

Reagan gives in to pressure from the Palace Guard

by Nicholas Benton

"Today's moves once again underscored what has been apparent for some time—the willingness of Mr. Reagan to modify or reverse a policy when faced with strong public opposition." So crowed the *New York Times* on Sept. 10 following President Reagan's announcement that he was exercising executive authority to impose sanctions on the South African regime.

The Eastern Establishment press was aglow with pride over the ability, once again, of the Trilateral Commission faction in the administration to prevail on the President for a major shift in policy. They were not reluctant to report that it was through the yeoman efforts of Chief of Staff Don Regan and Secretary of State George Schultz, in particular, that the shift occurred. "Mr. Schultz energetically urged the President to take that course," a spokesman for the State Department confirmed.

What pleases these forces about their ability to bend the President on the South Africa question concerns what this portends for the much bigger fish coming up in November, when they will be putting the pressure on even more to get Reagan to capitulate to Gorbachov and back down from his commitment to the Strategic Defense Initiative.

Lest there should be any confusion about who is behind these machinations to sway the President—no sooner were the limited sanctions announced by Reagan than the Bank for International Settlements meeting in Basel, Switzerland, revealed its disposition for the same policy, moving to close off credit to South Africa because, as one spokesman said, "We think there is a need for major political reforms in South Africa before we get into any talk of a rescue package."

Meanwhile, the President, talked into preempting congressional action on anti-South Africa sanctions with his executive order, began discovering that his move did not cool down the situation, as promised, but has only escalated the joint Swiss-Venetian-Trilateral and Soviet efforts to reduce

South Africa to an ungovernable bloodbath.

Following on the heels of the Reagan announcement, new rounds of violence were unleashed in South Africa, and 11 Western European countries meeting in Luxembourg reached agreement on a common but limited package of sanctions of their own. Reagan's announcement also prompted U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Herman Nickel to launch vituperative attacks on the South African regime via state-run national television in Johannesburg, where he returned for the first time in three months after withdrawing in protest.

In the United States, while Republicans in the Senate hollered about "closing ranks behind the President" as the congressional fight degenerated into a partisan battle over the level of severity of sanctions, arch-liberal Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.) prophesied that Reagan's capitulation has opened Pandora's Box and will lead irreversibly to more and more severe sanctions against the Pretoria regime.

The battle for more restrictive sanctions against South Africa than Reagan was willing to impose continued through the week. The Republicans were barely able to sustain a filibuster to prevent passage of a stiff sanctions bill—similar to one already passed in the House—that would force the President to veto the bill.

"Radical" stooges for the Trilateral plan to destroy South Africa—such as Randall Robinson of the TransAfrica Institute, who has led many of the demonstrations leading to over 3,000 arrests at the South African embassy in Washington, D.C. so far—attacked Reagan's moves, and said that the South African government's condemnation of Reagan's measures "is part of the theatre . . . the *de facto* alliance between them and this administration still exists."

All of these developments served to prove the point made by the *Executive Intelligence Review*, that without a comprehensive economic solution to the devastated conditions facing the continent of Africa as a whole—beginning with dis-

mantling the International Monetary Fund—there will be no peace in South Africa. This is the pathway that Reagan has so far avoided in capitulating to the Trilateral faction.

Reagan's executive order, announced before a national television audience Sept. 9, included these provisions:

- A ban on loans to South Africa, with the exception of "certain loans which improve economic opportunities, or educational, housing and health facilities that are open and accessible to South Africans of all races." The prohibition is effective on Nov. 11.

- A halt to the importation of the Krugerrand in the United States, subject to consultations with this country's major trading partners.

- A ban on all computer exports to military, police, and security forces and agencies "involved in the enforcement of apartheid."

- A prohibition of all exports of nuclear technology until South Africa agrees to the terms of international agreements on the spread of nuclear arms.

