COMPUTERISING APARTHEID
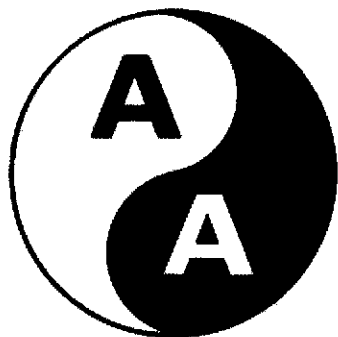
ICL in South Africa

20p

Apartheid South Africa is unlike any other country in the world — it is a society based on institutionalised racism. The United Nations has declared that apartheid is a crime against humanity.

Foreign companies in South Africa, to differing degrees, play a crucial role in sustaining the apartheid system. ICL's role is, however, unique. It has taken upon itself the task of 'computerising apartheid'. ICL computers are used by the South African police, the 'Bantu administration', the Bantustan authorities, South Africa's illegal administration in Namibia and by South Africa's defence industry. No other computer company is as committed to sustaining the apartheid system as ICL.

In a real sense it can be argued that many of the worst features of apartheid rely upon ICL. ICL computers are apparently used for enforcing the pass laws, influx controls and population removals such as the destruction of squatter camps as at Crossroads.

This pamphlet is based on confidential information about ICL's operations in South Africa supplied to the Anti-Apartheid Movement. For the first time a complete picture of ICL's role in South Africa has been prepared.

It is being published with the aim of informing those employed by ICL and the public at large. The Anti-Apartheid Movement is convinced that a full enquiry is required into the operations of ICL in South Africa. It is hoped that this publication will stimulate a vigorous campaign which will result in the termination of all forms of collaboration by British computer companies with South Africa.

October 1978

ICL is South Africa's major computer company. Documents supplied to the Anti-Apartheid Movement show that at the end of 1977 there were 588 ICL systems[1] in operation in South Africa and Namibia, out of an estimated total of 1,436 systems.

ICL's commitment to South Africa is total. At its 1978 AGM on 31 January the Chairman was reported as saying that 'ICL believed that its computers helped the Bantu population' (*The Guardian,* 1 February 1978). ICL South Africa's Managing Director explained his company's policy thus: 'We have decided to support South Africa — business, government and the people.' (*Financial Mail,* 8 September 1978)

This memorandum, based on documents supplied to the AAM, sets out what this support means in practice.

ICL IN SOUTH AFRICA

International Computers (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd is the South African affiliate of the British computer company ICL. ICL owns 92.86 per cent of its South African affiliate; the remaining percentage being held by South African interests. ICL is itself 24.4 per cent owned by the British government through the National Enterprise Board.

ICL (South Africa) is primarily a marketing and servicing company with hardware being manufactured in Britain and then exported. Linked to ICL (South Africa) but with most of its equity locally held is International Computers Finance Corporation (26.9 per cent equity held by ICL), which serves as a computer finance group and has a special agreement with ICL (South Africa) (*Sunday Times,* Johannesburg, 4 December 1977).

ICL (South Africa) employs approximately 1,200 people, of whom 950 are white, 142 African, 96 Asian and 36 Coloured. According to ICL there is no appropriate trade union for African employees to join. Wages for Africans are above Poverty Datum Line levels, although 'tea-servers' receive a miserable R80 a month.

ICL's 588 computers operating in South Africa are used by the government, local authorities and private corporations. Special sections of this pamphlet refer to particular uses to which some of these computers are put. The Appendix provides specific information about certain of the computers.

Many of these computers play a central role in helping to strengthen the apartheid economy. For example:

☐ 23 ICL computers are used by mining companies, including eight used by Goldfields of South Africa, one of the most notorious of the mining companies

☐ 18 ICL computers are used by banks, including 12 by Barclays Bank

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1. This total excludes a number of 'classified' computers — a secret list of which is kept by ICL.

☐ Five ICL computers are used by Total Oil and could therefore have facilitated the so-called swap arrangement for the supply of oil to Rhodesia

☐ Six ICL computers are used by the state-owned energy commission ESCOM.

Others are used to organise the structures of the apartheid institutions. For example, 31 ICL computers are used by municipalities, city corporations and provincial administrations. Another ICL computer is used by the Bantu Education Department. Five ICL computers are used by 'Bantu Administration Departments', three by the Bantustan authorities and two new ICL computers by the South African police.

ICL IN THE BANTUSTANS

A central feature of the apartheid system is the Bantustan policy. The Bantustans are South Africa's 'solution' for the African population. Africans are no longer to be citizens of South Africa; instead they are to become members of a 'tribal homeland' or 'independent' Bantustan.

The first Bantustan to be granted its so-called 'independence' was the Transkei in October 1976. The whole world condemned this action by the South African authorities and the UN unanimously called on the international community not to recognise or to cooperate with the Transkei in any way. Yet, also in October 1976, ICL installed a 2903 for the 'Transkei government' in complete defiance of the UN and the British government's own policy. ICL have also installed computers in the Ciskei and KwaZulu Bantustans.

THE PASS LAWS

John Starkey, Managing Director of ICL (South Africa), boasts of the role ICL plays in enforcing South Africa's apartheid policies. In an interview with the South African journal *Financial Mail* on 24 March 1978 he had this to say:

'Our computers are quite extensively used by Bantu boards in administrative jobs — in rates and rent for example. This is in the interests of the black population. It ensures that correct standards are applied. Blacks are treated fairly as a result. We also have a computer which stores information about the skills of blacks. As soon as a skilled worker is required he can be easily traced.'

