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# Anglo American's research project? South Africa Beyond Apartheid (SABA)

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*Boston University*

ANGLO-AMERICAN'S RESEARCH PROJECT? SOUTH AFRICA BEYOND  
APARTHEID (SABA)

Increasing numbers of U.S. researchers with varying ideological perspectives have begun to participate in research projects on the future of South Africa. Concerned scholars need to critically evaluate these projects and the strategies they propose in terms of their probable impact on the South African struggle for liberation.

The South African/American Academic Research Project --"South Africa Beyond Apartheid (SABA)" -- constitutes one such project. Scheduled to take place June 12th, the research team's first full meeting focused on analyzing the nature of the South African state and its opponents (See proposed draft agenda, attached.)

SABA's Board of Trustees represents the funders, a combined grouping of American and South African philanthropic foundations and corporations. Leading among the funders is the leading South African mining finance house, the Anglo American Group. SABA's prospectus claims, however, that the team of 20 academics and experts engaged in the project under the chairmanship of Professor Peter Berger of Boston University,

"has sole and exclusive responsibility for both the conduct of the research and the recording the project's findings. The conclusions reached by the team will in no way be influenced by, nor will they necessarily reflect, the view of the board of Trustees or sponsor organisations."

THE SABA TEAM:

Analysis of the backgrounds of the research team members, however, suggests that the range of "moderate" strategies considered will aim to eliminate the worst racist features of apartheid, while leaving intact the exploitative political economic structures which have proved so profitable to transnational corporate investors. The core of the team membership represents three constituencies likely to produce this result: The leading mining finance house that dominates South and southern Africa, the Anglo American Group, and organisations like the Urban Foundation funded by Anglo and other transnational corporations; the Human Sciences Research Council, a South African government-sponsored "think tank"; and American academics, most of whom are convinced that capitalism and democracy are necessarily co-terminous.

A few liberal American and South African researchers have apparently joined the team, but their input appears likely, at

best, be marginal. The team includes no representatives of either the South African liberation movement, the African National Congress (ANC), or the popular opposition movement inside the country, the United Democratic Front.

SOME INDIVIDUAL SABA TEAM MEMBERS:

The paragraphs below summarize the backgrounds of some of the SABA team members:

Chairperson: Peter Berger, sociology professor and director of Boston University's Institute for the Study of Economic culture, has recently authored "The Capitalist Revolution: Fifty Propositions on Prosperity, Equality, and Liberty" (forthcoming, fall, 1986). His Institute "addresses practical problems confronting businesses and governments", and seeks to develop a comprehensive theory which would "offer third-world countries a coherent explanation of long-verified historical fact: that democratic values and a free-market economy produce far more rapid development than social systems based on Marxist thought which, sacrificing individual liberties, also sacrifice the initiative that fuels economic development."<sup>1</sup>

Heribert Adam: A professor of Political Science at the Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada, Adam is a liberal sociologist who has written several books on South Africa on the changes in apartheid. He tends to attribute change to changes in demand for an industrial labor force. Most recently, he and his wife have co-authored a book on South Africa Without Apartheid, discussing the possibilities of an apartheid-free capitalist South Africa. This apparently forms the base of his contribution to the team project. Adam also served on the Buthelezi Commission, which recommended the federal system in Natal -- a system which would both protect minority (white) power and strengthen the position of bantustan leader Gatsha Buthelezi. Many observers consider the Buthelezi Commission report the most probable blueprint for a federal solution for the entire country; the Nationalist Government is currently viewing the Natal discussions as an experiment for the nation's future. This is a federal solution along racial lines; it does not challenge the basic racial separation in South Africa. The Buthelezi Commission called neither for one-person, one-vote, nor for negotiations with the liberation movement.

Ann Bernstein: Works at the South African Urban Foundation, created after 1976 to help improve housing and facilities for

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1. Boston University, 1971-1986, Board of Trustees, Boston University, 1986, p. 107.

urban blacks. Funded primarily by Anglo-American and US corporations, the Urban Foundation has been widely criticized by the UDF and other groups for its efforts to create a black middle class in urban areas; and because its role has generally been seen as divisive rather than supportive of community's efforts to organize themselves.

**Bobby Godsell:** One of the organizers of SABA research project, after 1976, Godsell became a prime mover in reshaping Anglo American's industrial relations policy -- a policy based on the principle of creating a 'stable' black working class, but which sends thousands of migrant laborers back to the bantustans to break strikes. For example, in 1985, Anglo fired some 14000 workers and bused them back to the bantustans over a wage dispute. Anglo also regularly calls in the police to deal with strikes on the mines. As one of the architects of the company's labor relations policy, Godsell has also been involved in efforts by Anglo to improve its image in the black community by funding housing and other projects, much along the lines of the Urban Foundation's efforts to create a black middle class. Godsell served on the Buthelezi Commission (see Heribert Adam and Schlemmer) and on the HSRC Intergroup relations commission (see H.C. Marais and Schlemmer).