Reagan did not specify how long the measures would remain in effect. He said the feasibility of the United States minting a gold coin as an alternative to the Krugerrand for American collectors would also be examined.

He mandated Shultz to set up a commission of "distinguished Americans" to report in 12 months on "measures to encourage peaceful change in South Africa."

Reagan said that his move was designed to shift his policy toward South Africa slightly from one he had repeatedly referred to as "constructive engagement" to what he now called "active constructive engagement."

Botha's reaction was swift. He said, "President Reagan's move will diminish the ability of the United States to influence events in South Africa. We see no understanding of the fact that even limited sanctions destroy jobs and progress. Punitive actions, no matter how selective, do not select their victims. The welfare of blacks and whites is indivisible." He insisted, "Despite outside pressure, the South African government will continue its program of reform."

A spokesman for the Pretoria regime insisted that Reagan's sanctions had nothing to do with Botha's announcement two days later that he would grant citizenship to all blacks in South Africa. "We made that decision weeks ago," said ambassador-designate to the U.S. Herbert Beukes. "We in South Africa," he added, "realize that we must move away from the status quo." In light of this, he added, Reagan's sanctions "are likely to prove counterproductive because they will make white South Africans angry and defensive, while having little practical effect on their lives." Beukes said, "Historical U.S. cooperation and sympathy for Pretoria's position, on the other hand, in its disputes with neighboring black African states had provided a feeling of stability that allowed us to move ahead with reforms which otherwise might have met greater resistance from our white electorate."

Botha's move to grant citizenship to all South African blacks was followed by the release on Sept. 13 of a 231-page

report from a committee of the 60-member South African President's Council, a statutory body that makes formal recommendations to Parliament, calling for the abolition of "pass books" in that country which restrict travel of blacks into the cities. This recommendation, striking at the heart of the apartheid system by breaking down restrictions on blacks on movement and the right to live in cities, was expected to pass the South African Parliament quickly. Again, South African officials insisted this development had nothing to do with Reagan's announcement, remarking that the wheels of government simply do not move that fast in their country. However, these developments were proof, they said, that reforms were already under way before Reagan capitulated.

Crowing over the ability of the Trilateral advisors—like Regan and Shultz—to influence Reagan, the *Washington Post* commented that Reagan's departure from policy on South Africa proves him to be even more "flexible" than the ignominious Jimmy Carter, who did not budge on the "constructive engagement" formula worked out in the mid-1970s by none other than Henry Kissinger when he was deployed to that area. Zbigniew Brzezinski outlined U.S. policy toward South Africa in December 1977, and that policy has stuck for almost a decade, the *Post* noted. But now, "President Reagan, by imposing economic sanctions on South Africa and promising an 'active' pursuit of reform there, has effectively reversed the fundamental premise not only of his policy but of a decade of U.S. diplomacy throughout southern Africa," the *Post* adds.

If he is learning to follow Trilateral order so well, the chance of getting him to bargain away the Strategic Defense Initiative are excellent, the rag might have added.

Representative Solarz, a raving Reagan critic, said that "whether Reagan is aware of it or not, he's driven the final nail into the coffin of constructive engagement" by announcing his sanctions. Solarz said that from now on, it will be more difficult for Reagan to argue against attempts at the United Nations to impose further sanctions on South Africa. It will also provide, he said, prophetically, justification and momentum for those in Congress favoring stronger sanctions.

This mentality has thrown Congress into warring camps between those, such as Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) and Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kan.) who now can look good "closing ranks behind the President," and the hard-line severe-sanction faction, including Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), who claimed, "The Republican Party is at a crossroads on this issue. It must decide if it is to be the party of Lincoln or the party of apartheid."

The irony is that both sides now support sanctions, and neither is looking at the underlying realities that threaten to destroy the continent of Africa as a whole, the nation of South Africa included, such as the ongoing policies of the International Monetary Fund, the international banks, and their allies in the Trilateral Commission who leaned so heavily on the President to force this latest capitulation.