about sanctions,<sup>61</sup> the Harare Declaration pleaded that the international community apply immediate and comprehensive sanctions on South Africa. It also demanded the implementation of the UN Resolution 435 on Namibia.<sup>62</sup> The participants rejected categorically all proposals for modification of apartheid.<sup>63</sup> The youth representatives requested the WCC to arrange a similar meeting specifically for the youth.<sup>64</sup>

The efficacy of this bridging PCR strategy is captured by Jay Naidoo's account of the 1985 Harare meeting. As the first general secretary of COSATU, he wrote:

I was invited to a meeting of the WCC in Harare. I thought it was a good idea to go and canvass some support. It was our first public function and everyone was very interested in COSATU. I knew I would meet with senior comrades from the ANC and I needed their support to implement the resolution on building strong national industrial unions and political unity. I ... wanted a direct line to the ANC in exile ... I wanted to connect to what I believed was the most serious liberation movement ... Contact with the senior ANC leadership was a critical priority. Several people from the ANC attended that meeting ... [including] Mac Maharaj, (a Robben Island 'graduate' and senior member of the ANC's Revolutionary Committee) and Joe Slovo (a senior member of MK's Special Operations section and also on the Revolutionary Committee). This was my first formal contact with the ANC in exile, and it took place at a very public meeting convened by religious leaders discussing the grave situation in South Africa.<sup>65</sup>

In other efforts to isolate South Africa that same year, Abdul Minty presented a declaration to the Commonwealth meeting, urging sanctions and asking delegates from all organizations (representing 18 million people) to sign the declaration.<sup>66</sup> In Beijing, Johnson Mlambo, the PAC president attended a conference on 'Supporting the People of South Africa in their Fight against Apartheid and for Ethnic Equality'.<sup>67</sup> France and Australia recalled their ambassadors from South Africa and Denmark closed its consulate in the country.<sup>68</sup>

In 1986, the Commonwealth appointed the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to visit South Africa because the political situation there had deteriorated so dramatically. Thousands of opponents of the government, including children,

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61. *Ibid.*

62. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, pp. 103–104.

63. Borer, *Challenging the State*, pp. 61–62.

64. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Report by James Mutambirwa on Harare meeting, 8 January 1986.

65. J. Naidoo, *Fighting for Justice: A Lifetime of Political and Social Activism* (Johannesburg: Picador, 2010), p. 104.

66. Thörn, *Anti-apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, p. 65.

67. Z. Weiyun and X. Sujiang, 'China's Support for and Solidarity with South Africa's Liberation Struggle', SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3, International Solidarity*, p. 1246.

68. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Document: Recent Developments in Southern Africa, 6 August 1985.



were detained, many had simply disappeared without trace.<sup>69</sup> The ANC leaders met with the EPG in Lusaka<sup>70</sup> and Botha permitted the emissaries to meet Nelson Mandela in prison. Yet his army virtually simultaneously raided the PAC and ANC bases in the frontline states and he followed this up by declaring a comprehensive state of emergency in a desperate attempt to stem the tide of resistance.<sup>71</sup>

In July 1986, the PCR organized another global consultation in Harare, responding to the request the youth had made the previous year. The moving testimony by Joe Seremane when he visited Geneva in March 1986 played some part in the WCC's decision to do so. He painted a poignant picture of the severe situation in South Africa and its impact on the black youth.<sup>72</sup> Other WCC divisions contributed financial resources and enabled the PCR to hold the youth meeting.<sup>73</sup> Youth from South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Zambia, Zaire, Ghana, Egypt, Brazil and Denmark gathered in Harare.

More relevant, the PCR brought together an assortment of South Africans. Michael Coetzee<sup>74</sup> attests that it was the SACC which put together the youth delegation from various grassroots formations. In his own words:

We were briefed and 'work shopped' about the mission – which was to further the aims of the international solidarity movement against apartheid and in particular the strengthening of the call and mobilizations for sanctions against the regime. The police arrested Edwin Arrison as we were being transported to the Air Zimbabwe aircraft. We put up such a scene in the plane about our detained comrade that they delayed taking off. It was the current judge Essa Moosa who came to calm us, [he was] also on his own mission to Lusaka. We met Thabo Mbeki, Mac Maharaj, Joel Netzhitenzhe, Welile Nhlapho, Barney Pityana and his wife, Pumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Shafiek Shohabodien from the Black Consciousness Movement, and other ANC exiles.<sup>75</sup>

The SACC Youth division president updated the audience about the political situation in the country. He cited the state's reforms as the reason why the youth was making South Africa ungovernable. His proposed solutions included the release of political prisoners, the return of exiles, the handing-over of power to the people, and the international community's support for comprehensive mandatory sanctions against the Pretoria government. He thanked the frontline states for the sacrifices they were making in supporting the struggle against

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69. Clark and Worger, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 95; Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, p. 135.

70. Thörn, *Anti-apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, p. 57.

71. Terreblanche, *History of Inequality*, p. 310.

72. PCR Collection: Box 4223.3.08, Confidential minutes of 18th PCR Executive Group meeting, Geneva, 3–5 March 1986.

73. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Memo from Emilio Castro (general secretary) to sub-units, URM, CMME, CCPE, CICARWS, Women and PTE re Harare Youth meeting, 21 May 1986.

74. The identities of the participants were not disclosed for security reasons. Those of Michael Coetzee, Donovan Madison and Edwin Arrison were revealed because of their arrests.

75. Electronic interview with Michael Coetzee, 9 August 2010.



apartheid. He also appealed to Western countries to show their solidarity by giving economic aid to anti-apartheid organizations.<sup>76</sup> Other South African youths rejected the 'gutter education' they were receiving. They emphasized their resolve to make the country ungovernable. The discussions incorporated why it was necessary for the South African youth to join the armed struggle against the apartheid government. A paper from a newly exiled South African youth was read to the meeting. Significantly, its title was: 'Forward to a Liberated South Africa: The State does not Shape Us – We will Shape the Nation.'<sup>77</sup>

At the end of the consultation, the participants called for an understanding of the armed struggle against the illegitimate apartheid government. They urged the churches to take an unambivalent stand on the violent tactics employed by the armed liberation struggle and those perpetrated by the apartheid government. The youth from other parts of the world pledged their solidarity. They undertook to coordinate their activities in order to give stronger and more effective support to the South African and Namibian people's struggle against apartheid.<sup>78</sup>

Michael Coetzee and Donovan Madison, the SACC Youth division president, were arrested when they returned. The representative of the Danish youth, who witnessed the arrest at the airport, issued an immediate statement of protest and called on his embassy for urgent action.<sup>79</sup> Madison and Coetzee were detained, tortured and forced to sign a transcript with details of the conversation they had held with Mbeki on the ANC's armed struggle. They subsequently spent three years in prison.<sup>80</sup>

The youth consultation was important in many respects. It provided a platform for South Africans to connect in their campaign against apartheid and linked them to the international community. Coetzee's recollections of the enlightening interactions with the Cuban delegates validates the point.<sup>81</sup> The consultation also consolidated the global anti-apartheid struggle. More importantly, it underscored the tragedy of violence in the struggle to either fight or to maintain oppression.

Following the consultation, the PCR facilitated coordination between the WCC Youth Desk, the Lutheran World Federation and the Youth Women's Christian

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76. [www.aluka.org](http://www.aluka.org), Summary reports from the meeting and covering letter from E. Militz, 18 July 1986; [www.aluka.org](http://www.aluka.org), Letter from I. Keith, Christian Aid, London to Mutambirwa and Eva Militz, 27 October 1986.

77. *Ibid.*

78. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of PCR Executive Committee, 1986; [www.aluka.org](http://www.aluka.org), Summary reports from meeting with covering letter from E. Militz, 18 July 1986; [www.aluka.org](http://www.aluka.org), Letter from I. Keith, Christian Aid, London to Mutambirwa and Eva Militz, 27 October 1986.

79. Sten Houmoller from Denmark reported the matter to the Danish Foreign Minister. He informed the PCR about his correspondence with the Foreign Ministry. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of PCR Executive Committee, 1986, Letter Sten Houmoller to PCR, 10 August 1986.

80. Telephonic interview with Donovan Madison, 23 October 2009 (not recorded).

81. Electronic interview with Michael Coetzee, 9 August 2010.

Association in Geneva, to follow up on the youth action plans against apartheid. It sent out the final communiqué of the Harare Youth Consultation to the WCC member churches for study. It also encouraged urgent action to support the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and Namibia.<sup>82</sup>

In 1987, the protracted power struggle between the apartheid establishment (with its Western allies) and the anti-apartheid forces, took a decisive and irreversible turn in favour of the latter. The shift in Washington's stance was clearly evident when the current US secretary of state, George Schultz, met with Oliver Tambo in January 1987. Tambo subsequently gave speeches in five major US cities, addressing church bodies and distinguished US universities. All this provided the ANC and its cause with high-profile visibility. The British foreign minister also invited Tambo to London to hear the ANC's point of view.<sup>83</sup> Conservative foreign governments across the board began to give serious consideration to adopting real sanctions against South Africa and unified business backing for Botha began to shrink.<sup>84</sup> Botha meanwhile made an unconvincing effort to explain away the embarrassing military coup that had taken place in the 'independent' Transkei (run by a pro-Pretoria puppet government) in late 1987, by saying that the ex-'homeland' provided refuge and bases for 'communist' freedom fighters who had been responsible for staging the coup.<sup>85</sup>

In May 1987, the PCR arranged a consultation on the churches' search for peace and justice in southern Africa. Its purpose was to provide a platform for a wider audience in Lusaka to inter alia explore fully the youth's plea for an understanding of the armed struggle against the illegitimate apartheid government.<sup>86</sup> It wanted the churches to take meaningful steps to diminish the violence of apartheid.<sup>87</sup> Pertinently, it was another opportunity for bridging the distance between apartheid's South African opponents.

Lusaka was a popular venue. A few weeks earlier, the Association of West European Parliamentarians for Action against Apartheid held its conference there. The Indian anti-apartheid body, Parliamentarians Action for the Removal of Apartheid (PARA) was represented at this Lusaka conference.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, Joan Fairweather has observed that it was in Lusaka that 'several hundred ANC officials researched and planned for post-apartheid South Africa'.<sup>89</sup>

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82. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of the PCR Commission, Marseilles, 11–16 August 1986.

83. Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in US', p. 808; Thörn, *Anti-apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, p. 57.

84. O' Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p. 330.

85. Clark and Worger, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 99.

86. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of the PCR Executive Committee, 1987.

87. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, p. 135; Borer, *Challenging the State*, p. 66.

88. V. Gupta, 'Solidarity: India and South Africa', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, pp. 1301–1302.

89. J. Fairweather, 'Canadian Solidarity with South Africa's Liberation Struggle', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 876.

At its May 1987 consultation in Lusaka, the WCC brought together more than 200 representatives of churches, the exiled liberation movements, the UN and foreign political dignitaries, as well as journalists. Some of the South Africans involved were the SACC's Beyers Naudé, the ANC's Oliver Tambo and the PAC's Johnson Mlambo. A few days before the meeting, the South African army attacked a town in Zambia, killing four people.<sup>90</sup> During the proceedings of the consultation, white South Africans went to the voting polls and returned the ruling National Party government to power with an overwhelming majority. Darryl Balia expressed the message these white voters had sent to the oppressed blacks as 'unashamedly morbid'.<sup>91</sup>

In his opening address at the conference, President Kenneth Kaunda encouraged the WCC to continue its praiseworthy efforts to support anti-apartheid forces that sought democratic change in South Africa.<sup>92</sup> One of his government officials (whose two nephews had been killed by the SADF), made an impassioned speech against South Africa's destabilization policy in the frontline states.<sup>93</sup> Naudé spoke with appreciation of the reunion of internal and external groups in the struggle against apartheid. Tambo is reported to have said:

[The] commitment to the struggle to overthrow the Pretoria regime, the transfer of power to all the people under a system of 'one person one vote' in a unitary South African state, the use of that popular power to abolish the apartheid system in its entirety and the rebuilding of South Africa on the basis of the non-racial and democratic perspectives [are all] spelt out in the Freedom Charter.<sup>94</sup>

His speech was described as that of a skilled statesman who demonstrated the credibility of the ANC as a government-in-waiting. It left a deep impression on the participants.<sup>95</sup> Mlambo, stressed that the PAC would only guarantee individual rights and not group rights in the new South Africa.<sup>96</sup> In a special meeting with the SACC, the PAC condemned the 'necklacing' – the execution carried out by forcing a rubber tyre filled with petrol around a victim's chest and arms and setting it alight.<sup>97</sup> It appealed to the churches to do the same. In its meeting with the SACC, 'the ANC suggested that the role of the churches should include work

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90. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of PCR Executive Committee, 1987; Borer, *Challenging the State*, p. 67; Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, p.135.

91. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, p. 135.

92. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of PCR Executive Committee, 1987; Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, pp.135–136.

93. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of the PCR Executive Committee, 1987.

94. Cited in Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, p.136.

95. [www.aluka.org](http://www.aluka.org), Statement of the president of the ANC, O.R. Tambo at the WCC Liberation Movement dialogue, 2–8 May 1987.

96. [www.aluka.org](http://www.aluka.org), 'Pan African Congress of Azania', May 1987.

97. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/necklacing>

to make a cross section of people aware of a future alternative to the present regime and societal order'.<sup>98</sup>

One of the high points of the consultation was an emotional one, when for the first time, Tambo and Naudé met and the two anti-apartheid leaders (an African and an Afrikaner) warmly embraced. Tambo paid him a moving tribute, whereupon there was a standing ovation. The participants ultimately adopted the Lusaka Declaration which sought to provide theological justification for the armed struggle.<sup>99</sup> It was also designed to mobilize international support for the SACC's work. Paul Boateng and Charles Villa-Vicencio were amongst those who drafted the declaration<sup>100</sup> Notably, it was at this consultation that the participants recommended to the WCC to send a delegation of the Eminent Church Persons Group on a mission to dialogue with major Western powers.<sup>101</sup>

Borer noted the views of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC). Its Theological Advisory Commission commented on the Lusaka Declaration, saying that it was:

... most dissatisfied with the low level of theology displayed in the manifesto. It was tragic that a good cause was undermined by sloppy arguments and poor theology. It was more a party political statement full of clichés than a thought-out theological document. It gave the impression of wanting to curry favour with SWAPO and the ANC rather than being a church statement.<sup>102</sup>

This opinion was similar to that which the SACC general secretary made earlier about the lack of craft displayed in the compilation of the WCC Notting Hill Statement. At a later meeting, however, the SACBC changed its position. It stated that its negative comments about the manner of presentation should not be taken as indicating its disagreement of the Declaration's main concerns.<sup>103</sup>

Naudé felt that the consultation was significant because it illustrated how committed the ecumenical Christian community was to the struggle for justice and peace in southern Africa. To Darryl Balia, it offered the world community an opportunity to witness the serious nature of South Africa's destabilization of the frontline states. He highlighted the importance of South African church leaders being given the opportunity to meet openly with the leadership of both the ANC and the PAC on an official level and mutually changing one another's viewpoints.<sup>104</sup> Paul Boateng also acknowledged the role the PCR played in facilitating the symbolic first meeting between Tambo and Naudé.<sup>105</sup> Tambo and

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98. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, p.136.

99. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of the PCR Executive Committee, 1987.

100. Electronic interview with the Right Honourable Lord Paul Boateng, 27 September 2010.

101. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of the PCR Executive Committee, 1987.

102. Borer, *Challenging the State*, p. 68.

103. *Ibid.*

104. Balia, *Christian Resistance to Apartheid*, pp. 136–137.

105. Electronic interview with Lord Paul Boateng, 27 September 2010.

Naudé's warm embrace was certainly historic. Eighteen years had passed since May 1969 at Notting Hill. The WCC had provided the same unique opportunity for the two to confront their differences in order to defeat apartheid. In 1969 the opportunity had not been taken.<sup>106</sup>

The next occasion on which South Africans were able to strengthen their ties against apartheid under the aegis of the WCC was again in Harare, but this time in 1990, immediately after the release of Nelson Mandela. The newly appointed President F.W. de Klerk had responded to some of the demands the anti-apartheid forces had made. The ban on all political organizations had been lifted. The enforcement of the death penalty was under review. De Klerk was calling for a negotiated settlement. These dramatic political changes were seen in a positive light by the international community and gave rise to increased hopes of a speedy end to apartheid. Sietse Bosgra claimed that this optimism led some to suggest prematurely that sanctions against South Africa should be lifted.<sup>107</sup> Yet there was still raging violence in KwaZulu-Natal and the homeland areas and SADF troops were still patrolling the townships. Discriminatory legislation such as the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act were still intact.<sup>108</sup> There were thus mixed signals coming from apartheid South Africa; these created a measure of confusion.

The PCR convened an emergency consultation and brought about 50 representatives from churches in South Africa, the ecumenical movement and the solidarity movements together for two days in Harare on 16 and 17 February 1990. Frank Chikane was among the non-exiled South Africans from the SACC. John Lamolo from the ANC, Phumzile Ngcuka from the Young Women's Christian Federation, and Barney Pityana the PCR director, represented the politically exiled constituency. The participants addressed the shift in the balance of power globally and the implications of this for South Africa. Their analysis, similar to that which Sampie Terreblanche expressed, was that the political events in South Africa were an integral part of what was happening in other parts of the world, as was evident with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the USSR.<sup>109</sup>

Lamolo warned the audience against 'De Klerk parading as a main actor and a referee in the direction of change in South Africa'. He reminded them that it was the ANC that had called for a negotiated settlement of the South African conflict, as early as 1987. He suggested that the ecumenical and solidarity movements should follow the OAU ad hoc Committee on the South African declaration of August 1989 which encapsulated the guiding principles the ANC planned to

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106. The issue is dealt with in chapter 3.

107. S. Bosgra, 'The European Community and Apartheid: Minimal Effective Pressure', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, pp. 613; Clark and Worger, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, pp. 102–103.

108. South African Institute of Race Relations, *Race Relations Survey, 1989/1990* (SAIRR, Johannesburg, 1990), pp. 64, 39, 741.

109. Terreblanche, *History of Inequality in South Africa*, p. 312.

follow in the coming months of 1990.<sup>110</sup> The participants at Harare finally agreed on common strategies and priorities for effective action to dismantle the apartheid system completely. The meeting *inter alia* adopted the 14 December 1989 UN Declaration on South Africa<sup>111</sup> as the best way to bring about a legitimate, democratic, just and sovereign South Africa.<sup>112</sup> More importantly, the WCC Central Committee endorsed the decisions taken at the consultation, including the UN's statement on South Africa.<sup>113</sup>

The annual meetings of the WCC Central Committee from 1983 until 1990 continued to serve as an arena for the assortment of South Africans struggling against apartheid. During the first two years, the dominant view at these forums was for the WCC to fight racism elsewhere, and not to hone in on southern Africa. It was therefore the responsibility of the South African members of the Central Committee to ensure that the problem of apartheid received adequate attention. Their contribution is evident in the strong statements against the apartheid state that the WCC authorities officially adopted each year.<sup>114</sup> The statements the WCC issued and distributed to their members spread across the world, were always the outcome of concerted debate and serious consideration.<sup>115</sup>

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110. WCC Archive Collection: Index 37, WCC Consultation on South Africa, Harare, Zimbabwe, 16–17 February 1990, Address on behalf of the ANC by Rev. J. Lamola.

111. These standards are that: (a) SA shall become a united, non racial and democratic state (b) All its people shall enjoy common and equal citizenship and nationality, regardless of race, colour, sex or creed; (c) all its people shall have the right to participate in the government and administration of the country on the basis of universal, equal suffrage, under a non-racial voters' roll and by secret ballot in a united and non fragmented SA; (d) all shall have the right to form and join any political party of their choice, provided that this is not in furtherance of racism; (e) all shall enjoy universally recognized human rights, freedoms and civil liberties, protected under an entrenched bill of rights; (f) SA shall have a legal system that will guarantee equality of all before the law; (g) SA shall have an independent and non racial judiciary; (h) There shall be created an economic order that will promote and advance the wellbeing of all South Africans; (i) democratic SA shall respect the rights, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries and pursue a policy of peace, friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation with all peoples. Source: WCC Archive Collection, Confidential report of the emergency meeting on developments in South Africa, sponsored by the PCR/WCC, 16–17 February 1990; UN General Assembly Declaration on South Africa adopted on 14 December 1989: Declaration on SA and its destructive consequences in southern Africa (A/RES/S-16/1).

112. WCC Archive Collection: Confidential report of the emergency meeting on developments in South Africa, 16–17 February 1990.

113. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 41st meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 25–30 March 1990, pp. 47–49.

114. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 36th meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 9–18 July 1984, pp. 58–59; WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 37th meeting of CC of WCC, Buenos Aires, 28 July–8th August 1985, pp. 26–27; WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 38th meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 16–24 January 1987, pp. 23–27; WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 39th meeting of CC of WCC, Hanover, FRG, 10–20 August 1988, pp. 44–47; WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 40th meeting of CC of WCC, Moscow, 16–27 July 1989, pp. 49–52; WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 41st meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 25–30 March 1990, pp. 33, 45.

115. P. Bock, *In Search of a Responsible World Society: The Teachings of the World Council of Churches* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974). p. 24.

There were numerous disagreements about some of the campaigns the WCC launched to transform the racialized South African society. In 1985, at a meeting held in Argentina, Philip Russell and Virginia Gcabashe clashed over proposed economic sanctions. Russell argued against sanctions on the grounds that they would have a serious economic impact on poverty-stricken South Africans. He told the audience that there were differences of opinion on this issue in South Africa which were not along racial lines. He quoted black South African leaders and others in the neighbouring states who opposed sanctions. Gcabashe expounded on the injustices that black workers in South Africa already endured under apartheid. She contended that the blacks Russell spoke about did not represent the majority in South Africa. She quoted the ANC which since its inception in 1912 had been trying to persuade white South Africans to change the unjust status quo in the country – to no avail. After consideration, the Central Committee adopted a statement which strongly condemned the apartheid government and supported the call for sanctions.<sup>116</sup>

There were also members of the WCC Central Committee who contested the call for the resignation of the apartheid government at the 1987 meeting in Geneva. Archbishop John Habgood of the Church of England and the Reverend Raymond Cuthbert of the Christian Church Disciples of Christ in Canada, asked what alternative could be suggested if Botha's government were to be brought down. The South African members present at the meeting, S. Khumalo and J. Carter, and others, defended the call which the SACC made. In the end, the WCC reaffirmed its conviction that justice and peace in southern Africa depended on the eradication of the racist and evil system of apartheid.<sup>117</sup>

Apartheid remained a lasting challenge as was evident in the meetings held in Hanover in West Germany, Moscow and Geneva respectively in the years from 1988 to 1990. These forums allowed for discussion in 1988 about the end of the emergency regulations in South Africa; the release of Nelson Mandela;<sup>118</sup> the deepening crisis as the state of emergency was re-imposed for the fourth successive year in 1989;<sup>119</sup> the Sebokeng massacre; and the right-wing shootings and bombings in 1990.<sup>120</sup> The range of South Africans present addressed their differences and contributed meaningfully towards the WCC's campaign against racism in South Africa and elsewhere.

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116. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of the 37th meeting of CC of WCC, Buenos Aires, 28 July–8 August 1985, pp. 25–27.

117. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 38th meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 16–24 January 1987, pp. 23–25, 106, 112.

118. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 39th meeting of CC of WCC, Hanover, 10–20 August 1988, pp. 44–47, 145, 146, 147, 150, 152, 156.

119. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 40th meeting of CC of WCC, Moscow, 16–27 July 1989, pp. 158, 159, 160, 165, 170, 49–52.

120. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 41st meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 25–30 March 1990, pp. 33, 45–49, 138, 139, 140, 142, 149.

## Mobilization

The PCR did not do much mobilization of the ecumenical Christian community against apartheid in 1983 and 1984. Action as far as South Africa was concerned was limited in January and February 1984 to two relatively minor actions. The first entailed the programme secretary sponsoring a female local candidate to attend the International Leadership Formation Programme that the World Student Federation organized in Norway in January 1984.<sup>121</sup> The second involved the document officer, Eva Militz, attending a meeting organized by the Southern Africa Task Force of the Lutheran World Church in February. The South African Rev. Ndanganeni Phaswana was one of the speakers at this meeting. He appealed to the audience to influence their governments to put pressure on South Africa to end apartheid.<sup>122</sup>

It was only after the core group members (including Manas Buthelezi) had met, that there was some action from the PCR. Bishop Denis Hurley was arrested for exposing the atrocities of the Koevoet South African paramilitary police unit in Namibia. The PCR mobilized to support him. It called upon jurists and bishops globally as well as bodies such as the International Council of Jurists; Amnesty International; the National Lawyers' Committee in the US; and the African Bar Association, to observe his trial.<sup>123</sup> It also translated the brochure the SACC and the SACBC published on forced removals in South Africa for a wider readership.<sup>124</sup> It looked for South African contributions on the local political organizations such as Inkatha, UDF and the National Forum hoping to include such articles in the PCR Information publication.<sup>125</sup> Its director, Barkat, who was acting as the PCR general secretary at the time, sent messages of support to the UDF and one of condemnation to the prime minister complaining about the high level of repression in South Africa.<sup>126</sup>

The lull in its campaign against apartheid before June 1984 was significant. It indicated the reluctance to revert to a previous focus by the PCR director. It was also an opportunity for the moderates within the WCC to observe whether the introduction of constitutional reform in South Africa would perhaps prove the revolutionaries wrong. Instead, the reforms led to heightened political resistance

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121. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.05, Letter from Robert van Drimmelen of PCR to Bishop Tutu, 23 January 1984.

122. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.05, WCC-PCR staff memorandum from Eva Militz regarding a meeting with Reverend Phaswana, 7 February 1984.

123. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.05, Memo on Bishop Denis Hurley.

124. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.05, Letter from Robert van Drimmelen of PCR to Bishop Tutu, 24 July 1984.

125. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.05, Letter from Pauline Bolay (a PCR editor) to Allan Boesak, 24 July 1984.

126. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.05, Telex from Anwar Barkat (acting WCC general secretary) to Popo Molefe, (UDF general secretary, 17 August 1984); letter from Anwar Barkat to P.W. Botha, 22 August 1984.



that was met in turn by massive repression, which compelled the WCC to turn its attention to southern Africa.

The PCR research consultant, in collaboration with the Commission on Church in International Affairs (CCIA), compiled a report in the form of an analysis on developments in southern Africa. The report included the Eloff Commission; the approval of the new constitution and the tri-cameral parliament by an overwhelming vote of confidence from the white electorate; the formation of the UDF and COSATU; forced removals; and the conclusion of a non-aggression pact between Botha and Samora Machel. It was critical of the South African state and made it clear that the situation was deteriorating in the region. The report was distributed to the member churches. For the purposes of its future policy in southern Africa, the PCR convened a small group of experts to consider the implications of what was unfolding there.<sup>127</sup> It was at this time that the PCR director fell ill. The programme secretary was also relocated to another commission. James Mutambirwa arrived on a short term contract. This meant that it was he and the seconded Eva Miltz who managed the PCR office. Work against apartheid became more concentrated and focused on South Africa from 1985 onwards, with the support and guidance from the PCR Executive Group and the PCR Commissioners.

The world Christian community celebrated 25 September 1985 as 'Africa Day'. The churches pledged their solidarity with the struggle against apartheid in South Africa and Namibia. The PCR prepared an educational package with information on current events in southern Africa for the member churches. It made a special request to the associate churches in Africa to invite leaders of the liberation movements and to dedicate the day by focusing on the anti-apartheid struggle. The PCR Commission members based in various parts of the world attended the various celebrations. In the US, the members of the Commission mobilized not only the church but secular groups. They organized rallies and demonstrations outside the regional offices of corporations that were doing business with South Africa and in front of the South African embassies and consulate offices. They urged Christian constituencies to show solidarity with black South Africans and to participate in the anti-apartheid struggle. Several of them were arrested for civil disobedience. The events leading up to the celebration helped to bring visibility to the work of the PCR against apartheid.<sup>128</sup>

In South Africa the government resorted to widespread banishments and mass detentions, including children, in its efforts to suppress the resistance. The PCR consequently planned for a World Day of Prayer which was held on 16 June 1986, the tenth anniversary of Soweto Day. Its purpose was not only to make the

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127. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 36th meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 9–18 July 1984, pp. 58–59.

128. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.05, Minutes of PCR Commission, January 1985; PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of 17th meeting of PCR Executive Group, 10–12 June 1985.

church relevant in the struggles of ordinary people, but to commemorate the school children who were brutally suppressed ten years earlier for resisting being taught in Afrikaans. The day also encouraged communication between the WCC members, the Roman Catholic Church, non-member churches and anti-apartheid movements. As a prelude to 16 June there was a symposium on 'Southern Africa and World Peace' that the PCR and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) held at the Geneva WCC Ecumenical Centre. Winnie Mandela and Beyers Naudé were considered as possible invitees for the symposium.<sup>129</sup> On 16 June 1986, the member and non-member churches and secular groups all received information packages from the PCR and the WCC Communications Department. The packages guided the proceedings for the day. The representatives of liberation movements and other organizations working for liberation were invited as guests at church services held in many parts of the world. Messages from South African church leaders such as Desmond Tutu and Beyers Naudé were also included in the packages. They called for solidarity in the struggle against apartheid from all ecumenical partners.<sup>130</sup> These efforts were reminiscent of what happened in the 1950s when church ministers prayed for the volunteers who defied the apartheid laws.<sup>131</sup>

There were other initiatives of solidarity with the peoples of South Africa and Namibia. In the Netherlands, the Komitee Zuidelijk Afrika (KZA); the Association of West European Parliamentarians for Action Against Apartheid (AWEPA) and Novib, the Dutch affiliate of the international Oxfam organization, together organized a conference on 'Apartheid and Southern Africa: the Western European Response'. Its aim was to support the victims of apartheid.<sup>132</sup>

The apartheid government's party line was that it was fighting a war against communism. Some of the local Christians questioned the relationship between the liberation struggle and communism. Albert Nolan argued, on the one hand, that if communism was defined as a dictatorial and authoritarian regime which oppressed its people, then P.W. Botha could be called a communist. On the other hand, if communism was defined as an undemocratic totalitarian and dictatorial system that deprived people of their rights, then the struggle was without a doubt, anti-communist.<sup>133</sup>

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129. PCR Collection: Box 4223.3.08, Minutes of PCR Commission meeting, Marseille, 11–16 August 1986; Letter from James Mutambirwa to Beyers Naudé, 17 April 1986.

130. PCR Collection: Box 4223.3.08, Confidential minutes of 18th PCR Executive Group, Geneva 3–5 March 1986.

131. P. Walshe, *Prophetic Christianity and the Liberation Movement in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1995), p. 18; D. Thomas, *Christ Divided: Liberalism, Ecumenism and Race in South Africa* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2002), p. 139; and L. Kuper, *Passive Resistance in South Africa* (London: Camelot Press, 1956), pp. 131–132.

132. S. Bosgra, 'From Jan van Riebeeck to Solidarity with the Struggle: The Netherlands, South Africa and Apartheid', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 562.

133. A. Nolan, *God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988) p. 74.

The PCR produced a series of pamphlets to counter the apartheid government's propaganda. The series covered various themes. These included:

- How real was the Communist threat in South Africa? It covered the history of the Soviet Union in Africa and its ability to establish a base in the continent.
- The kind of liberation movement the ANC was with a special focus on its religious origins. It cited the example of Chief Albert Luthuli the Christian president who received the Nobel Prize, and the continuing relationship of his organization with religious communities.
- The role of the armed struggle and how the ANC came to the decision to use it as a tactic for liberation.
- The myth of endangered access to southern African minerals by Western countries.
- Human rights and the liberation movements. It discussed the refugee camps, schools and other humanitarian projects prevalent in exile communities.
- The communist nature of the South African state. It explored the state control of the economy; the complete absence of civil and human rights; the lack of freedom of the press; the aggressive, militaristic behaviour of the state. This highlighted the fact that it was South Africans and not the Soviets or the Cubans, who were involved in perpetuating violence. It referred to the absence of documented evidence on the penetration of southern Africa by Cubans or the Eastern bloc forces. It interrogated the racism inherent in the communist threat argument. It underscored the assumption that blacks could not determine their own future and that they needed the Soviets or the Cubans to translate the oppression they as blacks endured.<sup>134</sup>

The series comprised small booklets of not more than ten pages each, providing an analysis of the themes mentioned above. They were produced with insights from Barney Pityana who was a PCR Commission member at the time.<sup>135</sup>

Pityana attended the 1986 Racism and Theology/Theology against Racism conference in the US on behalf of the PCR Commission. The participants were mostly Americans, with a few representatives from the then 'Third World' countries, and the WCC representatives. The main theme was why theology had not yet made an impact on civil rights and native indigenous spirituality. The explanation was that the theology of the 1980s was still based on Western culture and colonial power. The delegates identified the liberation movements' non-participation in theological debates as a problem that needed to be addressed. The outcome was an advocacy for contextual theology.<sup>136</sup> The PCR subsequently developed a resource modelled on a pass book which contained information on the liberation movements in southern Africa. Its aim was to educate grass roots constituencies in the US and to illustrate the kind of support

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134. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.06, Minutes of PCR Commission, Los Angeles, 17–24 January 1988.

135. Interview with Barney Pityana, Pretoria, 3 December 2009.

136. PCR Collection: Box 4223.3.08, Minutes of PCR Commission, Marseilles, 11–16 August 1986.

the PCR provided. This was distributed to member churches through the general secretary's offices.<sup>137</sup>

The PCR arranged a string of other consultations which engaged Christians on theology and racism. These explored a range of subjects such as racism in theological education, theology against racism, sexism in the church, feminist theology, theology against sexism, and tribalism. The research papers solicited came from South Africa, Mozambique and other frontline states as well as from West Africa. Participants had the opportunity to interrogate the role of churches in independent Africa as well as the changing face of racism in southern Africa.<sup>138</sup> The Student Movement councils and youth organizations also met at the University of Harare in 1988 to ponder on theology and racism. In the same year, several black theologians from European countries held their own meeting to discuss racism from a theological perspective. The participants proposed anti-racism programmes within churches in Europe. By 1990 the PCR was monitoring the WCC publications in the area of theology to ascertain whether they reflected the significance of contextual theology.<sup>139</sup> The impetus was to mobilize Christians worldwide to avert racism and to help transform racialized societies.

Shell had the longest historical presence in South Africa, dating back to 1907, and was the subsidiary of the Royal Dutch Shell in Holland. It developed into the largest single investor in South Africa. It had extensive operations in the petroleum, chemical and mining industries in South Africa and Namibia. Apart from the billions injected into the economy and the new technologies in the oil industry, Shell also helped South Africa with the necessary oil supply the country needed. No less than 70 per cent of the country's oil was imported and was used inter alia for fuelling the tanks, trucks, hippos and police vehicles as well as manufacturing weapons the SADF and SAP used against the oppressed majority.<sup>140</sup> Bosgra has claimed that Shell simply defied the UN embargoes on arms and oil trade with South Africa.<sup>141</sup>

Responding to the appeal the WCC made for disinvestment from South Africa, the Dutch anti-apartheid groups such as Kairos and the Komitee Zuidelijk Afrika (KZA); OSACI, a church-related economic research unit; Pax Christi, the Catholic peace organization; and the Nederlandse Organisatie voor Internationale Bijstand (NOVIB), the largest Dutch development organization, campaigned for a boycott against Shell. Kairos, the KZA and the UN Special Committee against Apartheid established the Shipping Research Bureau (SRB) which uncovered cases of secret oil deliveries to the country. Its information was used worldwide to stop supplies of oil reaching South Africa. It played an important role in the

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137. PCR Collection: Box 4223.3.08, Document providing information on the liberation groups.

138. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Letter from Charles Villa Vicencio (head of Religious Studies, UCT) to John Pobee, (PCR information editor) 1 May 1986.

139. PCR information booklet (Geneva: WCC, 1990), p. 51.

140. PCR Collection: Box 4332.2.08, Shell Campaign documents.

141. Bosgra 'The Netherlands, South Africa and Apartheid', pp. 578–579.

internationalization of the oil embargo and the campaign against Shell. Significantly, the WCC was among those who financially supported SRB.<sup>142</sup>

In 1985, representatives of PCR, Kairos, Holland Committee on Southern Africa, AWEPA, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the ANC, PAC and SWAPO warned the Royal Dutch Shell in the Netherlands and in the UK to stop supporting the apartheid government.<sup>143</sup> In the same year, unidentified anti-apartheid groups in the Netherlands adopted violent tactics against Shell. The Pyromaniacs against Apartheid' group 'bombed the country house of the Dutch oil trader, Deuss'. Another clandestine group calling themselves RaRa set alight a Makro retail store owned by a company involved in oil and coal trading in South Africa.<sup>144</sup> In the US, the Interfaith Centre on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) added Shell to the list of twelve key corporate 'partners in apartheid' targeted for disinvestment actions. William Minter claims that the US anti-apartheid groups launched what was perhaps the most sustained Shell boycott campaign.<sup>145</sup>

Paul Boateng, the PCR vice-moderator, was quoted in a press statement saying that 'shareholders of Shell have more than oil on their hands. They are steeped in responsibility for the bloody and oppressive system which they continue to underwrite'.<sup>146</sup> This was when Jean Sindab joined the PCR staff in 1986. She was the former executive director of the Washington Office on Africa which was known for its prophetic and effective voice, speaking out for stronger action from the churches.<sup>147</sup> Her involvement with the PCR advanced its campaign against Shell to a decisive height. The PCR followed Shell's relationship with southern Africa closely and informed the WCC constituency and partners on the news it gathered. Bosgra, who was highly regarded in anti-apartheid circles in the Netherlands, commended the WCC's decision to support the Shell campaign.<sup>148</sup>

In 1987, the US Congress passed the anti-apartheid Petroleum Act which called for companies which refined, transported and distributed crude oil, to divest from South Africa within a year. The act also stipulated that foreign companies had eighteen months to withdraw or forfeit bidding for the new US federal coal, oil and gas leases. Shell USA which relied heavily on the federal leases, was reported to have considered withdrawing from South Africa. The information the PCR obtained from the SRB indicated that Shell continued to be the major

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142. *Ibid.*

143. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of 17th meeting of the PCR Executive Group, 10–12 June 1985.

144. Bosgra, 'The Netherlands, South Africa and Apartheid', p. 581.

145. Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in US', pp. 826, 803–804; Thörn, *Anti-apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, p. 61.

146. www.aluka.org, Press statement, 15 May 1986, p. 2.

147. Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in US', p. 793.

148. Bosgra, 'The Netherlands, South Africa and Apartheid', p. 580.

supplier of crude oil to the apartheid government and was repeatedly violating the international oil embargo.<sup>149</sup>

The boycott prompted Shell to approach the WCC and to argue its case for not disengaging from South Africa. In its view, it played a constructive role since it took its corporate responsibilities seriously. It provided permanent employment which helped South Africans to achieve a sustainable livelihood. It supplied teaching aids and material to township schools and built houses for black families. It therefore found it ethically wrong that the WCC was coercing Shell to withdraw from South Africa. Its magnates threatened to sue the PCR for singling Shell out and for instigating the violence that was being thrown at the company. They denied participating in the importation, processing and distribution of oil in defiance of the international embargo.<sup>150</sup> The two institutions conducted a series of discussions on the issue.<sup>151</sup>

It transpired that Shell had commissioned the Pagan International consultancy to devise a strategy to deflect religious groups from supporting the boycott. The ICCR received a leaked secret strategy document codenamed Neptune, that Pagan International had prepared for the guidance of public relations advisors to Shell. This lengthy document outlined the threat posed by the campaign and indicated how the Neptune strategy could counter it. The document cited, among other things, the role the churches were currently playing in the boycott. The press and the anti-apartheid groups were sent copies of the report by the ICCR director.<sup>152</sup>

The PCR invited M. le Q. Herbert, who headed up Shell International Petroleum in London, to come to Geneva for discussions on the issue. Pityana was the PCR director by then (1988) and he was directly involved in the negotiations. The PCR made it clear to Shell that the target was the evil of apartheid and not Shell as good employers. It rejected the legitimacy of the apartheid state and the validity of Shell's argument that they had invested a great deal of money in South Africa and that this benefited all its citizens. The PCR explained that the call to dismantle apartheid had originated from South Africans and was not simply articulated by outsiders. In its view, the millions of black South Africans were claiming their right to determine their own political future and to participate in decision making in their own country. It was for these reasons that the PCR was committed to drive Shell out of South Africa. The aim was to transform the racialized nation into a true democracy. When Shell discovered that the PCR was well aware of its Neptune strategy, further talks between the two came to an unceremonious halt. More pertinently, the PCR made sure that its publication *Shell Shock* was widely distributed to inform and educate the church

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149. J. Sindab, *Shell Shock: The Churches and the Oil Embargo* (Geneva: WCC/PCR, 1989).

150. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Correspondence between PCR and Shell.

151. *Ibid.*

152. Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in US', pp. 804–805.

constituency and the world at large.<sup>153</sup> The WCC Central Committee also encouraged the churches to support the international campaign to boycott the Shell Oil Corporation.<sup>154</sup>

The complicated situation in 1990, when De Klerk's release of Mandela coincided with the eruption of violence in Kwa-Zulu Natal, raised the question internationally of whether to lift or maintain economic sanctions in South Africa. The WCC and the PCR took the stand that sanctions should be maintained against De Klerk's government. This was a resolution they took in conjunction with representatives of the churches in South Africa, the ecumenical movement, the South African liberation movements and the solidarity groups.<sup>155</sup> Frank Chikane, the general secretary of the SACC, congratulated De Klerk on his reforms which met some of the initial conditions conducive to negotiations. However, he emphasized that the SACC, along with the ANC, PAC, UDF, COSATU and the international community in general, called for the continuation of economic sanctions as a means to force the total dismantling of apartheid.<sup>156</sup>

During his first visit to Europe after his release in March 1990, Nelson Mandela also stressed the need for the international community to continue the economic sanctions campaign against his government.<sup>157</sup> He stopped over at the WCC offices and addressed a meeting the PCR convened, chaired by its vice-moderator, Paul Boateng. Mandela expressed his appreciation of the role the PCR had played in the struggle for freedom in South Africa.<sup>158</sup> In Sweden, Mandela was received as a head of state. His message to the Swedish parliament was that the Swedish people should maintain the economic sanctions against the Pretoria government.<sup>159</sup> Even in the US congress, Mandela relayed the same message. Sanctions had to be prolonged until the South African people were satisfied that their country was set on an unalterable course leading to its transformation into a united, non-racial democracy.<sup>160</sup> The UN also reiterated that international sanctions should be maintained against the South African government.<sup>161</sup>

Several anti-apartheid movements abroad also followed the ANC's lead in campaigning for economic sanctions to be maintained until a transitional

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153. Sindab, *Shell Shock*.

154. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of the 39th meeting of the CC of the WCC, Hanover, FRG, 10–20 August 1988, pp. 44–47.

155. PCR Collection: Box 4223, 1990, Confidential report of emergency meeting in Harare on developments in South Africa, 16–17 February 1990.

156. Borer, *Challenging the State*, p. 168.

157. Electronic interview with Paul Boateng, 26 August 2010. See also T. Sellström, 'Sweden and the Nordic Countries: Official Solidarity and Assistance from the West', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 520.

158. Electronic interview with Paul Boateng, 26 August 2010.

159. Sellström, 'Sweden and the Nordic Countries', p. 520.

160. Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in US', p. 817.

161. P. Pierson-Mathy, 'The Anti-Apartheid Struggle in Belgium as Perceived by the Comité Contre le Colonialisme et l'Apartheid', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 653.

executive council was in place and a date for election was set. In Belgium, the Committee against Colonialism and Apartheid, which was a beneficiary of the PCR Special Fund, campaigned to keep the sanctions in place as long as the ANC and the UN General Assembly deemed this necessary.<sup>162</sup> In several states in the US, the people's sanctions against South Africa remained in effect.<sup>163</sup> The people's sanctions in Britain also continued with a focus on gold and tourism.<sup>164</sup>

At the same time, the changes De Klerk introduced in the country garnered him international acclaim.<sup>165</sup> His visit to Western countries in October 1990 was intended to convince them of the irreversible progress his government was making to transform South Africa. This brought him additional political rewards from those who had previously opposed the imposition of sanctions and who wanted South Africa to be released from this burden.<sup>166</sup> Christabel Gurney observed that the British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, moved swiftly to lift sanctions. She announced the relaxation of the ban on cultural, academic and scientific links.<sup>167</sup> By May 1990, Britain had also lifted the ban on new investments to South Africa. In the European Community, Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal followed the British lead and eased sanctions against South Africa. The Austrian government suspended the economic sanctions that had been imposed in the mid 1980s and began to grant bank loans to the De Klerk government again. Its Federal Chamber of Commerce argued for stronger trade links between the two countries.<sup>168</sup>

The PCR condemned these governments, particularly Britain, which it argued had breached the internationally accepted agreements on sanctions against the South African government. It called on the international community to intensify sanctions and other pressures on the South African government in order to hasten the transformation of the country into a just society.<sup>169</sup>

### **Political action**

There were two fundamental characteristics of the PCR's campaign against banks lending to the apartheid state. The first was the part the PCR staff played not only in disseminating information about the banks that were lending to the apartheid establishment, but also in mobilising the Christian community and

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162. *Ibid.*

163. Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in US', pp. 818–819.

164. C. Gurney, 'In the Heart of the Beast: The British Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1959–1994', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 345.

165. O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, pp. 409–410.

166. L. and K. Asmal, 'The Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 412.

167. Gurney, 'In the Heart of the Beast', p. 346.

168. W. Sauer, 'Austria and South Africa during Apartheid', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 638.

169. PCR Collection: Box 4223, 1990, Confidential report of emergency meeting in Harare on developments in South Africa, 16–17 February 1990.



beyond to withdraw their own funds from such financial institutions. The second and arguably the more significant, was the part the WCC Geneva-based office played when its finance department was exemplary in its conduct and acted against its own bankers that were found to have South African connections. Notably, in the years 1983 and 1984, this PCR campaign against banks was abandoned. No record could be found in the course of this study on any research that the PCR may have conducted or commissioned about banks linked to South Africa, while Anwar Barkat was the director.

It was only in 1985, when the PCR arranged a workshop on sanctions, that this campaign against banks was revived. The aim of the workshop was to exchange experiences on actions and strategies to promote the economic isolation of Pretoria and to study possibilities for future co-operation. The participants included David Haslam of End Loans to South Africa (ELTSA), Erik van den Bergh of Kairos, Sietse Bosgra of the Holland Committee on Southern Africa and representatives of the ANC, PAC and SWAPO. Paul Baoteng, the PCR vice-moderator chaired the workshop. Dieter Probst from the Evangelical Church in Germany welcomed the participants with a song he had composed after listening to a sermon by Allan Boesak.<sup>170</sup>

The liberation movement representatives were considered the authentic voices of the black majority in both South Africa and Namibia. They explained the position of their respective movements as far as economic sanctions against the two countries were concerned. Thus far the anti-apartheid action had focused on the withdrawal of foreign investments; stopping bank loans; an oil embargo; an end to military and nuclear collaboration; and a cessation of trade with South Africa including the selling and buying of Kruger Rands. The ANC presentations set the tone for the workshop.<sup>171</sup>

Eva Militz of the PCR office reported on the status of international bank loans extended to South Africa between mid-1982 and the end of 1984. Her report was an update of earlier studies undertaken for the WCC by Beate Klein, the former PCR research consultant.<sup>172</sup> Of particular relevance is that Militz's account had nothing specific about the WCC's own role in the broader global bank loan campaign. It was the UN Special Committee against Apartheid that had commissioned her study.<sup>173</sup> This suggests that this project was lying dormant in the offices of the PCR and the WCC's Geneva-based finance section.

The participants consequently recommended that the WCC review its own relationship with the banks it was using. Other suggestions included the immediate publication of Militz's report,<sup>174</sup> and a regular newsletter with

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170. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of 17th meeting of the PCR Executive Group, 10–12 June 1985.

171. *Ibid.*

172. E. Militz, *Bank Loans to South Africa: Mid 1982 to end 1984* (Geneva: WCC, 1985).

173. *Ibid.*

174. *Ibid.*

information on new bank loans to South Africa. The PCR commissioned ELTSA to publish the first newsletter. Further, similar meetings to improve cooperation and exchange of information among themselves were to be held more regularly.<sup>175</sup>

The workshop came at a time when the international banks declared a moratorium on loans to South Africa and negotiated a repayment package with the apartheid government. Analysts observed that P.W. Botha's Rubicon speech and subsequent declaration of the state of emergency had destroyed the confidence of the corporate world. American and Canadian banks refused to roll over their short-term loans. The Canadian Scotiabank announced in 1985 that it was no longer purchasing Kruger Rands from the South African Chamber of Mines.<sup>176</sup> Botha's speech also disappointed Thomas Kean who was the Republican governor of New Jersey. He consequently felt that he had a 'moral imperative' to sign a massive pension fund divestment and a selective purchasing bill which had reached his desk. The *New York Times* quoted him as follows:

There are instances in human history when the gravity of an evil is so clear, and the cost of its continuance so great, that governments – at every level – must use every tool at their disposal to combat it. Apartheid is such an evil.<sup>177</sup>

The Episcopal Church activists brought a divestment resolution which read:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, that the 68th General Convention in obedience to the Religion of the Prayer Book and with the desire to demonstrate moral leadership in our society mandate, that the Executive Council and the Church Pension Fund divest all holdings in companies doing business in South Africa and Namibia. And be it further resolved that the General Convention urge all dioceses, parishes, and affiliated institutions of the Episcopal Church to examine their portfolios with a view to identifying and divesting any holdings of companies doing business in South Africa and Namibia.<sup>178</sup>

The SACC leaders called on foreign banks to freeze South African bank balances and to get court orders seizing Pretoria's assets abroad.<sup>179</sup> The PCR Executive Committee heeded the call. It worked on tasks for the new PCR staff relating to the renewal of bank loans to South Africa. More germane, it raised with the WCC Central Committee, the subject of the relationship of the WCC with its

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175. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of 17th meeting of the PCR Executive Group, 10–12 June 1985.

176. Clark and Worger, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 94; Reddy, 'The United Nations and the Struggle', p. 79; Fairweather, 'Canadian Solidarity with South Africa's Liberation Struggle', pp. 850, 864; O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p. 330.

177. Massie, 'Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation', p. 296. See also O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p. 329; Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality*, p. 310.

178. Massie, 'Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation', pp. 137–138.

179. Borer, *Challenging the State*, pp.154--155.

banks. The matter was referred to the Finance sub-Committee for its consideration.<sup>180</sup>

Increasing public pressure led the US to legislate the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act in 1986.<sup>181</sup> Yet many US companies operated in South Africa while more than a hundred universities and colleges adopted some form of divestment policy. Numerous corporations announced that they were selling their subsidiaries to South African managers and were pulling out.<sup>182</sup> Barclays Bank announced that it would lend no new funds until the South African government demonstrated its ability to pay its current debts and eliminated apartheid.<sup>183</sup>

At the time, the PCR had ascertained that since the apartheid government had introduced its constitutional reforms, banks camouflaged their direct and visible lending by making loans to the private sector, the parastatal corporations and/or through interbank loans in South Africa. Interbank loans were direct financial transactions between an overseas international bank and a South African bank. The maintenance of a 'correspondent bank' relationship with a South African bank enabled a foreign bank to extend lines of credit and to make interbank loans. The volume of such loans had increased in the late 1980s when the pressure on the South African government was rising. In addition, the Bantustan governments were also getting loans from foreign banks.<sup>184</sup> There were by now numerous of these 'independent' homelands, such as Transkei, Ciskei, Venda, Bophuthatswana, Gazankulu and Lebowa. This meant that the apartheid government and its lenders found loopholes in the financial withdrawal crusade and foreign banks were sustaining the apartheid system.

The WCC consulted with its own bankers to find out whether they were not involved in interbank loans to South Africa, the Bantustans or to Namibia. Its Finance sub-Committee reported back that there were no changes required in the WCC's current relations with its banks.<sup>185</sup>

The report back was significant in two respects. It meant that the banks the WCC was banking with were 'clean' and were not supporting the apartheid system. Yet the feedback came from the finance department which was under Oscar McCloud as director. He was among the internal critics of the PCR and its

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180. WCCRS, Confidential minutes, meeting of Executive Committee of WCC, 15–19 September 1986, Reykjavik, Iceland. p. 4.

181. K.S. Hasselblad, 'The United States Foreign Policy with South Africa: Leon Sullivan and the Sullivan Principles, 1948–1980' (MA thesis, Pacific Lutheran University, 1994), p. 177; Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in US', p. 805; Reddy, 'The United Nations and the Struggle', p. 79.

182. Massie, 'Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation', p. 25.

183. Clark and Worger, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 95.

184. WCCRS, Confidential minutes of Executive Committee of WCC, Geneva, 13–15 January 1987, p. 15.

185. WCCRS. Minutes and reports of 39th meeting of CC of WCC, Hanover, FRG, 10–20 August 1988.

Special Fund and was a member of both the Central Committee and Executive Committee. He was present earlier when the WCC's Finance Department had failed to implement the WCC's bank policy against UBS.

Nevertheless, the WCC Central Committee was instrumental in preventing the rollover and renewal of bank loans to the South African government. It requested its member churches as a matter of urgency to study and implement the additional criteria on banking relations its Executive Committee had adopted. It encouraged them to continue to campaign for disinvestment and withdrawal. In April 1987, it also urged them to support the call by the SACC to make any rescheduling of South African debt dependent on the resignation of the Botha government.<sup>186</sup>

The South African security forces covertly bombed the headquarters of COSATU and the SACC.<sup>187</sup> The American Committee on Africa mobilized churches and local groups to collect keys in a symbolic gesture to 'unlock' apartheid jails.<sup>188</sup> Rev. Leon Sullivan acknowledged that his reforms had failed. He called for sweeping economic and political sanctions against South Africa.<sup>189</sup> He was quoted as saying:

In spite of our efforts, the main pillars of apartheid remain and blacks are still denied basic civil rights. Repression against blacks grows. People are brutalized. The government's intransigence to fundamental change continues. The time has come for American corporations and the US to take a definitive stand against the evils of apartheid.<sup>190</sup>

The US Advisory Committee admitted to the failure of the administration's policy of constructive engagement to achieve its objectives,<sup>191</sup> and the American Citibank announced its withdrawal from South Africa in 1987.<sup>192</sup> Even Conservative foreign governments began to consider real sanctions against South Africa. Over 250 foreign companies withdrew.<sup>193</sup> According to World Bank figures, the country's growth rate that year was among the worst in the world.<sup>194</sup>

Several anti-apartheid get-togethers took place in various parts of the world. In Canada in 1987, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation arranged a

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186. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 38th meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 16–24 January 1987, p. 27.

187. Clark and Worger, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 96.

188. Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in US', p. 806.

189. *Ibid.*, p. 806; Massie, 'Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation', p. 23.

190. Hasselblad, 'United States Foreign Policy', pp. 164–165.

191. Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in US', p. 806.

192. Massie, 'Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation', p. 26.

193. O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p. 330. See also Thörn, *Anti-apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, p. 65.

194. K. Warr, 'The Normative Promise of a Global Civil Society: The Role of the World Council of Churches in the Transition to and Maintenance of Democracy in South Africa' (PhD thesis, American University, 1998), p. 141.

three-day conference entitled 'Taking Sides in Southern Africa'. The Commonwealth Heads of Government held a similar meeting in Vancouver that same year.<sup>195</sup> Another of these conferences was held in Geneva, to discuss broader economic sanctions.

The PCR reported on how the Western European banks were financing the apartheid government. These banks provided credit in interbank and foreign trade and they engaged in gold swaps. In that way, they contravened the sanction legislation the US Congress had adopted.<sup>196</sup> The PCR revealed several cases where the busting of sanctions occurred. One of these involved a contract between Lesotho and South Africa for the development of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. The perception was that the apartheid government would initiate a coup in Lesotho so that the new government could sign the accord for this project. The PCR report disclosed how the contract enabled South Africa to obtain funds from institutions such as the World Bank, the International Development Agency (IDA), UN Development Programme (UNDP), the European Development Fund (UDF), European Investment Bank (EIB) and others. The syndicate had already granted partial credits which were issued to the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority. South Africa, however, guaranteed the credits and was to be involved in the reimbursement of capital and interests. The PCR alerted the anti-apartheid groups about these developments. Another disclosure implicated the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) which was established in 1983 as a financial institution with a focus on infrastructure investment.<sup>197</sup> It was allowed to approach the Euro market for funds. The PCR warned banks engaged in foreign trade credits against giving funds to the DBSA which directly supported the Bantustan system. Furthermore, the ban on loans to South Africa since the moratorium did not include the occupation of Namibia by the apartheid government. The PCR alerted the solidarity forces to the possibility of sanction busting and so called 'pre-independence Aid' to Namibia.<sup>198</sup>

The sale of gold was South Africa's economic backbone and it was linked with Swiss banks lending to the apartheid government. South Africa was able to engineer this by offering gold in exchange and such arrangements were dealt with in great secrecy. It was therefore virtually impossible to establish with any certainty exactly which banks were involved or the amount of gold that had been traded. The PCR, in partnership with other solidarity groups, tried to expose these holdings and international links in the gold trade. Swiss banks, particularly foreign UBS branches who were suspected of being involved were picketed.

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195. Fairweather, 'Canadian Solidarity with South Africa's Liberation Struggle', p. 869.

196. PCR Collection: Box 4223.06, Anti-apartheid meeting, Geneva, Appendix no. 4, 14–15 March 1987.

197. C. de Coning, 'Organizational Transformation: The Case of the Development Bank of Southern Africa', in B. de Villiers, ed., *State of the Nation 1997/8* (Pretoria: HSRC, 1998) pp.190–191.

198. PCR Collection: Box 4223.06, Anti-apartheid meeting, Geneva, Appendix no. 4, 14–15 March 1987.

ELSTA sent protest letters to the Swiss bankers and the PCR kept a close watch on the international gold market, the flow of gold and the corporations suspected of involvement.<sup>199</sup>

Furthermore, the PCR monitored the rescheduling talks between South Africa and her major creditor banks. It observed the accord reached under which the moratorium was to continue for another year. The apartheid government agreed to reimburse 5 per cent of the frozen debt. A technical committee comprising representatives from twelve banks (three each from the US, Britain and Switzerland) negotiated the details of the agreement. The discussions between the relevant banks and South Africa took place behind closed doors until March 1987. Anti-apartheid groups were nevertheless able to gather intelligence on the new agreement reached between South Africa and 34 creditor banks. The agreement was to run for three years until 1990, with South Africa repaying the debt in instalments. It also offered foreign creditors the opportunity of converting short-term claims frozen inside the net into repayable longer term debt which would only be repayable over ten years. Barend du Plessis, the apartheid government's finance minister, was reported saying that the creditor banks were not making any political demands of South Africa in exchange for these favourable terms. Indeed, creditor banks were due to start individual discussions with South Africa again. The PCR warned the foreign banks that their three-year agreement was not going to halt their efforts to end financial assistance to debt-ridden Pretoria. It made it clear that the survival of the apartheid government was now out of their hands. In the PCR's view, resistance inside South Africa and Namibia and growing pressure from the international community and anti-apartheid forces, would soon become the defining factor in the future of South Africa.<sup>200</sup>

The warning was significant. It indicated that the risks involved in engaging with powerful banking moguls did not deter the determination to dismantle apartheid. Those deeply involved in the PCR were brave enough to put their lives on the line for the liberation of southern Africa from white minority rule. The PCR vice-moderator, Paul Boateng, declared in the British parliament that people with a conscience would only be free when South Africa had gained its freedom.<sup>201</sup>

The WCC had established the Ecumenical Development Cooperative Society (EDCS) which was a church loan agency and not a commercial bank. The rapid political changes towards the end of the 1980s; the intensification of the Shell campaign; and the Eminent Church Persons Group mission (to be elaborated upon later) overtook this particular task. The PCR thus began to question whether the EDCS was perhaps providing finance for trade or exports to the

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199. *Ibid.*

200. *Ibid.*

201. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_Boateng,\\_Baron\\_Boateng](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Boateng,_Baron_Boateng)

apartheid government and/or the Bantustans.<sup>202</sup> Notably, my research did not uncover any record of a categorical response to this specific PCR probe.

The WCC Central Committee did, however, call upon the banking sector to deny South Africa facilities for rescheduling its debts and to stop extending new loans and credits in 1989.<sup>203</sup> It also urged its member churches to continue their campaign for comprehensive and mandatory sanctions, even after Nelson Mandela's release and the declaration of the Namibian independence in 1990.<sup>204</sup>

The PCR's probe of EDCS was particularly significant. It reflected the PCR's vigilance on this campaign. In addition, it suggests there may have been some division within the WCC. It is plausible that the PCR proponents of this strategy did not have full trust in the EDCS, where the church loans were actually administered and implemented. There was a record of similar discrepancy during the Nairobi mandate period. The role the PCR and the WCC Central Committee played in encouraging the member churches to support the bank loan strategy against apartheid was transparent. But there had been uncertainty whether the finance department in Geneva implemented the WCC's bank policy with its own banks. Another possibility could be that indeed, the banks the WCC had relations with were *not* lending to the apartheid government and the Bantustans.

