

Opinion

Sanctions will result in turmoil

There is a growing pressure on the United States to impose economic sanctions against South Africa. While President Reagan asks the nation to resist an emotional clamor, the administration is seen as losing its fight against the ban on imports to South Africa and the forcing of American businesses to divest their South African holdings.



Mark Ude

Reagan's adopted policy of constructive engagement basically has collapsed. The three main aims of constructive engagement were the withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia while Cuban troops left Angola, an acceptance by South Africa and its black neighbors that they are interdependent and a commitment by South Africans towards political reform.

These aims were realistic, and probably could have brought about change in the present situation, if they had been allowed to continue. The first aim failed because the South Africans were not willing to surrender Namibia to Soviet-backed guerrillas. South Africa did sign a treaty with Mozambique two years ago, but the insurgencies that continued in that country raised questions about the

sincerity of South Africa. The third part of constructive engagement has dissolved because of blacks' impatience for political reform and their resolve to win real political power.

Though the severity of sanctions against South Africa will be in question, it can be assured that the consequences will be light. This is because of both President Reagan's and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's unwillingness to impose the hardcore penalties. The most the sanctions will amount to is the banning of new investments and imports of coal, steel and Krugers. This also includes the present ban on arms and oil.

These sanctions are supposed to pressure the South African government to release Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and encourage talks with the currently outlawed African National Congress. The puereness of the ANC from communist infiltration is in question, hence the reluctance on the part of President Botha. The vow of the ANC to bring war and terrorism to South Africa has not helped, either.

But this aim probably will stagnate, because the success of economic sanctions against South Africa is unlikely. Israel and Taiwan have refused to consider the application of sanctions and will do business as usual, which includes providing fronts for South African businesses and acting as the middleman in

international trade. Another key element is the number of opportunistic Japanese companies willing to do business by circumnavigating their nation's ban on direct investment. For example, most cars now sold in South Africa are Japanese. The South African automobile market would be given completely to the Japanese economy if Western companies withdraw.

Sanctions also would put an end to the reforms now in progress, which ask for integration and fair wages to black employees in the workplace. This would allow the resumption of cheap labor and competition in the international market, aided by the falling value of the rand.

South Africa is experienced in eluding sanctions. It is as capable of acquiring needed goods as is the Soviet Union. The corrupt governments bordering South Africa do not feel obligated to adhere to the sanctions. As South Africa is a port access to many landlocked countries, shipments supposedly going to Botswana or Zambia will wind up in Pretoria.

Any of these temporary U.S. sanctions, if passed, will have to overcome Reagan's certain veto. The only sure prediction is that the present turmoil will persist until the administration decides to either resurrect constructive engagement or set out on a new course and bring about a peaceful solution.

Mark Ude is a senior geography major and a columnist for The Battalion.



President misreads history to justify sanctions opposition

In December 1955, Rosa L. Parks, a black seamstress in Montgomery, Ala., was arrested and jailed when she refused to move to the back of the bus. Immediately, the leader of Montgomery's black community, E.D. Nixon, made a round of calls—one of them to a newly-arrived minister from Atlanta, Martin Luther King Jr. Nixon proposed a bus boycott and King, after some reflection, agreed. The U.S. civil rights revolution started, as these things often do, with an economic boycott.



Richard Cohen

Five years later, the quiescent civil rights movement was reinvigorated when four black college students nonchalantly walked into a Greensboro, N.C., Woolworth's, sat down at the whites-only lunch counter, and refused to leave until they were served. If there was any doubt that the first sit-in was a boycott by another name, Woolworth's settled the matter. By the end of the week, it had closed its store. White people had to go elsewhere for lunch.

All that, as they say, is history—a history President Reagan misread when he conscripted the American civil rights revolution to defend his position on South Africa. "Our own experience teaches us that racial progress comes swift and easiest, not during economic depression, but in times of prosperity and growth," the president said in arguing against sanctions that would weaken the South Africa economy. But our own experience teaches just the opposite. It

is precisely when economic interests are threatened that progress occurs.

The correlation that the president alleges simply isn't there. In our own country, the prosperous 1950s did not produce major civil rights breakthroughs. Those came later. And in South Africa, the incredible boom years of the 1960s and the continuing prosperity of the 1970s did not see a concurrent loosening of the racial laws. As long as the white community remained prosperous, it had no reason to change matters.

The president's thesis is hardly new. Back during the South Africa boom, it was widely believed that a rampaging economy (real growth averaged 7 percent a year) would make apartheid unworkable. Foreign firms—many of them American—were entreated to enter the South Africa market with the promise that the human-rights situation would improve. Prosperity would compensate whites for the loss of racial privilege—turn them from hard Boers into pragmatic and therefore liberal businessmen. Why, the need for skilled workers alone would bring down the racial laws.

No such thing happened. Instead, the racial threshold was raised. If the mines demanded more workers than the white community could provide, then blacks were brought in—but skilled jobs, such as blasters who work with explosives, were limited to whites. Throughout the South Africa economy, that principle was applied. An economic boom that raised the standard of living for Afrikaners from one of the lowest in the world for whites to one of the highest, did not ameliorate substantially economic or political conditions for most blacks.

One goal of economic sanctions is to bring pressure on the white business community so that it, in turn, will pressure the government for reform. Already, that is happening. Nothing so shocked the business community as the refusal of American banks to continue lending money to South Africa, the subsequent decline of the rand and the wrenching sound of American firms pulling up stakes. People who were content to go with the flow all of a sudden saw that the flow had ceased. Their incredibly high standard of living was imperiled.

