

## SANCTIONS

A Comparison between responses made to the Calls for Sanctions against Argentina and South Africa respectively.

### 1. The Falklands and Argentina:

UN Security Council Resolution 502 of 2nd April 1982 demanded an immediate withdrawal of all Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands (Isles Malvinas). Its reference to an invasion by the armed forces of Argentina, and the demand for withdrawal, placed Britain in a strong position internationally when calling for sanctions against the aggressor, Argentina.

2. In 1969 the UN Security Council requested South Africa to withdraw from Namibia and in 1970 called on member states to refrain from any dealings with South Africa which would be inconsistent with the finding that SA's presence in the territory was illegal. (Resolution 276).

In June 1971 the International Court found that the continued presence of South Africa in Namibia being illegal. South Africa was invited in mitigation to withdraw its forces from the territory. UN Security Council Resolution 435 endorsed the Court's opinion. It has many subsequent UN resolutions.

### 3. Similarities

(a) In regard to both Namibia and the Falklands the UN Security Council has resolved that the territory is illegally occupied by a foreign power.

In the case of Namibia, South Africa's response is further deemed to be illegal by the advisory opinion of the International Court. No ruling has been given on the Falklands.

(b) In both cases the illegal occupying force failed to comply with international demands to withdraw from the territory it occupied by conquest.

South Africa compounds its illegality in Namibia by using the country as a spring-board for the launching of acts of Armed Aggression against Angola. An illegal action, i.e. the violation of Angola's territorial integrity is undertaken from a base (Namibia) which is itself unlawfully occupied.

(c) In both cases the right of self-determination was discounted by the occupying force. For more than a decade the South African's have refused to allow for free and fair elections under international supervision and in the months of their occupation the Argentinians gave little sign of their willingness to see the rights of the Falkland Islanders as crucial.

(d) In both cases those who were the victims of illegal occupation believed that force was necessary in order to remove the intransigent invading force.

The Falkland Islanders, as the "indigenous people" have welcomed British intervention and Britain has seen this to be its responsibility in terms of its sovereignty. In regard to Namibia it is the Namibians who have themselves fought the war of liberation. The party holding sovereignty in trust for the Namibians, the United Nations, has not seen fit to go to war to regain control of the territory for the indigenous people. The Namibians, who in relation to the relatively recent settlement of the Falkland Islands have lengthy and historic roots in their country, sought for a negotiated settlement over decades before resorting to the use of force as a necessary factor. The British commitment to negotiations outside of force lasted a matter of weeks.

We see then remarkable similarities in terms of principles involved but also significant dissimilarities regarding the international response to these two territories. It is apparent that while international law and opinion are far more heavily weighted in favour of the liberation of the Namibians, the liberation of the "Kelpers" has been treated

#### 4. Dissimilarities:

(a) Within days of the call for Sanctions being made, Britain's partners within the European Economic Community responded positively.

There was little debate as to whether these Sanctions would be effective or not, and less debate as the Sanctions being alternative to the use of force.

By contrast, after more than a decade of unqualified international agreement as to South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia there is still no commitment on the part of Britain and the United States (at least) to allow for Sanctions being implemented against South Africa as a result of its Namibian policy.

(b) We have seen that with the passing of UN Resolution 502 the British Government claimed to be justified in the use of force (in terms of the UN Charter allowing for the right of Self-Defence). The understanding has been that Britain is using self-defence in a just cause of repelling an aggressor and after negotiations have failed.

By contrast, the use of force by Namibians is exercising the right of self-defence against a foreign aggressor is portrayed in much of the western media as an illegitimate struggle of terrorists fighting as the puppets of Communist Russia.

why these differences of presentation and response

Ad (a) - Sanctions

In the immediate response of the European Economic Community to impose Sanctions against Argentina we see that Sanctions are used when there is the political will to use them and that in this case the purpose was to use them as a punitive measure. It was to show both national displeasure of the invasion and political commitment to Britain's cause that sanctions were imposed by the E.E.C. nations. The motivation appeared to be the belief that the aggressor should not go unpunished.