The next political action the WCC took against apartheid was its mission to the major Western powers. The idea for an Eminent Church Persons' Group (ECPG) emanated from the WCC-initiated dialogue between the leaders of churches and the southern Africa liberation movements. It was a period marked with signs of shifts in the balance of power. The apartheid government released senior ANC leader, Govan Mbeki from Robben Island<sup>205</sup> and moved Nelson Mandela to a house in Victor Verster Prison.<sup>206</sup> The Soviet Union and the US began to defuse the Cold War.<sup>207</sup> The purpose of the ECPG was to persuade the major foreign investors to implement comprehensive mandatory sanctions against South Africa as a final all-out attempt to dismantle apartheid.

The PCR prepared profiles for the ECPG envoy on some of the powers that had links with South Africa, namely the US, Britain, France, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), Switzerland, Belgium and Japan. The profiles covered three areas. The first related to the various governments' policies towards South Africa: their voting records in the UN and other international agencies as well as their

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202. WCCRS, Confidential minutes of Executive Committee of WCC, 1988, pp. 38–39.

203. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 40th meeting of CC of WCC, Moscow, 16–27, July 1989, p. 52.

204. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of 41st meeting of CC of WCC, Geneva, 25–30 March 1990, p. 49.

205. M.T. Mufamadi, *Raymond Mhlaba's Personal Memoirs: Reminiscing from Rwanda and Uganda* (Cape Town: HSRC and Robben Island Museum, 2001), p. 149.

206. N. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (London: Little Brown & Co., 1994, pp. 473–475

207. Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa*, p. 270.

development aid contributions. The second related to the stance the various churches adopted towards South Africa: the decisions of their synods, and the programmes undertaken against the apartheid system. The third focused on the status of the anti-apartheid activities in the seven countries.<sup>208</sup>

Beyers Naudé and Frank Chikane were the two South Africans the WCC Executive Committee authorized as members of the ECPG. The other members were from different parts of the world. The mission took place in the first two months of 1989. A draft copy of the ECPG report (written by the PCR programme secretary, James Chamunorwa) gives some indication of the countries visited by the group and the reception they received.<sup>209</sup> The specific dates on which the various discussions were held are not provided; they were clearly subject to travel arrangements and the availability of group members and respondents in the various countries.

The group was tasked to convince the governments of these seven powers to impose arms and oil embargoes; to deny landing facilities to South African Airways in their countries; to cut all diplomatic, sports and cultural ties; to deny new bank loans; to refuse to guarantee credits; to refuse to re-schedule the South African bank loans which were due in April 1990; and to comply with the UN resolutions and other international measures advocating sanctions to dismantle apartheid in South Africa. It had to communicate the policies and actions of the WCC to the church leaders in these seven countries as far as the problem of apartheid in southern Africa was concerned. It also had to ascertain the impressions of the liberation movements, trade unions and solidarity groups in these countries about the status of the anti-apartheid struggle.<sup>210</sup>

All the government representatives the ECPG consulted opposed the call for comprehensive mandatory sanctions against South Africa. Their common explanation was that the sanctions would hurt black South Africans and therefore defeat the very purpose they aimed for. They wanted to give the South African government a chance to resolve apartheid locally, given that there was progress made with the agreement that had been reached with Angola and Cuba to free Namibia. They also argued that it was impossible to enforce sanctions since other businesses based elsewhere would simply take over and offer the same good and services. The ECPG however challenged these arguments and corrected the misrepresentations.<sup>211</sup>

The US secretary of state, the Black Caucus congressmen, and senators from both the Republicans and the Democrats represented the US government in the

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208. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of PCR Executive Committee, 1989.

209. PCR Collection: Box 4223.12.1, Document 0412S, J. Chamunorwa, 'The Sanctions Journey: Apartheid, the Churches and Justice in South Africa' Report of the Eminent Church Persons Group, Document 0412S, 5 March 1989.

210. *Ibid.*

211. *Ibid.*



talks with the ECPG. They all committed to influence their government towards ending apartheid. The secretary of state even expressed willingness to persuade Japan and other European countries to implement sanctions similar to those imposed by the US. The array of NGOs and church-based anti-apartheid groups reported on their vigilance of governmental attempts to circumvent sanctions against South Africa. They related their involvement in the Shell boycott and efforts to halt the rescheduling of South African bank loans due in April 1990.<sup>212</sup>

The group also met with Sir Geoffrey Howe, the British foreign secretary, in London. His government firmly believed in quiet diplomacy with the South African government. He cited the examples of the South Africa–Angola–Cuba agreement and President Botha commuting the execution of the Sharpeville Six. He also quoted fellow South African black leaders such as Gatsha Buthelezi, Bishop Stanley Mogoba and even the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference's rejection of comprehensive sanctions. Anne Borer noted that the bishops continued to insist that they were not competent to indicate how or when economic pressure should be increased.<sup>213</sup> Some of the British churches supported the call and had already written to the banks concerned asking them not to reschedule the South African loans due in April 1990. The London-based AAM criticized the government for increasing its trade with South Africa but the PAC representatives indicated that they objected to comprehensive mandatory sanctions on the grounds that they would hurt black South Africans the most. The ANC, however, commended the ECPG efforts.

In the talks with the ECPG, France was represented by the head of the African Affairs section in the President's Office; an official of the Ministry of Finance; the president of the national assembly; the technical advisor on foreign affairs to the prime minister; and the French ambassador to Mozambique. The French church leaders likewise rejected the call for comprehensive mandatory sanctions. They held the view that the anti-apartheid struggle promoted violence and was inspired by communism. They insisted on the separation of Christian faith, politics and business. Some of them were rather indifferent to the whole matter because South Africa was not an ex-francophone country. Although the French government had introduced limited economic sanctions, its local anti-apartheid movement informed the ECPG that its government still needed to institute mechanisms to ensure that corporations and business complied with the sanctions adopted.<sup>214</sup> The French trade unions were also reluctant to support economic sanctions for fear of local job losses.<sup>215</sup>

In the FRG (West Germany) the president, the chancellor, the foreign minister and the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee met the ECPG. They were

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212. *Ibid.*

213. Borer, *Challenging the State*, p. 64.

214. *Ibid.*

215. S. Bosgra, J. Derens and J. Marchand, 'France–South Africa, in SADET, *Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3*, pp. 676.

optimistic that a solution in South Africa was eminent. They predicted that a new National Party leader plus the rapprochement that was emerging between Moscow and Washington to end the Cold War, were crucial to resolving the problem of apartheid. They therefore believed that mandatory sanctions were not going to create a helpful atmosphere for negotiations with the South African white minority government. The group was reportedly astonished by what it perceived as a naïve analysis of South African reality. The opposition representatives, on the contrary, supported comprehensive mandatory sanctions against South Africa. They expressed their strong disappointment in the expansion of their government's trade with South Africa.<sup>216</sup>

The Church of the Rhine was a staunch supporter of the PCR. It had cancelled all its accounts with banks that had business links with South Africa. Twelve anti-apartheid groups received the ECPG with much enthusiasm.<sup>217</sup> Their anti-apartheid activism included a series of actions. They mobilized grassroots movements to boycott South African products sold in German stores and also demonstrated against the South African Embassy in Bonn. Furthermore, to make up for the lack of news due to South African press censorship, the activists made every effort to ascertain accurate information on the country. They demonstrated against West German banks who were making loans to the apartheid government and argued with them in boardrooms. Their trade union congress worked closely with COSATU and the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) and put pressure on their government and the EC to impose stronger economic sanctions against South Africa. The groups were particularly critical of the reactionary stance the EKD Church took on sanctions.<sup>218</sup>

Several junior officials, the Swiss ambassador and some of the assistants working in the parliament building represented the Swiss government in discussions with the ECPG. At the time, the foreign ministers from Switzerland and Belgium were attending the disarmament conference in Vienna. As one of the oldest democracies, Switzerland took pride in her commitment to the principle of neutrality. The government feared that sanctions would result in a complete breakdown of economic structures and lead to further violence in South Africa and the frontline states.<sup>219</sup> Peter Leuenberger has conceded that the Swiss anti-apartheid movement failed to pose a serious challenge to the economic and political establishment of South Africa country.<sup>220</sup>

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216. *Ibid.*

217. Among those present was Elizabeth Adler, the author of *A Small Beginning: An Assessment of the First Five Years of the Program to Combat Racism* (Geneva: WCC Publication, 1974). She was representing the churches in East Germany. There were also academics present. The hall was full and some enthusiastic activists had to be turned away. See PCR Collection: Box 4223.12.1, Chamunorwa, 'The Sanctions Journey'.

218. *Ibid.*

219. PCR Collection: Box 4223.12.1, Chamunorwa, 'The Sanctions Journey'.

220. P. Leuenberger, 'Switzerland and Apartheid: The Swiss Anti-Apartheid Movement' in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 713.

The ECPG group met with a junior Belgian government official in Brussels, the location of the European Community (EU) headquarters. The official stated that although his country had its own particular foreign policy on South Africa, the EU as such had to take a *collective* regional position for comprehensive mandatory sanctions to be effective. In 1985, Helene Passtoors, a Belgian citizen, was arrested and sentenced to ten years for supporting the ANC armed struggle. She was dressed in ANC colours during her trial. Her country was reluctant to cut diplomatic ties with South Africa as it was in the process of resolving her issue of her imprisonment. She was finally returned to Belgium in May 1989.<sup>221</sup>

In Japan, it was the deputy minister of Foreign Affairs and the director general of African Affairs, who met the ECPG. They defended their government's links with South Africa on the grounds that black South Africans and the frontline states benefited from generous Japanese humanitarian projects and funding. The ECPG revealed evidence of the Japanese government's clandestine importation of South African gold through Switzerland and the UK. The opposition Socialist Party welcomed the group. It reported on its efforts to make it illegal to sell strategic technology to South Africa through legislation. The National Christian Council of Japan and the anti-apartheid groups supported the ECPG initiative. They appealed to the government to force Japanese companies to leave South Africa in response to the cries of the oppressed black majority.<sup>222</sup>

The ECPG also had an audience with Commonwealth and UN representatives. The British government was the *only exception among* the 48 Commonwealth members, all of whom insisted that sanctions were of vital importance as the major instrument to dismantle apartheid. The UN was encouraged by the US and FRG's willingness to re-evaluate their policies towards South Africa. Its Committee against Apartheid held a special session and recorded a minute of high appreciation for the work of the WCC in general and the ECPG in particular.<sup>223</sup> Although it is difficult to measure the extent of the ECPG's impact, it nonetheless added great value to the global anti-apartheid struggle.

## Funding

Despite the constant criticism, the symbolic financial commitment to redistribute power to the racially discriminated remained fixed. It was the member churches, local congregations, councils of churches, church agencies, anti-racism groups, governments (through ecumenical councils) and private individuals, who continued to donate money to the Special Fund. A noteworthy contribution came from Joe Agne, a white pastor who was a PCR Commission member from

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221. Bosgra, 'The Netherlands, South Africa and Apartheid', pp. 565–566; PCR Collection: Box 4223.12.1, James Chamunorwa, 'The Sanctions Journey: Apartheid, the Churches and Justice in South Africa', Report of the Eminent Church Persons Group, Document 0412S, 5 March 1989.

222. PCR Collection: Box 4223.12.1, Chamunorwa, 'The Sanctions Journey'.

223. *Ibid.*

Chicago.<sup>224</sup> The gifts he received for his wedding in 1987 were donated to the Special Fund.<sup>225</sup>

The WCC was able to distribute annual grants to the successful applicants, although small changes were made to the procedure followed in disbursing these grants. However, the suspicion on whether the beneficiaries used the money for humanitarian or military purposes, still lingered. The old problem of partiality in the attitude towards the ANC and the PAC persisted.

The South African liberation movements which applied and received grants during this period were the ANC, PAC and SACTU. In 1983 the three organizations received US\$70,000; US\$50,000; and US\$10,000, respectively.<sup>226</sup> In 1984, they again received the same amounts. For 1985, the ANC was granted US\$77,000; the PAC US\$33,000; and SACTU US\$ 5,000.<sup>227</sup> There was an increase in the amounts distributed in 1986, with the ANC, PAC and SACTU receiving US\$80,000; US\$26,000; and US\$10,000, respectively.<sup>228</sup> In 1987, the ANC, PAC and SACTU received US\$95,000; US\$35,000; and US\$10,000.<sup>229</sup> For 1988, the ANC, PAC, SACTU were given US\$105,000; US\$45,000 and US\$20,000 respectively. In 1989, the same three organizations were allocated US\$100,000; US\$67,000; and US\$20,000. In 1990, the WCC Executive Committee approved a grant of US\$141,000 for the ANC, and the PAC was given US\$94,000.<sup>230</sup>

The discrepancy in the amounts allocated to the ANC and the PAC created tension amongst the donors, the PCR staff, the Commission members, the PCR Executive Group, the General Secretary and the WCC Executive Committee members. There were different views about handling the applications of these two organizations.<sup>231</sup> There were those who wanted the two treated equally on the grounds that both fought for the ultimate liberation of the racially discriminated. Others argued that the ANC's applications met the criteria adequately and its requests for the grants were for a larger constituency

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224. He had a long history of working for racial and social justice and chaired the Committee to Eliminate Institutional Racism. His doctoral thesis was entitled 'A World House Project', which detailed the New York United Methodist Church's ten-year journey to become an inclusive congregation honouring the global vision of Martin Luther King Jr, available at <http://www.fumcboulder.org/PastTIRBios.jps>

225. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of PCR Commission meeting, Los Angeles, 17–24, January 1988.

226. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of the PCR Executive Group, 20–24 June 1983.

227. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Minutes of the PCR Commission, 11–16 August 1986.

228. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of 18th PCR Executive Group meeting, Geneva, 3–5 March 1986.

229. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of 17th PRC Executive Group meeting, 10–12 June 1985.

230. Warr, 'Normative Promise', Special fund grants, Appendix C, pp. 300–304.

231. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Confidential minutes of PCR Executive Group meeting, 20–24 June 1983.

compared to that of the PAC. The proposed study to help solve the impasse did not materialize. Consequently, the disagreement lingered. In 1988, Emilio Castro, the general secretary, rebuffed the recommendation to give the PAC less than the amount allocated to the ANC. This resulted in a verbal clash with Pityana, the new PCR director.<sup>232</sup> It was only in 1989 that a compromise was reached to seek advice from the SACC on the matter. Nevertheless, the grants disbursed to the two organizations the following year were still unequal.

Furthermore, there were still members who needed reassurance that their donations were not allocated to the Special Fund. Some congregants of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, for example, wanted information on the donors to the fund made public so that they could be sure that contributions had not been channelled there. This became clear in 1984 in the correspondence between Donald Cragg, the Methodist representative, and the PCR director.<sup>233</sup> Their concern was understandable because of the current high level of political unrest in the aftermath of the government's unpopular constitutional reform.

There were many others who provided support to the liberation movements. The Gossner Mission funded the ANC, the PAC and other liberation movements in southern Africa. According to Friederike Schulze, a Gossner Mission activist, there was a 'gentleman's agreement with the liberation movements that church money was not to be used to buy weapons'. Further, pastor Gottfried Wolff ensured that a local church community in the village near Leipzig provided goods for South African refugees and local communities in Lesotho, as well as for the ANC schools in Morogoro, with a value up to 100,000 GDR Marks for 20 years.<sup>234</sup> The USSR donated US\$100,000 annually to the ANC during this period.<sup>235</sup>

The PCR also provided financial support to other anti-apartheid movements. Those who benefited in 1983 included the Japanese Anti-Apartheid Movement; Campaign against Racial Exploitation (Australia); the Austrian Anti-Apartheid Movement; Aktiekomitee Zuidelijk Africa (Belgium); the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa; the Anti-Apartheid Movement and Information Centre on Southern Africa (West Germany); the French Anti-Apartheid Movement; the AAM (London); the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement; Halt all Racist Tours (HALT); the New Zealand Anti-Apartheid Movement; the Anti-Apartheid

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232. C.E. Welch Jr, 'Mobilizing Morality: The World Council of Churches and its Program to Combat Racism, 1969–1994', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 23, 4 (November 2001), p. 19.

233. PCR Collection: Box 4223.2.08, Correspondence between Donald Cragg Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Grahamstown, 12 October 1984 and reply from Anwar Barkat, 29 October 1984.

234. Schleicher, 'GDR Solidarity', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 1096. On material assistance the ANC from the Solidarity Committee from 1983–1989, see p. 1125. See also Bosgra, 'The Netherlands, South Africa and Apartheid', pp. 564–565.

235. V. Shubin, Unpublished paper presented at the Conference on International Anti-apartheid Movements in South Africa's Freedom Struggle: Lessons for Today', Durban, 10–13 October 2004.

Movement of German-Speaking Switzerland; the Anti-Apartheid Movement of Switzerland (Geneva); and the Southern Africa Committee (USA).<sup>236</sup>

The French AAM's political orientation was based on the UN, OAU and the WCC resolution and on ANC appeals to isolate South Africa. It was created to inform public opinion and act permanently against the apartheid government as well as against all kinds of French-SA collaboration. It also supported the liberation struggle of the South African and Namibian peoples.<sup>237</sup> In Austria, the AAM started a nationwide campaign against fruit imports from SA.<sup>238</sup> In Australia, the organization known as HART campaigned against South African imports and was in touch with South African non-racial bodies.<sup>239</sup> The American Committee on Africa, together with the New York University student organizers, the UN Special Committee against Apartheid and the UN Council for Namibia, hosted an international Student Anti-Apartheid Conference at New York University. Representatives of youth wings of the ANC, PAC and SWAPO attended this meeting in 1983.<sup>240</sup>

In 1984, it was the African Liberation Trust Fund (Australia); the Austrian AAM; Aktiekomitee Zuidelijk Africa (Belgium); Comité contre le Colonialisme et l'Apartheid (Belgium); Canadians Concerned about South Africa; the AAM and Information Centre on Southern Africa (West Germany); the Irish AAM; the Japanese AAM; the Swiss-German AAM; the Swiss AAM (Geneva); and the Welsh AAM, that benefited from the PCR Special Fund.<sup>241</sup> Paulette Pierson-Mathy explains that the Belgian anti-apartheid group published and disseminated data on the apartheid government's policy and practice and commented on the legitimacy of the liberation struggle according to international law. It also made a close study of the UN charter and the OAU charter and practices for use by other anti-apartheid bodies.<sup>242</sup>

The Australian AAM; the AAM and Information Centre on Southern Africa (West Germany); the Mouvement Anti-Apartheid de France; the Irish AAM; HART (New Zealand); the Welsh AAM; and the Free South Africa Movement (USA) were beneficiaries in 1985.<sup>243</sup> Silvia Hill explains that it was an act of civil disobedience at the South African Embassy in November 1984 which sparked the Free South Africa Movement in the US. Randall Robinson (executive director of TransAfrica) Mary Frances Berry (US civil rights commissioner) and Walter Fauntroy, a US congressman, arranged a meeting with the South African ambassador and when

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236. Warr, 'Normative Promise', Special fund grants, Appendix C, pp. 284–299.

237. Bosgra, Derens and Marchand, 'France–South Africa', p. 673.

238. Sauer, 'Austria and South Africa during Apartheid', p. 635.

239. P. Limb, 'The Anti-Apartheid Movements in Australia and Aoteraroa/New Zealand', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 942.

240. Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in US', p. 791.

241. Warr, 'Normative Promise', Special fund grants, Appendix C, pp. 284–299.

242. P. Pierson-Mathy, 'The Anti-apartheid Struggle in Belgium as Perceived by the Comité Contre le Colonialisme et l'Apartheid', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 654.