It was no coincidence that after the rand fell, some of Johannesburg's business elite flew off to Lusaka, Zambia, to meet with leaders of the outlawed African National Congress. Now, in a cri de coeur of the bleeding-heart conservative, Reagan wants to reverse the process. So dreamy is his faith in the reformist virtues of capitalism that he actually has called upon American firms to plunge into a South Africa economy that is fast becoming a dry lake. For business reasons alone, few will make this dive.

In a speech delivered to a group of presidential admirers that applauded a reference to anti-communism but not to human rights, Reagan used economics and history to justify the policy based mostly on conventional anti-communism. He got it all wrong.

If necessity is the mother of invention, then adversity is the mother of reform. Our own civil-rights era is instructive. When it comes to South Africa, the calls have gone out. It's time for a boycott.

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Mail Call

The meaning of the grass

EDITOR:

Every now and then Karl Pallmeyer writes a great column. Thursday's was not one of them. Does Pallmeyer know why people don't walk on the MSC grass? The reason that "8,000 students became violently upset just because a few people wanted to sit on the MSC grass" is because to true Americans the thousands of men and women who have shed their blood in our defense is just as, if not more, important than apartheid in South Africa.

But we can see Pallmeyer's point of view. Who cares about the people who have given their lives so we can be free? He seems to have forgotten that without those people, he would not be able to tell us of these "things that really matter."

How is Pallmeyer open-minded when he labels other people "fascist?" As proud members of your "fascist fraternity in uniform" we would like to say that if we are fascist because of our conservative beliefs, Pallmeyer must be more of a communist than Marx and Lenin put together. The difference between us and him is that while he prefers to sit back and talk about protesting problems, we are willing to lay our lives on the line. It is just too bad that we may give our lives in Pallmeyer's defense in order to keep a democratic society.

Isn't it amazing that our supposedly closed minds are open-minded enough to realize that Pallmeyer must stay around in order to keep our country what it is. We only ask: Would he lay down his life in our defense?

Billy McManus '87
accompanied by 10 signatures

The Pallmeyer legacy

EDITOR:

Once again we have been subjected to the extremist din of Karl Pallmeyer trying to expose some great truth for all to see. Once again it seems that he has fallen short and simply aroused the wrath of many of his fellow students.

What Pallmeyer has failed to achieve is an understanding of a timeless characteristic of human nature that causes people to behave in such a way as to frustrate his own intentions. What we should all realize is that people have a tendency to conform in order to obtain the approval to their peers and even of society in general.

Twenty years ago, millions of young Americans lashed out at their society as they sought to reform its self-indulgent, "fascist" tendencies. As part of this protest movement, these young people dressed and talked in ways that their elders disapproved of.

Unfortunately, this human characteristic of conforming led these well-meaning young people to dress alike and formulate a new set of standards that would allow them to establish fashion strata to replace those which had become outmoded. In the end, these people grew out of their rebellion and started making money to buy the toys that would once again stratify them.

Texas A&M long ago accepted this characteristic of human nature and now cultivates it in order that its graduates will do well in society. Rather than railing against this tendency, perhaps Pallmeyer should find a way to conform enough for others to listen to what he has to say rather than simply offending fellow Aggies' sensibilities. Only then may he be able to make a mark upon this University to be proud of, unless, of course, he doesn't care to leave a meaningful legacy.

Samuel C. Thompson '88
accompanied by five signatures

Noteworthy words

EDITOR:

In response to Karl Pallmeyer's column Thursday in which he attacked the basic principles of Aggie land, may I offer the following words written by Elbert Hubbard:

LOYALTY

"If you work for a man; in heaven's name work for him; speak well of him and stand by the institution he represents.

Remember: an ounce of loyalty is worth a pound of cleverness.

If you must growl, condemn and eternally find fault — why?

Resign your position and, when you are on the outside, damn your heart's content, but as long as you are part of the institution, do not condemn it;

Or the first high wind that comes along will blow you away, and probably you will never know why."

I suggest Pallmeyer note these words carefully.

Dawn Lee Wakefield '78

Answers wanted

EDITOR:

This is directed at — who else? — Karl Pallmeyer. This isn't another "Highway 6 runs both ways" letter. We just want some answers to some questions.

Why is changing Texas A&M his "grail" in life? Why does he insist things must change? He constantly complains about and cuts down this University and we can't fathom why. What is wrong with asking people not to walk on the Memorial Student Center grass? Is it wrong to establish something as a memorial?

Not all people follow "traditions" and such blindly here. We are not brainwashed clones. We are individuals who have a common bond — our love for our school and all it stands for. Pallmeyer himself came here, among other reasons, because his father did. Is he not following "tradition"?

It is the same everywhere, all students want to graduate and become rich — that's the "American Way" instilled in us by advertisers. We cannot see how all the blame can be put on a university and its students.

It seems that in most cases, if someone is unhappy with the situation surrounding them, they leave. We would and have done so. What we can't understand is if things really bother Pallmeyer here, why would he want to stay. Is it that he enjoys the attention he draws when he riles people? Was Pallmeyer perhaps the neglected middle child in his family?

Christine Dittfurth
Thomas Gilliland

EDITOR'S NOTE: Pallmeyer claims he was the spoiled youngest child in his family.

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