**Jim Leatt:** Professor of Business Ethics at the University of Cape Town's Business School, Leatt is a theologian by training and has published in ethics and political economy. In the book which he recently co-edited, *Contending ideologies in South Africa* (South Africa: David Philip, 1986), he wrote, "No system has proved itself to have the potential for overcoming poverty and creating large-scale prosperity for such great numbers of people as the capitalist system found in many countries today... "Much of the critique levelled against capitalism is, in fact, a critique of technological advance and industrialization, which socialist countries cannot avoid if they want to attain high standards of living." (p.14)

**David Hauck:** works for the Investor Responsibility Research Centre (IRRC, Washington, D.C.) which looks at the corporate responsibility of companies. Hauck specializes on corporate activity in South Africa; one of his most recent publications was a booklet on corporate anti-apartheid activism in South Africa, arguing that companies are now major leaders in the struggle against the government. The IRRC is generally liberal in its outlook, but the material it supplies to investors may be somewhat misleading, particularly in relation to South Africa: the IRRC depends almost entirely on information supplied by the companies themselves. In a few cases, especially where the company is not a Sullivan signatory, the IRRC will mention other details, but when discussing Sullivan signatories the IRRC will rely almost entirely on evidence supplied by the company. Thus, for example, if a company says its policy is not to sell to the

military, IRRC will not report otherwise available evidence of product supplied to the military. Thus, in their descriptions of IBM in South Africa, IRRC does not mention IBM computers in the Department of the Interior or in use by ARMSCOR-affiliates. This ignores the wide body of evidence collected by groups like the AFSC or ACOA that shows that companies often lie about their role in South Africa.

Glen Loury: A very conservative black economist who works at the Kennedy School (apparently the only black American serving on the SABA team), Loury is one of the leaders in the debate against affirmative action. His main research relates to the U.S., not primarily (if at all) South Africa. In relation to affirmative action, he argues that the source of black poverty lies within the black community, not in external factors; and that the black community should put its energy into pulling up its own bootstraps rather than looking for aid outside the community.

H.C. Marais: Vice-president of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), a South African-government funded 'thinktank'. In the past, the HSRC has been notorious for social science studies that support apartheid. Today, like the Buthelezi Commission, the HSRC suggests that apartheid is now outdated, and that some other arrangements must be found; however, like the Buthelezi Commission, the HSRC accepts the idea that any solution must be designed along racial lines. Last year, for example, Marais vice-chaired the HSRC commission which called for an end to influx control laws on the grounds that they are no longer functional for economic growth, but failed to propose measures to end the segregated patterns of living and work structured by

apartheid<sup>2</sup>

John Marcum: A political science professor from Santa Cruz, Marcum has spent a great deal of energy trying to assist black education in South Africa (as well as opposing US aid to UNITA). However, he often finds himself in a contradictory position, because the people from whom he seeks funding for his educational programs may be more conservative than he concerning such issues as sanctions. He chaired the University of California panel of Africanists that called for selective divestment, and clearly believes that corporations can act responsibly for social change in South Africa.

Lawrence Schlemmer: Active in both the Buthelezi Commission (see

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2. An interesting sidelight to the HSRC report on Intergroup relations: nearly every black member of the commission worked either for black township councils or bantustan administrations, and a shocking number of the black members of the commission have died or been forced to resign since the unrest began.

Heribert Adam) and the HSRC Intergroup Relations enquiry (see H.C. Marais), Schlemmer has become wellknown in South Africa as an active supporter of Buthelezi's Inkatha group and an opponent of sanctions or divestment. His widely-publicized survey (partly funded by the American State Department) on black workers' attitudes towards divestment was notable for asking factory workers questions like, "Some people overseas say they should stop sending money to South Africa and creating jobs. What do you think?" Subsequent surveys which tried to overcome Schlemmer's methodological problems have found much wider support for divestment and sanctions. Schlemmer has actively sought funds for Buthelezi's movement in Europe, particularly in Germany. In 1984, Schlemmer argued on South African television that the elections for the new tricameral parliament had been undemocratically disrupted by the United Democratic Front's boycott campaign. In 1986, Schlemmer's study and his office were both burnt down; it remains unclear whether the attack came from the left, which objects to his strong support for Buthelezi and Inkatha, or from the right, which objects to his work in designing a racially-segregated 'federal' option.

Other members of the SABA Team include:

Jakes Gerwel, Professor of Afrikaans literature and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, he was recently appointed Rector and Vice-Chancellor designate of the University of Western Cape.

Pieter Le Roux, director of the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of the Western Cape. An economist, he previously taught at the Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg, and worked on the Second Carnegie poverty investigation and served as Vice-Chairman of the Economics and Labour Workgroup of the HSRC Intergroup Relations Investigation (see Marais).

Richard Neuhaus, Lutheran pastor, who runs the Center on Religion and emocracy in New York City, and has written a book on the church in South Africa (forthcoming).

Michael Spicer, who previously worked at the Royal Institute for International Affairs and the South African Institute for International Affairs, recently joined the Anglo American Corporation where he serves as secretary to that company's Public Affairs Advisory Board.

Paulus Zulu, a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Applied Socail Sciences at Natal University, Durban.