243. Warr, 'Normative Promise', Special fund grants, Appendix C, pp. 284–299.

this was refused, declined to leave the premises. When the three were arrested, demonstrators marched with placards denouncing apartheid and US support to the evil system. High profile individuals, including senators and church leaders who wanted to express opposition to apartheid joined the demonstration. Hill argued that the point was to make a symbolic declaration that whatever President Reagan thought, apartheid was unacceptable to the American people.<sup>244</sup>

In 1986, it was the AAM and Information Centre on Southern Africa (West Germany); the French AAM; the Irish AAM; the Japanese AAM; HART (New Zealand); Africa News Service (US); and the Welsh AAM that received PCR grants. The Japanese AAM: the Campaign against Racial Exploitation (Australia); HART (New Zealand); the AAM and Information Centre on Southern Africa (West Germany); the French AAM; the Anti-Apartheids Beweging (Netherlands); All Faith for One Race (UK); the Welsh AAM; and the Southern Africa Program (American Friends Service Committee) who benefited the following year.<sup>245</sup> Peter Limb has recorded that HART ran a successful boycott on South African wines and remained in close touch with South African non-racial bodies.<sup>246</sup>

In 1988, it was the Japanese AAM; the AAM and Information Centre on Southern Africa (West Germany); the French AAM; the Irish AAM; the Scottish Committee Anti-Apartheid Movement; and the Welsh AAM, whose applications were successful. while in 1989 the Japanese AAM; the Arbeitskreis 'kein Geld Fur Apartheid' (West Germany); the AAM and Information Centre on Southern Africa (West Germany); the Mouvement Anti-Apartheid de France; the Aktion Sudafrica-Boycott (Switzerland); the Scottish Committee AAM; and the Welsh AAM were beneficiaries. The Scottish Committee was active in boycott campaigns, supporting ELTSA and the broader call for comprehensive sanctions against South Africa.<sup>247</sup>

In 1990, the Japanese AAM; the Action Committee on Southern Africa (Belgium); the AAM and Information Centre on Southern Africa (West Germany); the Mouvement Anti-Apartheid de France; Aktion Sudafrica-Boycott (Switzerland); Mouvement Anti-Apartheid de la Suisse (Romande); the American Committee on Africa; and the Washington Office on Africa (WOA), received grants from the Special Fund. Two US scholars, William Minter and Robert Massie, have portrayed the WOA as an organization which combined grassroots mobilization with coalition building as the prerequisites for exerting influence on the US

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244. Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in US', pp. 795–797.

245. Warr, 'Normative Promise', Special fund grants, Appendix C, pp. 284–299.

246. Limb, 'Anti-Apartheid Movements in Australia and New Zealand', in SADET, *Road to Democracy, Volume 3*, p. 942.

247. At [http://www.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/aama/entry/anti-apartheid\\_movement\\_scottish\\_committee](http://www.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/aama/entry/anti-apartheid_movement_scottish_committee), accessed 30 October 2010.

Congress. It organized marches, made speeches, wrote letters, testified in government hearings and held conferences on the South Africa question.<sup>248</sup>

Although the amounts the WCC provided to the solidarity groups were small, they went a long way towards assisting the global anti-apartheid struggle. A good case in point was the WOA, which was lauded for its crucial role in lobbying the US Congress to pass legislation on sanctions against South Africa. Yet two Americans who were in the WCC Executive Committee had contrasting views about the WOA receiving the PCR grant. Oscar McCloud rejected the PCR's recommendation that the WOA should receive the grant in 1984.<sup>249</sup> Janice Love appealed against McCloud's objection precisely because of the praiseworthy efforts of the WOA in the US Congress against apartheid.<sup>250</sup> This was yet another example of the ramifications of the PCR's organizational jigsaw.

## Conclusion

Despite a clear mandate from Vancouver to prioritize the campaign against apartheid in southern Africa, under the directorship of Anwar Barkat the PCR seemed to stall. The repression in South Africa compelled the WCC to attend to the apartheid problem. The illness and transfer of staff members with longer terms of service rendered the PCR office less effective. It was the arrival of new staff members and the drive from the PCR advocates in other layers of its organizational jigsaw that revitalized the WCC's campaign against apartheid.

In his personal reflection, Barkat wrote that:

there was justification in the criticism that the PCR was less of a global program of combating racism and more of an anti-apartheid programme in southern Africa. Seventy percent of staff time and resources were spent on southern Africa. The Special Fund gave half of its grants to liberation movements and one third to southern Africa oriented support groups. It was natural to concentrate on southern Africa because racism was most institutionalized and intense in this area. Still, the global character of the program was being compromised. There was concern expressed in the Executive Committee after Nairobi that the global character of the PCR needed to be restored without compromising the valuable work done in southern Africa.<sup>251</sup>

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248. Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in US', p. 793; Massie, 'Moral Deliberation and Policy Formulation', p. 35.

249. McCloud was unhappy that it was the same organizations that received the grants almost yearly. He persistently challenged the PCR staff to publish a list of groups whose purposes and objectives the programme supported but to which no financial grant had yet been made. See WCCRS, Confidential minutes of Executive Committee of WCC, 15–19 September 1986, Reykjavik, p. 27.

250. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of CC of WCC, Closed session on special fund grants, Geneva, 9–18 July 1984.

251. PCR Collection; Box 4223.17.1, A. Barkat, unpublished manuscript, 'The World Council of Churches: Programme to Combat Racism, Personal Reflections, 1980s–1990s'.



His reflection is salient in many respects. It illustrated his endeavour to restore the integrity of the PCR as a global programme during his term as its director. It underlined the challenge the WCC faced in managing the balance between competing demands, the anti-apartheid struggle and spreading its campaign against racism to other parts of the world. A loss to the anti-apartheid struggle was perhaps a gain to the struggle of indigenous people for land rights in Australia, for example. The abiding problem, however, was whether his efforts did not water down the cutting edge, particularly that of the PCR's bank loan campaign against apartheid.

The year 1985 marked a surge in the PCR's energy for its campaign to transform the remaining racialized societies in southern Africa. This can be attributed to the team which was able to resume the radical approach the PCR had always embraced in the attempt to dismantle apartheid. The PCR strategy of bridging the distance between opponents of apartheid at various consultations proved effective. This was evident in Harare in 1985 when Jay Naidoo of COSATU met Joe Slovo, an ANC representative. Slovo who was also the South African Communist Party leader, had previously dismissed the WCC's efforts against racism.<sup>252</sup> The Lusaka encounter between Tambo and Naudé in 1987 is another case in point.

The reaction of the Shell magnates, who threatened to sue the WCC, demonstrated the effectiveness of the PCR's strategy in mobilising the Christian community to boycott the hugely powerful oil company. The Netherlands anti-apartheid groups that initiated the boycott acknowledged the WCC's decision to support the campaign against Shell and its financial contribution to the Shipping Research Bureau.<sup>253</sup> Joan Fairweather also gives credit to the important role the WCC played in drawing Canadian churches into solidarity with their churches in South Africa by disseminating its reports and publications. She observed that through these Canadian churches had heard the voices of African member churches and individuals and thus learnt how they might best respond to the situation.<sup>254</sup>

Beginning in 1985, the PCR advocates had also revived the WCC campaign against banks that were extending loans to the apartheid government and its agents. Their contribution was evident in their vigilance towards sanction busting and credits made available through interbank loans, and their monitoring of foreign trade and clandestine gold swaps. The participation of the WCC's finance section in Geneva in this specific campaign was however opaque rather than transparent. Its internal implementation of this policy gave the WCC an edge in the international financial withdrawal from South Africa campaign. Its execution of this policy internally is what gave the WCC an edge in the international financial withdrawal from South Africa campaign.

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252. This point was made in chapter 3.

253. Bosgra, 'The Netherlands, South Africa and Apartheid', p. 579.

254. Fairweather, 'Canadian Solidarity with South Africa's Liberation Struggle', p. 870.

The WCC received tributes from the UN for the political action it took against banks making loans to South Africa, its innovative ECPG mission to certain Western powers and the grants given to the liberation movements and anti-apartheid groups.<sup>255</sup>

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255. Reddy, 'The United Nations and the Struggle', p. 112.

## Chapter Seven

### The PCR struggle against apartheid under the Canberra mandate, 1991–1994

#### Introduction

The repeal of discriminatory legislation from the law books in February 1991 coincided with a cycle of violence in KwaZulu-Natal and consequently jeopardized the prospect for a peaceful negotiated settlement in South Africa.<sup>1</sup> It was at this stage that the WCC held its 7th General Assembly in Canberra, Australia. It pledged to support the process of bringing about a peaceful transition to a democratic non-racial country, to *all* South Africans (my emphasis).<sup>2</sup> On this occasion, the commitment by the WCC was extended to the entire South African population and not only to those who had experienced racial discrimination, as had been the case in the past.

This chapter pays attention to the debate about racism at the assembly in February 1991 and charts the PCR activities in its campaign to assist the transformation of South African society for the next four years to May 1994, when democratic elections were held. By 1993, the PCR was no longer a Commission as before, but a Working Group under Unit III on Justice, Peace and Creation.<sup>3</sup> As a Working Group its status had been reduced and it functioned in an advisory capacity. It no longer concentrated exclusively on white racism, which had previously been its preoccupation when its emphasis had been on indigenous people, ethnicity and equal human rights. Its official name at this stage was the Working Group on Racism, Indigenous People and Ethnicity. Financial resources were allocated to permit it to carry out its programmes to assist with the South African transition.<sup>4</sup> Significantly, the reorganization of the PCR had implications for its activities in South Africa. The latter years (1993 to May 1994) saw the PCR's declining visibility as apartheid retreated and the prospect of elections seemed more secure. What remained evident was the funding commitment that the WCC Executive Committee honoured until the end; the monitoring of violence; and the assistance provided for the smooth running of the first democratic election in April 1994. These projects had been initiated before the

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1. T.R.H. Davenport, *The Transfer of Power in South Africa* (David Philip: Cape Town, 1998), pp. 9–10; M. Meredith, *South Africa's New Era: The 1994 Election* (London: Mandarin, 1994), pp. 21, 35, 36.
  2. PCR Collection: Box 280.4223. 8t, Reports and statements of PCR from 7th Assembly, Canberra, 1991.
  3. The Working Group was defined as a resource for Unit 111 and only had advisory powers.
  4. Minutes of Working Group on Racism, Ethnicity and Indigenous People, Programme Unit III, WCC, 24–28 June 1993, pp. 1, 12, 76. (The 1993 minutes of the Working Group are available in the general section of the Main Library in Geneva, not in the reference section.)

restructuring process in 1993. It is the denouement of the WCC's involvement in South Africa from 1991 until 1994 May that this chapter considers.

The transition period in South Africa brought a new reality to the fore. This chapter argues that the PCR adjusted its previous four-pillared strategy (funding, mobilization, political action and bridging) against apartheid to respond to the new circumstances that followed the release of former political prisoners and the intention to negotiate a political settlement. The PCR continued to mobilize the ecumenical Christian community to maintain economic sanctions until South Africa was set on an irreversible course leading to change that would give rise to a united, democratic and non-racial country. The WCC sustained its commitment to redistribute empowerment to a far wider range of representatives of the racially oppressed in order to prepare for the general election. It also continued its efforts to bring together South Africans who wanted to end apartheid. This time around, however, the PCR's bridging-strategy incorporated South Africans who were previously excluded because they were members of the ruling National Party and the official opposition Democratic Party.

This chapter contends that as before, disagreements arose among WCC policy makers about the implementation of the PCR strategies in the early 1990s. The significance of these differences of opinion was nonetheless overtaken by the imminent end of apartheid in South Africa. Rodney Davenport has described the South African transition as a period in which violence very nearly plunged the country into a civil war. He argued that what saved South Africa from becoming the world's polecat, were people with vision, people who were committed to peaceful negotiation.<sup>5</sup> It was this background and the likelihood of ordered, cordial talks between representatives of a wide range of political opinion, which encouraged the WCC to conclude its commitment to the transformation process in South Africa when a new democratic government took over.

## **Canberra**

The delegates who assembled in Canberra to formulate policies which would guide the tasks and responsibilities of the WCC in the 1990s, included several South Africans. In their opinion, racism remained an obstacle to the full expression of the communion in Christ and the 'gift and calling of the Church'. They called for Christians to atone for the sin of racism. They also demanded changes to abolish structural and institutional racism. More importantly, they reaffirmed their commitment to combat racism and therefore endorsed the work of the PCR.<sup>6</sup>

In the case of South Africa, the delegates welcomed the efforts by F.W. de Klerk, to repeal the laws underpinning apartheid. They explicitly advocated a

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5. Davenport, *The Transfer of Power*, p. 3.

6. PCR Collection: Box 280.4223, 8t, Reports and statements, PCR 7th Assembly, Canberra 1991.

democratically elected constituent assembly to carry out negotiations for a new constitution for the country. The assembly mandated the WCC to engage in a consultative process with churches and the solidarity network to determine the criteria that would indicate the end of apartheid and the beginning of meaningful constitutional processes that were irreversible.<sup>7</sup> The Canberra mandate was thus that the PCR would follow a course of action that would facilitate a democratic solution to racial segregation in South Africa through diplomatic means.

### **PCR organizational structure**

The employment contracts of some of the PCR staff members carried over to the Canberra era. For instance, the South African Barney Pityana retained his position as the director of the PCR until the end of October 1992. However, James Mutambirwa, the Zimbabwean who had been the programme secretary since 1984 left the WCC in July 1992. Deborah Robinson joined in January 1993 as the executive secretary. She was responsible for its work in southern Africa.<sup>8</sup>

### **Mobilization**

De Klerk proceeded to dismantle the remaining apartheid laws in February 1991. He gained international approval for doing so and this promised an early end to sanctions.<sup>9</sup> The European Community began to discuss lifting sanctions on iron, steel and Krugerrands. By early 1992, it removed outstanding sanctions against South Africa.<sup>10</sup> In the Netherlands, the cultural and academic boycotts were eased and sporting sanctions were virtually ended.<sup>11</sup> The Irish prime minister made a commitment to De Klerk to review Ireland's unilateral sanctions as well as its support for the remaining European Community sanctions.<sup>12</sup> A professor of Comparative Politics, International Studies and Philosophy,<sup>13</sup> Adrian Guelke felt that the De Klerk government had repealed the remaining discriminatory laws precisely to meet the requirements of the USA Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid

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7. PCR Collection: Box 280.4223, 8t, Reports and statements, PCR 7th Assembly, Canberra 1991.
  8. PCR Collection: Box 4223.1993, Letter from D. Robinson to conference participants, 23 December 1993.
  9. D. O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948–1994* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1996), p. 407.
  10. S. Bosgra, 'The European Community and Selected West European Countries', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity, Part 1* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008), p. 629.
  11. *Ibid.*, p. 613.
  12. L. Asmal and K. Asmal, 'The Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 3, Part 1*, p. 414.
  13. See Adrian Guelke at [http://en.wilki/Adrian\\_Guelke](http://en.wilki/Adrian_Guelke)

Act.<sup>14</sup> In July 1991, the Bush administration lifted sanctions with congressional approval.<sup>15</sup>

For their part, the WCC and PCR remained steadfast in their campaign to support the maintenance of economic sanctions against the Pretoria government throughout the transitional period. During a visit to the country in October 1991, Emilio Castro elaborated on the WCC's position as far as the imposition of economic sanctions was concerned. (The WCC visit to South Africa is dealt with under the next bridging sub-theme.) Castro made South Africans aware that it was the WCC that had pioneered the international action for the economic isolation of their country. He also shed light on the WCC's campaign against banks linked to the apartheid state; the consumer boycotts emanating from the WCC's research projects; and the actions taken by the PCR since the early 1970s. He also highlighted the significance of the people's sanctions adopted by individual Christians and non-Christians overseas, and emphasized that these had been mobilized by the PCR. Many foreign individuals were persuaded to take personal responsibility to end apartheid and this had led to a worldwide network of ordinary people engaged in anti-apartheid activities. He told South Africans that the WCC was proud to have contributed meaningfully in this way. He further made them aware of the fresh mandate from the Canberra Assembly for the WCC to remain actively engaged in the unfolding developments in South Africa. In the WCC's opinion, he said, the decision to lift the sanctions against South Africa had to be from the perspective of the victims.<sup>16</sup> Emilio Castro's rendition of the WCC as an advocate of economic sanctions against the apartheid state was important. It indicated the moral imperative of a church institution to use material means to stop the evil system of apartheid which it perceived as sin.

Robbie Williams of Radio 702, challenged the WCC for its persistent support of sanctions against South Africa and for mimicking the ANC policies. He argued that sanctions were tantamount to violence and that they led to poverty and suffering among the very people they were designed to help. In a counter argument, Emilio Castro pointed out that poverty had prevailed in the country long before any talk of sanctions. On the contrary, he viewed sanctions as a form of self-sacrifice that the poor people imposed on themselves in order to overcome their circumstances. He said that the emergence of a new government that represented all sections of the population would mitigate the suffering of the poor in South Africa.<sup>17</sup> Further, Janice Love, a member of the WCC Central Committee expressed satisfaction that the Commonwealth was maintaining some important trade and finance sanctions against the South African

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14. A. Guelke, *Rethinking the Rise and Fall of Apartheid and World Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 197.

15. W. Minter and S. Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States-South Africa Relations', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 3, Part 2*, p. 818.

16. PCR Collection: Box 4223, 1991, WCC visit to South Africa, 12-23 October 1991.

17. *Ibid.*

government. She regretted that her own government in the USA and other Western powers had decided to lift sanctions.<sup>18</sup> The dilemma about whether to lift or maintain economic sanctions during the course of negotiations for a political settlement evoked further debate in South Africa and the WCC defended its stand on this.

The South African economy had indeed stagnated during this period.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, Nancy Clark and William Worger have observed that the privatization of state enterprises accelerated in this transitional period and that the government was seen to be transferring assets into white hands that would otherwise have passed into the control of a black majority government.<sup>20</sup> Martin Meredith also reported on the corrupt white civil servants and politicians who 'scrambled to top up their pension funds and fix long-term contracts before the day of reckoning'.<sup>21</sup> Notwithstanding the harmful effects of economic sanctions for the country, such underhand practices by bureaucrats in the apartheid establishment indicated their resistance to the imminent changes in economic and political power.

By 1992, the WCC Executive Committee still urged its member churches to continue to campaign for economic and financial sanctions until such time as an interim government was in place to guarantee the full participation of all South Africans.<sup>22</sup> It was not until September 1993 that Mandela finally appealed to the international community to lift economic sanctions. This was because the date for the demise of the white minority government had been determined and a date had been set for elections. He announced in a meeting of the UN Special Committee in New York that the 'countdown to democracy in South Africa had begun'. The following month, the UN secretary general called upon states not only to terminate restrictions on economic relations with South Africa immediately, but also to end the oil embargo once the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) became operational.<sup>23</sup> The green-light signal flashed to indicate that the end of the apartheid system had arrived.

At the same time, the WCC remained vigilant and awaited assurances that all South Africans would be guaranteed the right to vote in the 1994 April general election.<sup>24</sup> It was fully aware that South Africa's economy had been systematically racialized by the apartheid government and its business sector. It

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18. *Ibid.*

19. A. Butler, *Democracy and Apartheid: Political Theory, Comparative Politics and the Modern South African State* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 108.

20. N.L. Clark and W.H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (London: Pearson Education, 2004), p. 107.

21. Meredith, *South Africa's New Era*, p. 54.

22. WCCRS, Minutes, WCC Executive Committee meeting, 18–20 August, Geneva, 1992, p. 7.

23. E.S. Reddy, 'The United Nations and the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 3, Part 1*, pp. 135-136.

24. PCR Collection: Box 4223, 1993, 'World Council Cautious on South Africa', in *Christian Century*, 27 October 1993, p. 1045.

was particularly concerned about the country's shrinking economy which had led to high unemployment rates. It was also mindful of the sobering reality that to correct the structural distortions of the economy would require years of collaboration between the new democratic government, its partners in civil society and the international community. For these reasons, its Unit III on Justice, Peace and Creation (where the PCR had been relocated), encouraged the creditor banks to whom South Africa owed money, to consider rolling over outstanding loans on terms conducive to long-term democratic development. The unit also urged the creditors to increase the capacity of the country's institutions and to provide financial resources to the groups previously denied equal access to credit.<sup>25</sup>

In January 1994, for the very first time in its history, the WCC Central Committee met in South Africa.<sup>26</sup> At this meeting the SACC requested reinvestment in South Africa, which was spelt out in its Code of Conduct. The request ended almost half a century's undertaking by the PCR to mobilize the ecumenical Christian community to become fully conscious of the dangers of racism and to join the anti-apartheid struggle. It brought to an end the political action taken by the WCC and its member churches, which saw a financial withdrawal from the apartheid government's partners in an attempt to dismantle the South African economy. The chapter of economic sanctions against South Africa was finally over.

Virginia Gcabashe, the South African member of the Central Committee, thanked the WCC for its support. She presented the WCC with an embroidered banner to remind it of its South African friends.<sup>27</sup> Brigalia Bam, the SACC general secretary, requested the WCC to continue its support and assistance to deal with the negative legacy of apartheid.<sup>28</sup> Archbishop Tutu expressed his gratitude to the WCC for its constant support and prayers for South Africans in their struggle for liberation. He commended the WCC for enabling South Africans to see ecclesiology come alive.<sup>29</sup> This meeting in the country marked the departure of the WCC from its previous position of a just war in respect of apartheid.

