

NEWS RELEASE

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CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS
306 U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ANNEX
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20515
(202) 225-1691

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KILLING OF AFRICAN GOLD-MINERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Congressional Black Caucus condemns the shooting of African gold-miners by the South African police in a wage dispute on September 12, which resulted in the death of 12 miners, with 27 wounded.

This massacre of unarmed workers is reminiscent of another South African massacre--the blatant shooting of a peaceful crowd at Sharpeville in 1960, when 67 Africans were killed. That show of violence by the racist regime in South Africa sparked a crisis of confidence among foreign investors many of whom then tried to withdraw their stake in the South African apartheid.

The Congressional Black Caucus calls on all U. S. investors and banks to note the warning signs of violence and police terror in South Africa and to adopt a policy of non-involvement with this ruthless regime. The inhumanity of the structure which keeps Blacks in grinding poverty for

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the enrichment of the white settlers and foreign investors is best demonstrated by the subsequent statement of a local police inspector: "Sometimes property means more than lives. Our duty is to protect property and lives, not only lives."

The Lesotho Government which lost five of its citizens in the massacre reacted by suspending recruitment for the mine involved, Anglo-American's Western Deep Levels. The United States must not allow the courageous stand by this small state constantly threatened by South Africa to go unsupported; it is imperative that we withdraw our support and subsidies for the regime.

The shooting further exposes the untenable position of "enlightened" businessmen in South Africa. Harry Oppenheimer, chairman of the Anglo-American Corporation, is considered a spokesman for this group; yet workers on his mines are subject to conditions of neo-slavery. They live in barracks, forcibly separated from their families who are confined to poverty-stricken "Bantustans" or resettlement camps. In a statement of September 11, 1972, the Caucus' foreign policy spokesman, Congressman Charles C. Diggs Jr., after visiting

South Africa and making a thorough study of the problem, commented: "It is not simply a matter of physical deprivation; it is a question also of the mental suffering which results from the tearing apart of the fabric of African society, just as in the days of the old slave trade."

African miners are not free to choose their employer and are totally controlled by him for the duration of the contract. A strike or unauthorized absence is a criminal offense. Whites working in the gold mines receive over 20 times the salary of Blacks. Conditions are appalling and deaths and injuries, very common: 16 miners were killed in one accident in June. For the last 30 years there has been an average of three deaths per shift in the mines, numerous injuries and unknown numbers of casualties from occupational diseases.

International Responsibility

On September 24, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank ^{begin} ~~begin~~ their annual meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, to debate the urgently needed reform of the international monetary system. The free-market gold price has

soared, creating speculative pressure on the U. S. dollar and perpetuating uncertainty in international currency markets. South Africa which supplies 78% of the non-Communist world's gold is the main beneficiary, and may receive an extra \$150 million bonanza in the coming year from this speculation. The boom has already enabled the Government to revalue the Rand by 5% against the dollar, without adjusting its gold parity--in violation of the Smithsonian Agreement.

The foreign companies receive even more: Anglo-American gold mines made a \$240 million profit in 1972, the highest being Western Deep Levels--where the slaughter took place--with \$65 million. However, the London Financial Times has commented that the gold boom is of no use to the African miners since they have no right to bargain for any share of the profits.

As a major element in the whole repressive system of apartheid, the South African gold mines provide not only huge profits for the mine-owners but the basis for the economic strength of the minority Government. Income from

gold sales helps to pay for arms for internal repression; maintain the illegal occupation of Namibia (formerly South West Africa) already condemned by the U. S. Government; and provide guided missiles and bombers to threaten neighboring African countries. France, the major arms supplier to the South African regime, is also its chief ally in promoting its gold.

The U. S. Position

The official U. S. policy, as stated by Treasury Under-Secretary Volcker last year, is: "With respect to gold, the United States has repeatedly expressed the view that the role of that metal in the international monetary system should and must continue to diminish." But inadequate efforts have been made to implement this policy in spite of the support it has received in Congress. Extensive hearings on the issue were held in September, 1972 by the Joint Economic Committee's subcommittee on International Exchange and Payments in which Congressman Diggs made a major statement on U. S. collaboration with South African interests over the continued use of gold. The subcommittee unanimously

approved a report urging that nations should be able to sell their gold reserves on the free market to dampen speculation; that gold be phased out as a monetary reserve asset; that the IMF agreement to buy gold from South Africa be terminated; and that gold be replaced by Special Drawing Rights (SDR) which should be issued to poor countries to finance their economic development and imports from rich countries. In a letter to the White House of September 21, 1972, 23 Congressmen and four Senators supported Congressman Diggs' call for faster progress in international monetary reform. Support for the demonetization of gold and immediate sales of official U. S. gold reserves has also come from many experts on the international monetary system.

The Congressional Black Caucus therefore calls upon the Administration to work for the immediate reduction and eventual abolition of the role of gold in the international monetary system on the grounds of (1) the conditions of neo-slavery in which the South African gold-miners work; (2) the subsidies which the speculation provides to the repressive regime there; (3) the damage that speculation and uncertainty are doing to

the U. S. economy and the strength of the dollar.

To delay further by rationalizing the system would amount to a tacit approval of the neo-slavery system of gold-mining in South Africa and a betrayal of the 12 African miners murdered by the police state of South Africa. Their sacrifice must not be forgotten.