They were not suggested or implemented primarily as a means to secure a negotiated settlement or as an action to be undertaken in place of the use of force.

This causes one to question whether the west's disinclination to impose sanctions over Namibia guided by the belief that they will escalate violence, or lack efficacy, as is often suggested. It is not something quite different but little expressed which determines western policy, namely a willingness to respond to the plight of those who are archetypically British (or white, or western) while showing no willingness to respond to the plight of those who are not regarded as our kith and kin?

If these questions must be asked of the politicians they must also be asked of the church. In the church we often call upon abstract and sacred principles to justify actions which are essentially inspired by the factors of blood, alliances and nationhood.

The church must respond to this call for consistency.

If sanctions are wrong in that they create conflict and contribute to violence (as some churches suggest) then they are wrong for the Falkland, as much as for Namibia. If churches believe that they should oppose sanctions in principle, i.e. because they are conflict creating measures, then surely these churches ought to condemn their Government's use of sanctions, as in the case of the west's action against Argentina.

Moral principles which inhibit the use of sanctions to liberate blacks are seemingly irrelevant in the pursuit of white liberation. Questions of effectiveness which are primary in debating and rejecting sanctions against South Africa were not raised in regard to Argentina.

Granted that comparisons must take account of many complex differences (e.g. the west's dependence on strategic minerals from Argentina is slight and considerable for South Africa) the impression remains that Britain and her western allies uses one

standard for securing Western interests and another for considering Third-World interests. The Church of Christ must not participate in this inconsistency.

Ad (b) - Force

Britain's sending of a Task Force to the South Atlantic before any negotiating process had been adequately pursued appeared to enjoy the backing of her Western partners.

Media presentation in Britain's "popular press" has been to uncritically back the use of force, to eulogise the military in their engagements, to dehumanise the enemy and to portray the conflict as a war waged on behalf of true democracies to free us from the domination of totalitarian regimes who disregarded international law.

Very few politicians in Britain have questioned the use of force and our Western allies appear to have seen the defence of freedom and the rule of law as indivisible and deserving of this response.

Church members in Britain appear to have generally endorsed the use of force over the Falklands. Some voices have felt that its use was premature and should be undertaken when negotiation proved fruitless i.e. "last resort", and these voices still have rejected force on the grounds of proportionality or pacifist persuasion.

By contrast, one is reminded of the sentiments expressed by Bishop Desmond Tutu, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches. He analysed the mood prevailing in the Western Church when discussing the liberation struggle in Southern Africa before the ACC's Assembly in 1981;

"When I speak to churchmen about the SWAPO freedom fighter in Namibia I am surprised to discover that the British Church, presumably since the Second World War, has become overwhelmingly pacifist!"

Bishop Tutu would hardly be able to make that tongue-in-cheek estimate of the mood of most British church members if he had visited Britain at the time of the Falkland crisis.

Again we see that what is regarded as principle, i.e. a condemnation of SWAPO's PLAN (Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia) for its use of force against an armed aggressor, is not so much a principle as an interpretation of a cause.

The very politicians and newspapers who have been the most strident in denigrating the British peace lobby as traitors, sell-outs and peaceniks have previously been the most vocal in condemning the liberation movements for their use of force in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. These voices have been at pains to analyse the British position as a "just cause"

over the Falklands, but emotive phrases like Marxist surrogates, and anti-Christ, anti-white, anti-west terrorists have been substitutes for any careful analysis of the justice of the long oppressed in Southern Africa.

The church is influenced by this much heard inconsistency of interpretation and can readily duplicate what is nationalistic or even racist response, clothing its prejudices in the guise of principles. Many Christians respond to the issue of force on the basis of approval if used by kith and kin and disapproval when used by other groups or races.

The Falklands tragedy will have brought some good if we are encouraged to strive for a greater consistency and catholicity in interpretation when considering situational ethics generally, and force in particular.