## Funding

The WCC resumed its commitment to empower the racially discriminated South Africans in the 1991 to 1994 period by way of symbolic financial support. The banned liberation movements' representatives who had been the main beneficiaries of this support in the past, were unbanned and they returned to the country. The organizations became legal political parties once more. The PCR accordingly adjusted its criterion for the beneficiaries of its Special Fund. It

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25. WCCRS, Minutes and reports of the 45th meeting of the Central Committee of WCC, Johannesburg, 20–28 January 1994, p. 111.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 71.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

29. D.M. Tutu, 'To those Participants in the Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches', *International Review of Mission*, 83, 328 (January 1994), pp 9–10.



supported groups which were engaged in the struggle for the transformation of South Africa that had the approval of the national churches. Further, the previous policy had been to allocate 50 per cent of the amount received for the Special Fund to southern Africa liberation movements and anti-apartheid groups. From 1992, that percentage dropped to 35 per cent.<sup>30</sup> Despite the reduction in the funds allocated, which might have suggested that the attention given to the anti-apartheid struggle was waning, the WCC still gave some financial support even though the racist laws were being abolished and negotiations had in fact begun.

In 1991, the WCC Executive Committee agreed to give US\$ 141,000 to the ANC and US\$ 94,000 to the PAC.<sup>31</sup> The only solidarity group which received a grant in 1991 was the Anti-Apartheid Movement and Information Centre on South Africa, in Germany.<sup>32</sup> The newly established South African National Civil Organization (SANCO) and the Ciskei Border Council of Churches each received US\$40, 000. In 1992, US\$70, 000 was set aside for the Patriotic Front (PF), a loose alliance of parties holding an anti-apartheid position.<sup>33</sup> The following year (1993) a newly formed national women's organization which included women from all political groupings, the South African Christian Women's Movement (CWM);<sup>34</sup> the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT);<sup>35</sup> the South African Council of World Affiliated Young Women Christian Association (SACWAYWCA);<sup>36</sup> and the Women's Development Foundation (WDF) applied for and each received (US\$ 25, 000) from the PCR Special Fund.<sup>37</sup> The ANC and the PAC each received

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30. WCCRS, Minutes of WCC Executive Committee meeting, 18–20 August, Geneva, 1992.

31. K. Warr, 'The Normative Promise of Global Civil Society: The Role of the World Council of Churches in the Transition to and Maintenance of Democracy in South Africa' (PhD thesis, American University, 1998), Appendix C, Special Fund grants, p. 300.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 301.

33. WCCRS, Minutes of WCC Executive Committee meeting, 18–20 August, Geneva, 1992.

34. The CWM was formed in response to the need for a movement that addressed itself specifically to the interests of women who believed that God created human beings equal, but were aware that in the church and in society women remained subordinate. Women thus united against gender discrimination. It had a membership of over 3 000 and had 14 groups of women actively conducting self-help projects including semi-urban and urban groups. The constituency of CWM comprised women from rural, informal settlements, squatters, semi-urban and urban areas. See PCR Collection: Box 4223, 1993, Applications for Special Fund grants, South African Christian Women's Movement.

35. The ICT was founded in 1991 and requested a Special Fund grant for its Education for Democracy Programme. This was designed to ensure that people understood that while they might be voting on the basis of a political manifesto, they should insist that they be part of the implementing mechanism – whether at regional or local level. ICT felt that democracy should maximize participation of the people in the economy, the creation of wealth and the distribution of wealth. The grant was to help the ICT to reach out more effectively to the rural poor and marginalized sections of the community. See WCCRS, Minutes of the Executive Committee of the WCC, Geneva, 1993.

36. The Soweto affiliate of the SACWAYMCA was established in 1993. Its focus was on women voter education. It wanted to recruit about 40 women field workers to undertake training on a fulltime basis for four months prior to the elections. The idea was to empower women to deal with issues of democratization and how they could become agents of change. See WCCRS, Minutes of the Executive Committee of the WCC, Geneva, 1993.

37. *Ibid.*

US\$ 35, 000.<sup>38</sup> In 1994, it was only the WDF that received US\$20, 000.<sup>39</sup> This was the last financial support that the WCC Executive Committee granted to South Africans from the PCR Special Fund. The WCC thereby completed a 25-year period of dedicated redistribution of resources from the powerful to the powerless from 1970 until 1994.

The funding had provided regular assistance throughout the 1970s and 1980s for the needs of the politically exiled South Africans who were denied democratic rights by the apartheid government. This support continued into the 1990s to assist those whose rights were still being withheld. The final funding to the Women's Development Foundation was clear evidence of helping perhaps the most powerless of all South Africans to reclaim their political and social freedom. It assisted the South African women to perform effectively as elected members of local, provincial and national governmental bodies in 1994.

Some members of the Executive Committee objected to the ANC and the PAC receiving funding on a regular basis. This was an indication of the enduring belief in some quarters of the WCC that it was wrong to support freedom fighters.<sup>40</sup> The ANC and PAC had other sources of support such as the Swedish government, who provided considerable financial support for the welfare of ANC leaders.<sup>41</sup> The AAM also raised money to help the ANC establish new structures.<sup>42</sup> Boris Yeltsin's Russian administration, conversely, dropped its financial assistance to the ANC at the end of the Cold War.<sup>43</sup>

## **Bridging**

The PCR's bridging strategy continued after 1991, but made adjustments in accordance with the political process of negotiations that was taking place. It engaged with many of the political exiles who were back in the country, including the representatives of the different sectors of civil society and the supporters of the ruling and official opposition political parties.

In January 1991, Nelson Mandela called for an all-party congress to prepare for a constituent assembly. F.W. de Klerk's positive response to this took the negotiations a step forward.<sup>44</sup> In February, the WCC General Assembly in Canberra declared its support for a constituent assembly and four months later,

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38. *Ibid.*

39. WCCRC, Minutes of Executive Committee of WCC meeting, Johannesburg, 18–19 January 1994, Appendix V, p. 94.

40. WCCRC, Minutes of Executive Committee of WCC, Canberra, 4–6 February 1991, p. 6.

41. T. Sellström, 'Sweden and the Nordic Countries: Official Solidarity and Assistance from the West', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 3, Part 1*, p. 520.

42. A. Gurney, 'In the Heart of the Beast: The British Anti-Apartheid Movement', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 3, Part 1*, p. 348.

43. V. Shubin, 'There is No Threat from the Eastern Bloc', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy Volume 3, Part 2*, p. 1056.

44. Davenport, *The Transfer of Power*, pp. 9–10; O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p. 408.

in June, the PCR in conjunction with the UN Centre for Human Rights, arranged a workshop in Geneva on international human rights standards and constitutional law. Here, the PCR brought together all shades of South African representation to Geneva. The participants were from political parties, civic organizations, religious and human rights groups, academic and research institutions; across the board they were outstanding individuals who represented their diverse constituencies.

From the political parties, there were luminaries such as Dikgang Moseneke, Willie Sereti and Ben Ngoepe, from the PAC; Zola Skweyiya, Bulelani Ngcuka and the late Dullar Omar from the ANC; Chris Fischer, Gert Myburg and Renier Schoeman from the National Party; Mojankunyana Gumbi and Mbulelo Rakwena from the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO); and Colin Eglin and Tony Leon from the Democratic Party. The trade unions were represented by Mahlomolo Skhosana and Sisi Kampepe from the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) and by Mcebisi Msizi and Jay Naidoo from COSATU. Pat Laphunya participated on behalf of the Southern Transvaal Civic Association. From the legal fraternity there were people such as Pius Langa from the National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADEL) and Peter Mothoe and Jack Unterhalter from Lawyers for Human Rights. The academic fraternity was also there, including Charles Villa Vicencio from the University of Cape Town, Johann Kinghorn from Stellenbosch, Nic Hayson from Wits, Marinus Wiechers from UNISA, Mokgethi Motlhabi from Wilgerspruit Fellowship Centre and Louisa Zondo from the Constitutional Research Unit, Natal University. The Religious groups were represented by Jonathan Draper, Jameson Don Buys, and Sister Margaret Kelly from the Catholic Church; Father Smangaliso Mkatshwa from the Institute for Contextual Theology; and Gerrie Lubbe and Avil Sooklal from the World Council for Religion and Peace (WCRP). The late Mary Mxadana represented the SACC. The South African PCR director, Barney Pityana was also present.<sup>45</sup> Although he trained in theology, his dedicated interests also stretched to law, human rights and the academe.<sup>46</sup>

The PCR and the UN also assembled a group of international experts ranging from judges, members of human rights bodies, specialist groups and university professors to share their insights on international human rights principles and their incorporation into constitutional law. The gathering afforded an opportunity for the exchange of views and genuine dialogue on constitutional issues between South African and international luminaries. It also raised awareness of the possibilities which human rights standards offered for nation building.<sup>47</sup> The workshop delayed for a day because some of the representatives from the

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45. PCR Collection: Box 4223, 1991, Participants at the human rights and constitutional law workshop, 17–20, June 1991.

46. [www.unisa.ac.za/contents/about/principle/docs/Prof\\_pityunabridged\\_cv\\_September2009pdf](http://www.unisa.ac.za/contents/about/principle/docs/Prof_pityunabridged_cv_September2009pdf)

47. PCR Collection: Box 4223, 1991, James Mutambirwa's letter of 7 May 1991 to the ANC general secretary, Alfred Nzo, inviting his organization to the workshop in June 1991; Rev. Barney Pityana's letter to Dr Dugard, inviting him to attend the human rights and constitutional law workshop, 30 May 1991.

liberation background could not agree to sit around a table to hold discussions with their former oppressors. They finally agreed to bury the hatchet and proceeded with the workshop.<sup>48</sup> The impasse was understandable, given that these were compatriots who had been legally estranged for decades.

The report on the workshop indicates that the participants were mainly preoccupied with the economic, social and cultural rights of citizens. They were particularly interested in finding out how to improve the situation of black South Africans, including the ending of discrimination with regard to race and gender. The range of issues they debated included affirmative action; the concept of minority rights and its relationship to requests for special protection from certain groups; the judiciary and its independence; how to make the judiciary and other organs of society reflect the country's composition; as well as techniques which could be used to translate the UN standards into the South African context.<sup>49</sup>

Mbulelo Rakwena of AZAPO corroborated the report and shed light on some of the debates. There were participants like him, who recognized that even in a democratic society where there was universal suffrage, a vote in itself was meaningless. They therefore explored the possibilities of concrete rights informed by the social and economic realities in South Africa. They pondered upon issues related to whether the new state could guarantee rights to housing, employment, health, education and other basic essentials to restore the human dignity of the people. With regard to property rights, they debated whether the new state could guarantee property ownership or not, since the minority groups already had the advantage because of the legacy of racial inequality.<sup>50</sup> He was particularly interested in the new state whose constitution was to guarantee black people the rights to housing and employment, among other things. His commentary reflected the aspirations of his political organization, steeped in Black Consciousness philosophy.

The PCR provided opportunities for discussions outside the formal meetings, with a view to facilitate mutual understanding. These discussions were reported as being open, frank and friendly. The South Africans requested that further talks and assistance be provided to promote understanding and respect for human rights in the South African context. They also asked for more seminars on issues such as setting up a constitutional court, the judiciary and standards for the police. Other requests included advice on education and advanced studies in human rights, publications and information activities, as well as training for teachers, lawyers, judges and police officers and the translation and distribution on human rights materials.<sup>51</sup> This was a major breakthrough by the PCR in

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48. Interview with Mbulelo Rakwena, Centurion, 6 July 2010.

49. PCR Collection: Box 4223, 1991, Draft report of the UN Centre for Human Rights–WCC Seminar on International Human Rights Standards and Constitutional Law, 17–20 June 1991.

50. Interview with Mbulelo Rakwena, Centurion, 6 July 2010.

51. PCR Collection: Box 4223, 1991, Draft report of constitutional seminar, 17–20 June 1991.

bridging the gaps among divided South Africans. South Africans across the racial and political divide sought assistance which would equip them to end their racialized past and create a new society where justice prevailed.

During the workshop, the WCC general secretary had the opportunity to remind South Africans of the WCC's campaign to eliminate apartheid over many decades, seeking to express the gospel message of justice. He predicted that apartheid by faith was about to die, freedom was to triumph and that highly skilled work was needed to establish constitutional law and the basic rights of every South African. He reiterated that the task of the WCC was to encourage the people to listen to one another, socialize together, even if only for a few days. More importantly, he asked God to grant them tolerance towards one another.<sup>52</sup> His statement underscored the relevance of the PCR's bridging-strategy over the two decades of its existence.

The workshop was significant in two respects. Firstly, the gathering was historic for the WCC. It was the first time that the WCC addressed its rejection of apartheid to all South Africans, including representatives of the government and official opposition, in one venue. As much as the WCC sided with victims of racism, as a church institution it at the same time recognized its duty to the perpetrators of racism in its ministry of education and reconciliation. Secondly, the consultation provided an inimitable opportunity for South Africans to dialogue on the issues of human rights and a constitution from their diverse perspectives. It offered them expert knowledge and insight about these key issues. More importantly, it equipped them in their preparations for the imminent constitutional negotiations back in their country.

In the end, after protracted negotiations, South Africans agreed on an interim constitution under which the country was to be ruled by a government of national unity. Nelson Mandela approved the interim constitution on 18 November 1993.<sup>53</sup> Some analysts viewed the process which led to the interim constitution in a positive light. Richard Spitz and Matthew Chaskalson believed that it met the key interests of the main negotiators: the ANC and the National Party. In their opinion, it attained the level of support needed for its adoption, even though the yardstick of sufficient consensus was controversial.<sup>54</sup> Adrian Guelke also emphasized the rational, deliberate process and the workable compromises made by the negotiators in arriving at the interim constitution. Notably, he observed that the negotiators drew on global best practice as a model.<sup>55</sup> The significant catalytic role the PCR and the UN played in South African constitutional negotiations is evident in the two following commentaries. One was

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52. PCR Collection: Box 4223, 1991, Annexure 11, Statement by Rev. Emilio Castro of the WCC, 17 June 1991 at the constitutional seminar, 17–20 June 1991.

53. Reddy, 'The United Nations', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 3, Part 1*, p. 136.

54. R. Spitz with M. Chaskalson, *The Politics of Transition: A Hidden History of South Africa's Negotiated Settlement* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2002), p. 421.

55. Guelke, *Rethinking the Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 172.

Rakwena's confirmation (in his report on the workshop discussed above) that representatives had benefited from the exchange of ideas with the group of international experts about constitutional law and human rights. The other was Guelke's observation that the negotiators in South Africa had been guided by international practice in their deliberations.

The next bridging effect by the WCC and its PCR was in October 1991, when endemic violence in South Africa began to pose a serious obstacle to negotiations. Even though the national peace accord had already been signed a month earlier, violence persisted. In view of the urgent need to curb unrest and to protect the negotiation process, the WCC delegates interacted with many of the South African stakeholders. By then it had been revealed that De Klerk's government was involved in funding and supplying weapons to the IFP with the aim of fanning violence in the township to weaken the ANC.<sup>56</sup> The PAC's armed wing, the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) was also involved in racial attacks.<sup>57</sup>

The WCC and PCR delegates had separate meetings with De Klerk; the PAC president, Clarence Makwethu; the IFP leader, Gatsha Buthelezi; the ANC's Nelson Mandela; and AZAPO representatives. All these leaders had the opportunity to listen to the various versions of what was perceived as the cause of the political violence which was destabilizing the country. Although the WCC delegates met with the stakeholders individually rather than jointly, their desire was to unite all South Africans. They appealed to all groups to make compromises and not to allow violence to derail the progress towards a negotiated constitutional settlement. The WCC representatives encouraged dialogue and cooperation among them to achieve reconciliation for the country.<sup>58</sup>

The personal encounter between the WCC delegates and De Klerk was of special interest. The WCC and the NP government had an adversarial relationship ever since the launching of the PCR. It was remarkable that the PCR director, Barney Pityana and the president of the apartheid government were at that juncture engaging as fellow South African compatriots in the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.<sup>59</sup> Further, the WCC delegates interacted with ordinary residents in various black townships and hostel dwellers who were victims of the violence. They prayed with them and asked God to bring peace to their trouble-torn country.<sup>60</sup>

The delegates also attended many other events in different parts of the country. They were present at Tambo's appointment ceremony as the new vice chancellor

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56. Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 3, Part 2*, p. 820.

57. Clark and Worger, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 108.

58. PCR Collection: Box 4223, 1991, *From Cottesloe to Cape Town: Challenges for the Church in a Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Geneva: WCC-PCR brochure, 1991), pp. 64–76.

59. PCR Collection: Box 4223, 1991, WCC visit to South Africa, 12–23 October 1991.

60. *Ibid.*

of Fort Hare University. Tambo had enjoyed a long association with the WCC and had contributed in the founding of the PCR. In addition, the delegates participated at a symposium on the legacy of Steve Biko. The untimely death of Biko had inspired the PCR to make it its business to inform the world about who he was. With its publication on this struggle icon, it made the world aware of the dangerous apartheid system that had led to the death in police custody of the most influential black intellectual, political leader and Christian, a man who had stood for justice and equality.<sup>61</sup>

During the exchanges with South Africans, the WCC general secretary made several recommendations. He appealed to them to avoid the dangers of tribalism and a one-party state which would stifle democracy. A multi-party system with an obligation to pluralism was far preferable. He advocated for a participatory economic democracy and challenged the researchers, theologians, economists, sociologists and politicians to collaborate and find ways and means to set in motion the processes of reconstruction and restitution that were required in their country. He urged the universities to create special programmes to address the 'lost generation' of the 1970s and 1980s who had dropped out of the school system and had thus made no progress in the economic life of society. He highlighted the value of Black Consciousness, an ideology initiated by Steve Biko which South Africans could use as a weapon to fight the inferior black education. He encouraged a vibrant civil society, where trade unions, co-operatives, neighbourhood groups and sport groups would thrive. He also communicated the WCC's wish to celebrate the end of apartheid with South Africans and the beginning of a just non-racial, non-sexist democratic society.<sup>62</sup>

The WCC came to South Africa primarily to participate in a consultation it co-sponsored with the SACC. As churches, they explored the ecumenical agenda for a changing South Africa. The presence of the WCC delegates in South Africa was of vital importance. It signified a positive beginning and marked the end of a 21-year period where there had been a decidedly cold relationship between the WCC and the South African government.

The following month, in November 1991, the PCR made another effort to connect South Africans. Together with UNESCO, they invited representatives of different faiths to another workshop in Geneva. They assembled a gathering of religious leaders from a wide variety of different persuasions, including Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, African Indigenous Churches, the Catholic Church, the Dutch Reformed Church and theologians from academic institutions. The workshop explored the role of religion and religious institutions in the dismantling of apartheid.

For this study, the significance of this workshop lay in the fact that the WCC once again provided a rare opportunity for Hindu, Jewish, Islamic and multi-racial

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61. *Ibid.*

62. *Ibid.*

Christian South Africans to dialogue with one another in an effort to find a common identity for a new country. The prominent faith leaders who participated included Sally Frankental from the Centre of Jewish Studies; Sister Margaret Kelly from the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference; Professor Bernard Lategan from Stellenbosch University; Dr Gerrie J. A. Lubbe from the World Conference on Religion and Peace; Archbishop Ndumiso Ngada, from the Theological Training Centre in Braamfontein; Professor Martin Prozesky from Natal University; Dr Anil Sooklal from Durban; Professor Charles Villa Vicencio from Cape Town University; and Barney Pityana as the director of the PCR. There were also other representatives from UNESCO and the WCC, including the former PCR director, Baldwin Sjollema.<sup>63</sup>

The participants agreed that religion had a vital role to play, not only in bringing about reconciliation but also in the political, social and economic transformation of South Africa. In their concluding statement, they said the following:

We now live in a transitional period in South Africa. We are walking towards a new era within which a non-racial, non-sexist democracy seems possible. We are obliged to:

- (1) continue to raise a prophetic voice, saying, 'NO' to all forms of injustice, suffering and exploitation whenever and at whatever level they may occur;
- (2) learn to say a creative 'YES' to such possibilities of socio-economic and political reconstruction that make for a better, more just and more humane society. Recognizing our obligations to do justice, love one another and care especially for the poor, we regard it to be our specific obligation to ensure that national reconstruction be such that those in most need benefit most from the change process that is beginning to unfold.<sup>64</sup>

Their declaration was important. It indicated a shared enthusiasm to build a common understanding and to take cooperative steps for the future of a new South Africa. Pertinently, the PCR catalytic role once again advanced the spirit of solidarity and partnership among these representatives of diverse faiths in South Africa.

The next opportunity for the WCC and its PCR to connect South Africans was in its monitoring of violence and assistance in the holding of a democratic election. At the meeting of the WCC with the ANC in October 1991, Nelson Mandela made a special call to the churches (and the business sector) to assume responsibility for ensuring that violence in the country did not derail the negotiation process. The WCC embraced this call because it had direct access to virtually all sectors of the South African society.<sup>65</sup> At its consultation with the SACC at the time, the

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63. PCR Collection: Box 4223, 1991, Telex from Mary Balikungeri of the PCR to Mr Boar of UNESCO, Paris, on plan for the consultation on the role of religion and religious institutions, 1 October 1991.

64. Final report on workshop on 'The Role of Religion and Religious Institutions in the Dismantling of Apartheid', November 22–25 1991, Geneva, Switzerland. Copy available in WCC Main Library in Geneva.

65. PCR Collection: Box 4223, 1991, *From Cottesloe to Cape Town*, WCC-PCR brochure.



WCC resolved, among other things, to set up an effective monitoring system which was to be supervised by an international group with adequate powers to investigate, report and ensure appropriate action.<sup>66</sup>

The prospect of a peacefully negotiated settlement reached its nadir by 1992. Codesa was deadlocked over the constitutional issue and violence spiralled. In May, the SACC invited politicians and church leaders to participate in a summit on violence. The summit acknowledged the need for an international mechanism to monitor violence. Together with the SACBC, the SACC called upon the international church community to send teams to monitor violence, the political transitional process and the general election.<sup>67</sup>

The PCR responded to the call and worked out the structure, policy and vision of an ecumenical monitoring programme, in a planning and briefing workshop in Geneva in August 1992. In conjunction with the Vatican's Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace, the WCC provided international coordination to this programme. Reverend Daniel N'toni from Angola became the international coordinator of this programme, with his office at the WCC in Geneva.<sup>68</sup> Beyers Naudé chaired the national element of this monitoring programme, which became known as the Ecumenical Monitoring Programme in South Africa (EMPSA).

EMPSA had three components: the Ecumenical Eminent Persons Group (EEPG); the group of experts; and the operational monitors. The first component, the EEPG, included Bishop Sir Paul Reeves, the former governor-general of New Zealand, who was at the time the Anglican representative at the UN,<sup>69</sup> Archbishop Nikodamus Kinima, Bishop Suzan Morrison, Hildegard Zimach and Magne Theresa van Hareren. These were outstanding individuals who were committed to justice, democracy and human rights. They spent a week engaging all parties on the constitutional transformation that was underway and the future of South Africa. More importantly, their presence demonstrated the concern of the church worldwide for the suffering of the people of South Africa. The EEPG called on all South Africans to stop the violence.<sup>70</sup> The EEPG, SACC and the SACBC officially launched the independent EMPSA in September 1992.<sup>71</sup>

The second component of EMPSA, the Group of Experts arrived in South Africa for a period of two weeks. Their expertise ranged from monitoring, policing, control of violence, work with community organizations, management, identifying

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66. *Ibid.*; T.A. Borer, *Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa, 1980–1994* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), p. 177.

67. *Ibid.*

68. PCR Collection: Box 4223.9.13, 1992, Rev. Daniel N'toni.

69. PCR Collection: Box 4223.9.13, 1992, Letter from Barney Pityana to all EMPSA partners, 26 September 1992.

70. PCR Collection: Box 4223.9.13, 1993, Report of the EEPG, 25 July–1 August 1993, WCC-PCR, EMPSA.

71. Borer, *Challenging the State*, p. 177.

human rights violations; and expediting conflict resolutions. The group ran training workshops and provided advice and hands-on solutions in areas of concern. The third and biggest component of EMPISA was the team of operational monitors that was deployed to various parts of South Africa. The WCC recruited many volunteers to monitor violence and the smooth-running of elections. The financial resources for EMPISA came from many churches and other bodies all over the world. The volunteers arrived as teams from various countries such as Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Kenya, the UK and the US. Many of these volunteers were people with experience in monitoring elections in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Haiti, Namibia, Zambia, Kenya and Angola. They helped in quelling the political violence and appeasing political opponents where this was possible. They also provided voter education for South Africans preparing them for the April general election.<sup>72</sup>

The importance of the EMPISA initiative was that it brought together an assortment of churches ranging from the African Indigenous, Fundamentalist, Liberal, Pentecostal, Orthodox, Protestant to Catholic, from within and outside the country, to collaborate in monitoring the violent transition towards a democratic South Africa. Pertinently, the PCR was the catalyst in this endeavour. There were similar initiatives in place from other international groups such as the UN, Commonwealth, European Community and the OAU, all of which assisted the South African transition.<sup>73</sup> The Clinton administration sent Jesse Jackson to head the official US observer team. The American Committee on Africa was also present as an observer, as was Prexy Nesbitt who had played many roles in the solidarity movement over a quarter of a century. He was assigned to areas in the vicinity of Empangeni in rural Kwa-Zulu.<sup>74</sup> Notably, Nesbitt was a former staff-member of the PCR.

The WCC sent its own team to monitor the first democratic election. The SACC handled the logistical arrangements for allocating the WCC monitors. Sjollema, former PCR director, was in a group of ten based in Johannesburg which monitored the Gauteng province. Kenneth Kaunda, the former president of Zambia, led this group. Kaunda had had a close relationship with the WCC since 1968 at the Uppsala General Assembly. The group celebrated Kaunda's 70th birthday at its Johannesburg hotel during the course of this mission.<sup>75</sup> Others who came to the country included Bola Ige from Nigeria, Nina Koshy from India and Jose Chipenda from Angola. From within the WCC they had all supported the founding and the survival of the PCR throughout its campaign against apartheid. In April 1994 they were stationed at various polling stations to observe

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72. PCR Collection: Box 4223.9.13, 1993, WCC-PCR, EMPISA.

73. Reddy, 'The United Nations', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 3, Part 1*, pp. 134–135.

74. Minter and Hill, 'Anti-Apartheid Solidarity', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, Part 2*, p. 822.

75. Electronic interview with Baldwin Sjollema, 9 September 2010.

the voting, counting of the votes and transportation of the ballot boxes to the election centres. They reported irregularities to the Electoral Commission.

In the words of Baldwin Sjollema:

It was for many of us one of the most emotional moments of our lives, to see those millions of people queuing up for hours proudly waiting for their turn, for the first time to use their democratic rights. I shall never forget those days. It was an indescribable happy moment. A dream come true.

The presence of the WCC team in South Africa and the feedback from Sjollema are vitally important. Many of the individuals in the team were present at the Uppsala General Assembly in 1968 when the WCC took the decision to act against racism in South Africa and elsewhere. Many were part of the layers in the organizational structure of the PCR. They had faced severe trials and tribulations as the PCR campaigned against apartheid. Sjollema in particular had led the PCR for more than a decade. Thereafter he had remained closely in touch with its activities. Thus, the reality of South Africa's first non-racial national election and the inauguration of the first democratic government, was a special moment for this team.

## **Conclusion**

Faced by the overwhelming obstacle of violence in the country and the impact of an internal 'reshuffle' in the PCR, the WCC followed through on its commitment to assist in the achievement of a democratic South African society. The PCR initiatives in South Africa were visible only until 1992, when it still functioned as an independent commission. Although the PCR's influence as a working group lessened in 1993, it still condemned the attack on the World Trade Centre by members of the Afrikaner Volksfront and Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging and other paramilitary right wing Afrikaner groups.<sup>76</sup> It called into question the inaction, neutrality and legitimacy of the South African police force. It also supported the call made by the SACC for joint control of the armed forces. It pledged its commitment to the oppressed in South Africa and its support to bring freedom and justice to South Africa.<sup>77</sup> It even urged the creditor banks to provide financial resources to the groups previously denied equal access to credit. Notwithstanding the internal disagreement on continuation of funding, the WCC and PCR walked the last mile together with the people of South Africa and the world community in ending the apartheid system in 1994. The WCC moderator, Archbishop Aram Keshishian and Ms Mercy Amba Oduyoye arrived to witness the official inauguration of President Nelson Mandela on 10 May 1994.<sup>78</sup> The WCC had indeed made its contribution in mending the South African nation.

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76. While elements of the far right continued to resist the new dispensation, the mainstream entered institutional politics with the formation of the Freedom Front.

77. Minutes of the Working Group on Racism, Ethnicity and Indigenous People, Programme Unit III, WCC, 24–28 June 1993, p. 16.

78. WCCRS, Minutes of the Executive Committee of WCC, Bucharest, September 1994, p. 3.

## Chapter Eight

### Conclusion

In concluding this thesis it seems appropriate to retrace the steps that led to its conception. It was initiated through a number of experiences and encounters, sparked by an interest in religion as a agent of social and political change that began in an honours course offered by the late Professor Gabriel Setiloane of the University of Cape Town, on 'the black man in a white church'. That was in the early 1990s. A master's degree on the political career of Raymond Mhlaba followed. It was an attempt to establish the personal sacrifice of an actor caught in the struggle for political liberation from apartheid. These strands have fed into this research which ultimately emerged from various excursions into archives at the University of the Witwatersrand and University of South Africa respectively, and which led to intensive archival explorations in Geneva at the WCC Archives.

An interest in ANC politics completed the picture, especially when I discovered that UCT's Department of Religious Studies had links with the PCR. Oliver Tambo's ties with religious agencies added complexity to the prospective study and a meeting with Cedric Mayson,<sup>1</sup> who headed the ANC religion desk at the time, fostered a link with Baldwin Sjollema, the first director of the PCR. Sjollema visited South Africa in 2006 and a reading of *A Long Struggle: The Involvement of the WCC in South Africa* (1994) further spurred this research. Although all these influences aroused my curiosity in studying the activities of this religious body, my primary interest remained the socio-political history of its agenda on racism.

The confluence of religious involvement in politics, the liberation struggle and the international anti-apartheid movement provided the occasion for a detailed documentary exploration of the PCR as a vehicle of the WCC's humanitarian support of revolutionary activity in South Africa after 1969. Its origins naturally required an examination of WCC pronouncements on apartheid from 1948 and subsequent policy on apartheid presented in the early chapters of this thesis.

The aftermath of the Second World War saw only some restoration of international stability. The Cold War that followed resulted in the schism which separated the world into East and West, with communism and capitalism competing. The manifestation of apartheid, at more or less the same time, illustrated the failure of social justice for peoples struggling for their basic human rights. The problem of racism consequently became a major issue in international moral discourses and global politics.

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1. Interview with Cedric Mayson, Luthuli House, Johannesburg, 14 April 2005.

As a Christian institution, the WCC believed in the ideas of equality, justice, democracy and the morality of non-violence. It therefore faced a serious challenge when the National Party government implemented and sustained legislated racial segregation which resulted in structural violence in South Africa until the early 1990s. The predicament arose from its assorted membership from the West, East and elsewhere, whose orientation often followed the divisions of Cold War politics and who initially adhered to the principle of non-violence in the face of structural violence that the apartheid system represented.

The inclusive yet divergent sectoral nature of the WCC lent itself to being an ideological battleground among its ecumenical members during the anti-apartheid struggle. This accounted for the jigsaw in the various structures of the WCC where individual members with different belief systems collaborated to tackle racism. The WCC's diversity of commitment and political affiliation created constant tension among the members, whose orientation and self-interest were competitive, even combative, as ethical and religious positions were asserted or defended in terms of a globalizing political environment. It also allowed the most powerful sector and personalities, at different moments and in different contexts, to control the nature of the involvement of the WCC in South Africa.

Despite the competing views of its members, this thesis has shown that the WCC was at least categorical and consistent in its denunciation of apartheid from 1948 to 1994. This is clear from the evidence marshalled in the substantive chapters that cover the seven general assemblies, from the late 1940s to the early 1990s. These landmark conferences largely decided the extent and nature of the WCC's participation in South African affairs and delineated the growing activism which accompanied these. It is argued that the main problem lay in the approaches which were adopted in tackling racism in South Africa, especially since the increasingly inclusive membership of the WCC emphasized the contests among positions within the ranks on how apartheid should be resisted. There was always contestation about the approach to be taken in the fight against racism in South Africa. Accordingly, from the beginning to the end, the approach that the leading members adopted determined the WCC's effectiveness, or lack thereof, in challenging apartheid. But the thesis demonstrates the incremental shift from the purely rhetorical condemnation of apartheid to active resistance and an acceptance of armed struggle in light of 'just war' theory.

The findings of this research indicate that in the initial stages – the late 1940s and early 1950s – the WCC had difficulty in speaking out against the social upheavals and the destructive changes apartheid caused in South Africa. Its voice was modulated and cautious. At the time, it was a predominantly Western ecumenical family, with only a few Asian and African members. The leading British, European and American sector, in charge, failed to implement the anti-apartheid policy that the WCC Amsterdam General Assembly formulated in 1948. This sector was profoundly influenced by the white South African ecumenical members who either supported 'positive' apartheid or were paternalistic towards

the majority of blacks. This was despite the presence and the voice of black members of the calibre of Chief Albert Luthuli and Professor Z.K. Matthews, who promoted a non-racial democracy.

The leading white British, European and American, as well as the South African ecumenical membership was not persuaded that the majority of black South Africans were 'civilized' enough to merit equal political rights in the country. They feared the influence of communism which some black South African political representatives embraced at the time. They also feared restrictions to religious freedom under a prospective black government with communist leanings. Among them were powerful individuals such as Sir Kenneth Grubb whose international business interests influenced his views. A prospective pro-communist black government did not seem favourable. The pro-capitalist apartheid government which obtained its second election victory from the white electorate in 1953 therefore had nothing to fear from the WCC.

The limited pressure from the WCC in challenging apartheid from 1948 to 1953 decreased even more between 1954 and 1960. The dominant sector within its membership did not put the WCC's anti-apartheid policy (which was reiterated at the Evanston Assembly in 1954) into practice. It wavered in setting up the Secretariat on Racial and Ethnic Relations which was meant to institutionalize opposition and resistance to legally sanctioned racism. It was reluctant to spend WCC money on this initiative. Instead, the British, European and American constituency obtained its guidance mainly from the white proponents of 'positive' apartheid, such as Professor Ben Marais, rather than from the few liberal white critics of apartheid, such as Bishop Ambrose Reeves, and discounted the opinions and advocacy of black activists, such as Matthews and Luthuli.

Willem Visser't Hooft, the WCC general secretary at the time, believed strongly in building church unity, particularly with the Dutch Reformed churches during this era. He therefore directed the WCC's involvement in South Africa towards primarily achieving that aim. The WCC accordingly aligned its campaign more with the interests of white Afrikaans-speaking Dutch Reformed churches, whose members supported the ruling NP government and its apartheid system, as well as the smaller white English-speaking churches whose liberal views were weakly critical of the apartheid state, rather than the unrepresented, and therefore invisible, ecumenical black churches whose members desired a non-racial democratic country. It was only the brutality of the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 which challenged the WCC ideologically. Archbishop Joost de Blank demanded that the WCC expel the Cape and Transvaal Nederduits-Gereformeerde Kerk synods from its membership 'for the sake of Christianity'. It refused to do so but agreed to assist in organizing a conference of its South African member churches.<sup>2</sup> The Cottesloe consultation compelled it not only to face up to South

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2. J.W. de Gruchy, 'Grappling with a Colonial Heritage: The English-speaking Churches under Imperialism and Apartheid', in R. Elphick and R. Davenport, eds, *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1997), p. 162.

Africa politics, something that it had been avoiding, but to also decide which priority was more important, church unity among white South African churches whose Western orientation seemed complicit in racial injustice, or social and moral justice for the majority of black South Africans whose espousal of Christianity had not prevented the erosion of their rights under apartheid.

Most importantly, it was at this juncture – the 1960s – that the WCC constituency changed dramatically. The combination of more Africans, Asians and others from the developing world who joined the WCC as a result of decolonization, and those within the Western churches who were yearning for change in the work of the church, began to counter the ideological imbalance which had given weight to the views of the dominating white Western and liberal members of the WCC ecumenical family. The ‘new blood’, whose interests were liberation, equality and development, among other social concerns, changed the agenda that the WCC had hitherto pursued. Further, devotion to the belief of non-violence by many of the WCC’s members was subjected to a decisive test as repression escalated under the supposedly Christian government of the Republic of South Africa, symbolized by the Sharpeville massacre.

Even a panel of the British Council of Churches declared:

It is too late to insist that our support should be confined to those pledged to non-violence. To urge their subjects to avoid violence furthers the ends of governments ... who themselves habitually employ violence to repress any move that would upset the role of privileged minorities. The time has come to show our solidarity with those seeking radical change and struggling for freedom in Southern Africa.<sup>3</sup>

The findings of this study indicate that it was in the seven years from 1961 to 1967 that the WCC started building a real challenge to the apartheid government. For the very first time there was adherence to the WCC anti-apartheid policy which was renewed in New Delhi in 1961 by a more activist leadership. This less homogenized group laid the groundwork for an internal institutional structure to tackle racism when it revived the Secretariat on Racial and Ethnic Relations initiative. It stopped pandering to white Christians in South Africa and recommended that they join forces with fellow compatriots and international governments to end apartheid, to avoid isolation in the global arena. It encouraged Christians worldwide to rally support for justice in South Africa; to demonstrate their empathy with victims of discrimination and to alleviate their suffering. It also warned governments that had trade links with the apartheid state to curtail these in the interests of achieving justice in South Africa.

The two consultations the WCC sponsored during this period were major landmarks in advancing its approach to the problem of racism. The Cottesloe consultation had already concluded that apartheid could not be reconciled with

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3. G.W. Shepherd Jr, ‘Humanitarian Assistance to Liberation Movements’, *Africa Today*, 21, 4 (1974), p.76.

the teachings of the Bible. The Mindolo consultation, which it co-sponsored in 1964, went further to explore Christian practice and desirable action to transform race relations in southern Africa. From this consultation, the WCC heeded the call made by blacks in southern Africa, for economic sanctions against the apartheid government. It noted the appeal to create platforms for church and political leaders to dialogue about the problem of apartheid. It listened to the messages of Christian leaders such as Matthews and Professor Eduardo Mondlane, who communicated that violence was the only option left to blacks in southern Africa to resist apartheid and the Portuguese white minority government in Mozambique. It began to take the side of the victims of racism in the region and supported them financially in their defence against unjust laws.

The arrival of an activist leadership in the WCC paved the way for a much more effective approach in tackling racism. Its Geneva consultation in 1966 searched for thoughts and actions from Christians to resolve problems of domination, poverty and inequality. It noted the appeal for Christians to work for seismic change to achieve social justice and called upon its member churches to use their power and resources to redress the racial imbalance of power in the world.

During this era, the global representation within the WCC ecumenical family no longer permitted the opinions of politically powerful South African church leaders, or those of the world church, to dictate a moderate stance in its challenge to apartheid. Instead it heeded the cries of oppressed South Africans and showed Christian compassion by supporting their cause. Earlier, the WCC did not engage with the views expressed by Luthuli, the president of the ANC, which advocated a non-racial South Africa. He was a devout Christian who was the vice-president of the Christian Council of South Africa. His call for economic sanctions against the apartheid government finally received a sympathetic ear from a more radicalized WCC. His untimely, mysterious death in 1967 had a strong impact on the WCC.

Before the Sharpeville massacre, the WCC had discounted Professor Z.K. Matthews' warning not to gamble with the lives of black South Africans who endured racial injustice under the evolving apartheid system. At Cottesloe in 1960, the WCC listened to him expressing a genuine desire on the part of the oppressed majority to create a non-racial, democratic South Africa. But four years later, in Mindolo, the WCC entertained his argument that it was the end of the road for black South Africans who could no longer sustain their non-violent ways to appease the apartheid government. The WCC went as far as offering him a post to head its division which dealt with church aid service to refugees. Brigalia Bam joined the WCC staff in 1967 and met Matthews. She recalls that he was instrumental in nominating the candidates who were appointed in the next Central Committee.<sup>4</sup> Importantly, it was this Central Committee that was responsible for the WCC modifying its traditional loyalty to pacifism and passive resistance and adopting militancy against racism. Matthews, together with

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4. Interview with Brigalia Bam, Johannesburg, 10 October 2010.



Professor D.G.S M'timkhulu, the first secretary of the All Africa Council of Churches, were key influences on the WCC.<sup>5</sup> This notwithstanding, the growing concern about apartheid and the more committed position on the liberation of South Africans by the WCC was still short of substantive action.

The crisis of racial discrimination and political turbulence experienced throughout the world in 1968 demanded the WCC to do much more than listen to the voice of the oppressed and issue verbal assurances about restoring social justice. This period saw the surge of Black Consciousness, black power, liberation and Black Theology, and the call for revolutionary changes to transform the world community.<sup>6</sup> The violent death of Martin Luther King Jr, as a result of white racism particularly, tipped the scales in favour of constructing the liberation struggle in South Africa as a 'just war' by the WCC. This saw a rising radicalization within the WCC ecumenical family which impacted on how it proceeded to tackle the problem of racism throughout the 1970s.

It was at the fourth WCC General Assembly in Uppsala in 1968 that the real challenge to racism in South Africa (and elsewhere) culminated in an undertaking beyond declaration. The assembly challenged the churches to be relevant by becoming actively concerned for the economic and political well-being of exploited groups in the world community. The process which initiated this challenge determined the nature of resistance waged by the WCC against apartheid from then onwards. The WCC canvassed widely for guidance on the nature and causes of racism and adopted a global perspective to resolve this problem. The end product was the militant, politically charged Programme to Combat Racism which the WCC inaugurated in 1969.

The eighteen-month process which established the PCR, intended to run for five years, was bitterly contested the whole time. The dominant militant sector ignored the apprehension expressed by the Archbishop of Cape Town, Robert Selby Taylor, that there was inadequate consultation and approval within the ecumenical family in the choice the WCC took to isolate white racism. It also ignored the criticism of Bill Burnett who was displeased by the badly crafted statement the WCC adopted, which proposed revolutionary and political solutions to end racism. Right-wing hecklers jeered Trevor Huddleston and Oliver Tambo for their views on apartheid. A minority view in the WCC Central Committee favoured a moderate rather than a militant programme. There was even a clandestine attempt to seek an alternative to the militant PCR at Ulvenhout in the Netherlands, by moderate family members of the ecumenical community.

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5. Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom for My People: The Autobiography of Z.K. Matthews, Southern Africa 1901 to 1968* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1981), pp. 206–208; Electronic interview with Professor Barney Pityana, 1 February 2011.
  6. D. Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets: Black Consciousness in South Africa, 1968–1977* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2010), pp. 68–70; 105–114; 212 fn67.

The establishment of the PCR represented a change in the approach the WCC had embraced before Sharpeville in its involvement in South Africa. At this point, the leading members were guided more by representatives of the liberation movements such as Oliver Tambo and Joe Matthews and less by white liberal church leaders such as Taylor and Burnett. By the end of 1969, the WCC had a militant weapon to fight apartheid in the form of its PCR. In a revolutionary sense, the PCR played the role of a military wing of the WCC in the battle against apartheid. It was the 'new blood' of individual Christian activists such as Eugene Blake from the USA, Madathilparampil Thomas from India, Akuna Ibiam from Nigeria and Pauline Webb from Britain, among others, who led the WCC in this direction.

This research shows how church-state relations in South Africa after 1961 can be understood as *resistance*,<sup>7</sup> but takes the analysis further to argue that the PCR, as an external transnational, ecumenical lobby with intimate links to internal South African political radicalism, as well as exiled militant formations among the liberation movements, sanctified revolutionary methods in dealing with white supremacy. It marshalled a broad range of international opinion against apartheid by creating an agency within the broader structures of the WCC. This enabled it to act decisively outside the presiding jurisdictions that were constrained by pre-eminent Western interests and diplomacy, drawing more directly on Latin American liberation theology and the politics of non-alignment.

The findings of this research indicate that from the years 1970 until 1975 the WCC was to a greater degree effective in challenging apartheid. The PCR applied multiple strategies to attack the apartheid system. The WCC redistributed power from the politically privileged white South Africans to the powerless oppressed black South Africans. It provided symbolic funding to the ANC, PAC and SACTU from the PCR Special Fund. It mobilized the ecumenical Christian community around the world to support the anti-apartheid struggle. By means of action research and programmes on anti-racism developed by the PCR, the WCC was able to inform and influence individual Christians and churches in different parts of the world to join the anti-apartheid struggle.

The WCC spearheaded the campaign on financial withdrawal from institutions which gave bank loans to the apartheid government. The PCR initiated the WCC bank policy which resulted in the WCC selling its holdings from banks that lent to the South African government. The WCC tried to bridge the gulf that existed among South Africans who were separated by the apartheid system and to advocate non-racialism. The WCC and PCR offered multiracial South Africa an opportunity to meet and dialogue, to find a common strategy to defeat apartheid. These strategies were driven and supported by the 'holy warriors' within the

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7. S.R. Kumalo (with Douglas Dziva), 'Paying the Price for Democracy: The Contribution of the Church in the Development of Good Governance in South Africa', in S. de Gruchy, N. Koopman and S. Strijbos, eds, *From Our Side: Emerging Perspectives on Development and Ethics* (Amsterdam: Rozenberg, 2008), p. 172.

WCC ecumenical community. The conservative or moderate members who contested the funding of the South African liberation movements, opposed economic sanctions against the apartheid government, and who were not enthusiastic about the support and attention freedom fighters received from the WCC, were outnumbered.

The WCC 'foot soldiers' who fought apartheid included individuals such as Baldwin Sjollega of the Netherlands; the African American Charles Spivey; the Angolan Jose Chipenda; David Gill from Australia; Rena Karefa-Smart from Sierra Leone; black South African, Brigalia Bam; and Canon Burgess Carr of Liberia, among others. Nawaz Dawood from Pakistan died mysteriously after exposing the banks which were giving loans to the apartheid government. They fought apartheid alongside exiled political revolutionaries such as Oliver Tambo and Abdul Minty.

This jigsaw of common ground against racism among the members of the WCC who fought apartheid was, however, not without contention, and divisions remained. For example, Andrew Young and Nathan Shamuyarira who both served as members of the PCR Commission and both espoused activism, differed on the funding of the liberation movements and support for economic sanctions against the apartheid government by the WCC. This underscores the complex nature of the debates within the PCR and the residual patterns of religious commitment that informed them. The truly ecumenical character of the PCR permitted some dissent.

A key platform of this study is that the WCC provided a space for debate across a fairly wide range of ideological contestation. Its advantage was largely a function of its location in Geneva, its broad religious constituency, its ecumenical hue and its openness to representing the interests of oppressed communities. Its attraction to political interests, civil society lobbyists, church people and philanthropists, contributed to its effectiveness as a 'think tank' for liberation, away from the defined political forums and party picket lines. It ostensibly represented a 'clearing house' for ideas about social transformation. Even though the PCR drew considerable fire for its radicalism in supporting armed struggle, couched as 'humanitarian aid' to liberation movements, it nevertheless succeeded in fostering dialogue among liberals and radicals engaged in rethinking South Africa's future.

Other scaffolding comes from a careful archival study of influential individuals in the WCC and PCR. These more biographical sections show the contribution of leaders and thinkers within the churches who applied their religious convictions to social activism in the interests of oppressed communities. The tracks of their leadership are easily discerned in the minutes of WCC and PCR meetings, assembly publications and confidential correspondences. They are also evident in the formulation of policy, statements and research reports on apartheid. That they were not freedom fighters in liberation armies does not in any way reduce

their significance because their symbolic struggles waged against unethical and illegitimate forms of government canvassed international opprobrium against racism and justified the abandonment of deeply held commitments to passive resistance that were conventional tenets of WCC strategy. This battle for hearts and minds may not have trumped the military campaigns of ANC cadres, but it surely garnered moral support that was also prepared in many cases to commit materially to the liberation enterprise.

WCC pressure in challenging apartheid between 1970 and 1975 intensified because the Fifth General Assembly, in December 1975, decided to renew the PCR. The militant sector continued its campaign to shift power to racially discriminated South Africans. The Executive Committee once again provided financial grants to the ANC, PAC and SACTU from the PCR Special Fund throughout the period from 1976 to 1982. The WCC continued to mobilize the ecumenical Christian community to support racial justice in South Africa by means of its research and programmes run by the PCR.

At this point, the WCC went further than selling its own holdings in financial institutions linked with South Africa. As a result of the PCR initiative, the WCC closed its accounts with international banks that were providing loans to the apartheid government and its agents. At the annual and bi-annual forums the WCC held during this era, its Central and Executive Committees, as well as the PCR Commission, afforded a broad spectrum of South Africans from various racial backgrounds, including those in exile, to engage each other about apartheid with a view to finding a common strategy to defeat the apartheid system.

By 1979–1980, the WCC came in for some severe criticism because of its PCR. Pastor Marion Reynolds Jr, for example, accused the programme of aiding and abetting political revolution.<sup>8</sup> The PCR's campaign which concentrated mainly on ending apartheid nearly split the WCC ecumenical family. It was under the courageous leadership of Philip Potter of the West Indies, the third general secretary, that the WCC navigated the stormy waters of discontent among its broad membership. He guided and supported the PCR unstintingly and consistently backed the projects administered by Baldwin Sjollema and Prexy Nesbitt to make further strides in the campaign against apartheid.

The conservative and moderate membership of the WCC, however, sustained their objection to funding the ANC, PAC and SACTU, as well as economic sanctions against the apartheid government and the appeasement of freedom fighters. In 1981 and 1982 this moderate element gained ascendancy and shifted attention away from apartheid in South Africa that the PCR had so assiduously cultivated, to racist regimes in other parts of the world.

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8. M.H. Reynolds, 'The Truth about the WCC', *Fundamental Evangelical Association (FEA) News and Views* (1997). Reynolds was the editor of the newsletter.

The sham constitutional reforms that the apartheid government introduced in the 1980s, however, resulted in wide-scale insurrection in South Africa and the spotlight of the PCR returned. The upsurge in repression once again prompted the WCC to adopt a 'just war' position in respect of apartheid. To do this it invoked a theology of political morality which questioned the legitimacy of the apartheid government. This saw the rise of 'contextual theology' as a justification of armed struggle.<sup>9</sup>

This archival study indicates that in the eight-year period from 1983 to 1990, the WCC was generally unsuccessful in challenging apartheid in the first two years (1983–1984). This was because the moderate sector in charge (from 1981–1982) moved the PCR away from campaigning in southern Africa. It failed to adhere to the decision the 6th General Assembly took in Vancouver in 1983, to reinstate southern Africa as the major focus of the WCC and PCR. The evidence shows that the PCR under a new regime hardly did any mobilization of the ecumenical Christian community to enable it to rally behind the anti-apartheid struggle during this opening period of the 1980s decade. The campaign on financial withdrawal from banks which gave loans to the apartheid government, which the PCR had spearheaded, stagnated. The funding of the ANC, PAC and SACTU was, however, sustained. The donors to the PCR Special Fund maintained their commitment to support the struggle of the powerless. The South African liberation movements that were not privy to WCC internal politics continued to submit applications for the PCR Special Fund grants.

It was only in the last six years of the eighties, from 1985 to 1990, that the WCC was most effective in challenging apartheid. The thesis draws on archival and oral evidence to show that the PCR under a new leadership resumed its strategies to mobilize the ecumenical Christian community to resist apartheid and campaign for international disinvestment from South Africa. The strategy by the WCC and PCR to re-connect South Africans divided by apartheid was most effective during this era. Charles Villa Vicencio and Allan Boesak met with Oliver Tambo, Alfred Nzo and Thabo Mbeki on several occasions. They tried to forge a common strategy against apartheid under the auspices of the WCC. The WCC kept its commitment to pass power to the ANC, PAC and SACTU through symbolic funding from the PCR Special Fund in this period.

The 'foot soldiers' who resumed the combat against apartheid included individuals such as the Zimbabwean, James Mutambirwa; Eva Militz of Germany; Paul Boateng, a black activist in the United Kingdom; Barney Pityana, apostle of black consciousness from South Africa; the African American, Jean Sindab; the white American, Joe Agne; the Kenyan, Sam Kobia; and others. They fought apartheid alongside local revolutionary Christian leaders such as Desmond Tutu, Charles Villa-Vicencio, Allan Boesak, Sally Motlane, Wolfram Kistner and Virginia Gcabashe.

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9. See, for example, A. Nolan, *God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988) p. 74.

The internal struggle among the opposing elements of the WCC lingered. The moderates remained unconvinced that supporting economic sanctions against the apartheid government was the best option to transform the country. They still had doubts about the funding of liberation groups that promoted revolutionary ways to overthrow the apartheid government.

The various strands of activism which the WCC ecumenical family members displayed in the anti-apartheid struggle were certainly not decided along racial lines. It was the Pakistani, Anwar Barkat, from the developing world, who directed the PCR when it was ineffective in attacking apartheid. Both the black Oscar McCloud and the white Janice Love from the USA fought against apartheid as members of the WCC Central Committee. The two differed in their views about funding the Washington Office on America which lobbied for the US Anti-apartheid Act. McCloud opposed it whilst Love supported the payments the WCC gave to solidarity groups.

A turning point in the international campaign against apartheid came in 1990. The advocacy work and external lobbies to isolate the apartheid government by international solidarity groups such as the WCC and PCR was eclipsed by the political process of negotiations. The WCC moved towards theologies of reconstruction and development during this period. It was restructured and the status of the PCR was reduced from a Commission to a Working Group after 1993. It also reduced the amount of funding offered to the racially discriminated South Africans from 1992. Even at this stage members of the WCC Executive Committee still contested the financial support offered to the ANC and the PAC.

In spite of the view which regards this period 1991 to 1994 as an anti-climax in the life of the PCR, the findings of this study indicate that it was effective in challenging the stubborn vestiges of apartheid. The WCC and PCR supported the stand to maintain economic sanctions against De Klerk's government until Nelson Mandela requested the international community to lift them in 1993, and the SACC requested the WCC to campaign for reinvestment in South Africa in January 1994. The WCC and PCR fulfilled their commitment to bridge the gap between black and white South Africans who wanted an end to apartheid. The WCC maintained its commitment to empower the racially oppressed South Africans and provided funding from the PCR Special Fund until 1994. The WCC participated in monitoring violence and the first democratic general election of a non-racial South Africa.

Barney Pityana, the last director of the PCR as a commission until 1992, masterminded the effectiveness of the WCC in the ultimate dismantling of apartheid in 1994. His ingenuity saw the creation of the Ecumenical Monitoring Programme in South Africa which monitored violence and the first democratic general elections in April 1994. From 1993 cadres such as Yvonne Delk, Joe Agne and Bob Scott, who were part of the reduced PCR working group, held the

fort. They sustained the attack by the WCC on a fading apartheid. In the closing stages, the WCC sent a team which included some of the 'holy warriors' from the 1970s and 1980s to witness the fall of apartheid at the April 1994 general election. Its leading staff came to South Africa to participate in the inaugural ceremony of Nelson Mandela as the president of a new South Africa.

This study concurs with the pioneer researchers, Darril Hudson, Claude Welch, Kevin Warr and Baldwin Sjollema, that the WCC and PCR acted as a political interest group, a transnational advocacy network, and a significant religious sector within global civil society, which contributed to the transformation of South African society and certainly narrated its resistance to apartheid eloquently. This study, however, uncovers the archival evidence of the PCR's role, reading the documentation against oral testimony and secondary literature on the liberation movements to lay bare the contribution of the WCC.

The WCC and PCR fought racism in various parts of the world. This study has focused narrowly on South Africa, but their activism against racism undoubtedly went beyond this country. This research lays the groundwork for understanding on how the WCC and PCR fought racism in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, as well as Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Europe, Britain and the USA. The lens on South Africa in the PCR lent itself to a national focus and zoomed in on an exemplary case study of racism and human rights abuses. The WCC archives offered a bank of information on how the PCR pursued a southern African agenda as a way of profiling other discriminatory regimes. The PCR played a significant role in fighting racism in the world.

Finally, this thesis provides a social history of the PCR's role in undermining the apartheid government and contributes to the research on international opposition to racism in South Africa. It illustrates the importance of religious archives in fleshing out our understanding of the anti-apartheid movement, thus adding to the sources which historians have identified as foundational to writing the history of the liberation struggle.<sup>10</sup> It also opens up prospects for further research on the theological discourses of the WCC and PCR which would amplify the prolific Religious Studies literature on the significance of church-state relations between 1948 and 1994. Religion has become a fertile field of historical research in South Africa since the late 1990s, drawing on its deep historiography on colonial missions and some excursions into Pentecostalism.<sup>11</sup> Such insights, however, have not been widely tested in sustained empirical studies of more contemporary twentieth-century South African histories of resistance. Religion has tended to be

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10. C. Saunders, 'Issues in Writing on Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa', in C. Saunders, ed., *Documenting Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa*. Workshop Report (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2010), pp. 62–64.

11. See for example, A. Bernstein, 'Concluding Remarks', in P.L. Berger, ed., *Faith and Development: A Global Perspective* (Johannesburg: CDE Public Lectures, 2008), pp. 21–22.

more recessed, but its time has come and some recent studies of social movements have emphasized its central role.<sup>12</sup>

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12. See for example, Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*.



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Box 4223.0.01	Box 4223.3.46	Box 4223.7.12
Box 4223.0.02	Box 4223.3.51	Box 4223.7.15
Box 4223.0.02.1	Box 4223.3.54	Box 4223.7.17
Box 4223.0.05	Box 4223.3.57	
Box 4223.0.06	Box 4223.3.60	Box 4223.9. 6
Box 4223.0.07	Box 4223.3.62	Box 4223.9.13
	Box 4223.3.65	Box 4223.9.14
Box 4223.1.01	Box 4223.3.67	Box 4223.9.15
Box 4223.1.02	Box 4223.3.70	Box 4223.9.17
Box 4223.1.03	Box 4223.3.73	
	Box 4223.3.76	Box 4223.10.1
Box 4223.2.01	Box 4223.3.79	Box 4223.11.1
Box 4223.2.02		Box 4223.11.2
Box 4223.2.03	Box 4223.4.01	Box 4223.11.3
Box 4223.2.04	Box 4223.4.02	Box 4223.11.5
Box 4223.2.05	Box 4223.4.03	Box 4223.11.7
Box 4223.2.06	Box 4223.4.04	
Box 4223.2.07	Box 4223.4.05	Box 4223.12.1
Box 4223.2.08	Box 4223.4.06	
	Box 4223.4.08	Box 4223.14.1
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Box 4223.3.02	Box 4223.4.20	Box 4223.14.3
Box 4223.3.03	Box 4223.4.21	Box 4223.14.5
Box 4223.3.04	Box 4223.4.22	Box 4223.14.7
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**PCR Collection (boxes categorised by subject)**

**Secretariat on Race and Ethnic Relations**

4223.0.01  
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4223.2.01  
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4223.2.08

**Special Fund**

4223.3.01  
4223.3.02  
4223.3.03  
4223.3.04  
4223.3.18  
4223.3.42  
4223.3.46  
4223.3.51  
4223.3.54  
4223.3.57  
4223.3.60  
4223.3.62  
4223.3.65  
4223.3.67  
4223.3.70  
4223.3.73  
422.3.76  
422.3.79

**Bank loans, disinvestment and boycotts**

4223.4.01  
4223.4.02  
4223.4.03  
4223.4.04  
4223.4.05  
4223.4.06  
4223.4.08  
4223.4.09  
4223.4.20  
4223.4.21  
4223.4.22

**Programme projects**

4223.7.7  
4223.7.12  
4223.7.15  
4223.7.17

**South Africa**

4223.9.6  
4223.9.13  
4223.9.14  
4223.9.15  
4223.9.17

**World Day of Prayer**

4223.10.1

**Conferences and consultations**

4223.11.1  
4223.11.2  
4223.11.3  
4223.11.5  
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4223.14.1  
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## **8. INTERVIEWS (in chronological order)**

All interviews were conducted by Thembeke Mufamadi.

Cedric Mayson, Luthuli House, Johannesburg, 14 April 2005.

Baldwin Sjollema, Geneva, 8 July 2008.

Brigalia Bam, Pretoria, 11 November 2008.

Informal conversation with Joe Matthews, Johannesburg, 9 December 2008.

Electronic interview with Pauline Webb, 9 December 2008.

Telephonic interview with Donovan Madison, 23 October 2009.

Barney Pityana, Pretoria, 3 December 2009.

Prexy Nesbitt, Johannesburg, 11 December 2008.

Telephonic interview with Brigalia Bam, 13 May 2010.

Mbulelo Rakwena, Centurion, 6 July 2010.

Reverend Wesley Mabuza, Johannesburg, 15 July 2010.

Electronic interview with Michael Coetzee, 9 August 2010.

Electronic Interview with Paul Boateng, 26 August 2010.

Electronic interview with Baldwin Sjollema, 9 September 2010.

Brigalia Bam, Johannesburg, 10 October 2010.

Electronic interview with Prof. Barney Pityana, 1 February 2011.