In fact, what Mr Starkey was describing was the computerisation of the pass laws and influx control systems. More than 10 million registration numbers and places of domicile need to be stored with easy access. According to the *Financial Mail* an ICL computer was installed to do this task in 1967 at the Bantu Reference Bureau in Pretoria. There are now two additional ICL systems in Pretoria: a KE100 installed in June 1972 and a 1903T installed in October 1974. Other ICL computers are used by Bantu administration departments in Natal, Orange Free State and the

Transvaal.

According to the Black Sash organisation, 'these innovations are there to help the authorities. They merely aggravate the position for blacks.'

COMPUTERS FOR POLICE

In October 1973 an ICL 1904S was installed at the South African police head-quarters in Pretoria. Following press reports in August 1978, two ICL 2960s were apparently rushed out to South Africa to replace the now outdated 1904S. In a confidential memorandum prepared by Peter Ellis, ICL's Marketing Director in Britain, the following information (sic) was supplied:

'The South African police force consists of men and women from all South African races both "on the beat" and in the office. The administration of the Police Force has used a large 1900 computer for some years and this will be replaced by two 2960s ordered last year and being delivered this year.

'The main applications for which the system was specified cover salaries and personnel records for all the people in the Police, both administrative and operational, giving normal information for job progression as in any personnel system. It will also be used for stores control and accounting.

'In addition an on-line information and enquiry service has been set up so as to help improve the recovery of stolen goods and vehicles, for example enquiry terminals are established at some frontier posts to verify that the ownership of a vehicle is valid.' (29 August 1978)

For anyone conversant with the South African police this information is a total distortion of reality. One can be tempted to ask whether 'normal information for job progression' would include details such as the number of detainees who have died whilst in the policeman's custody!

The wording of this information is extremely careful. It refers to what the *application specified* and not its actual use. Since the only other computer which the South African police have is an MDS2400, it is safe to assume that these two new computers will be used for general police operations. Indeed this can be inferred from the information supplied by ICL itself. For example, it refers to the establishment of enquiry terminals at some frontier posts. The significance of this should be obvious even to ICL. South Africa is desperately worried about the illegal exit and entry of opponents of the regime. Patrols now cover all South Africa's borders. It is inconceivable that the South African police would set up an elaborate computer system to check for stolen cars unless at the same time it provided facilities for the security police. These computers therefore will in fact assume an even greater threat to the freedom struggle in South Africa.

ICL AND SOUTH AFRICA'S MILITARY BUILD-UP

In 1963 the United Nations Security Council decided to impose an arms embargo against South Africa. However, it was not mandatory on member states and so South Africa continued to obtain most of the military equipment it required.

However, the South Africans recognised the necessity to develop its own military production, and in particular military aircraft. The Atlas Aircraft Corporation therefore began the task of constructing military aircraft under licence in South Africa, eg Mirage fighter bombers and the Impala jet.

The British government claimed that it fully implemented the embargo (except for the period 1970-74, when the Conservative government lifted the embargo, allegedly to meet obligations under the Simonstown Treaty). Now it is revealed that two ICL systems were provided to Atlas Aircraft: a KE100 in 1974 and a 1903T in July 1977. When this matter was taken up with the Foreign Secretary, Minister of State Frank Judd replied that 'the computer...is, I understand, a general purpose administrative computer which does not form part of a weapons system'.

It would appear from this reply that it is acceptable that British computers can provide the administrative back-up for the manufacture of weapons as long as they are not used as part of the weapons system itself. An argument which is not dissimilar to that used to justify the swap arrangement for supplying oil to Rhodesia.

Mirage aircraft manufactured by Atlas Aircraft have been supplied to the Smith regime and have been used during attacks against Mozambique and Zambia.

On 1 November 1977 the UN Security Council imposed a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa. This succeeded the voluntary embargo introduced by the UN in 1963.

The British government, unlike the US administration, has failed to bring computers within the scope of this new embargo. ICL is reported to be capitalising on this situation, since IBM, its main competitor, can no longer supply 'new machines, parts or unpublished technical data of US origin to South African military or police entities, directly or indirectly'.

Another disturbing feature was revealed in the magazine *Computing* on 31 August 1978. This quoted sources close to ICL who had information on the activities of a South African government agency, Infoplan, which pays private companies to buy computers with much larger capacity than their needs so that they can then be made available for use in an emergency. ICL admitted to knowledge of the agency.

In addition, it is understood that there exists a highly confidential list of ICL computers which are not included in the list supplied to the AAM. This could mean that ICL computers are playing an even more direct role in South Africa's military system than would appear to be the case from the information contained in this pamphlet.

ICL'S COMMITMENT TO SOUTH AFRICA

On 13 August 1978 the *Sunday Times,* London, reported that ICL were planning to establish a manufacturing capacity in South Africa. ICL confirmed that they intended to set up a software plant and facilities to service rented out computers.

On 7 October there was an even more disturbing report in *The Guardian* to the effect that ICL were planning to establish a manufacturing plant in South Africa

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to produce computers under licence. ICL Chairman, Tom Hudson, admitted that 'we are looking at the pros and cons of manufacturing there'. The idea, according to confidential internal documents leaked to *The Guardian,* came via ICL's South African subsidiary from the South African government, which it is known is determined to establish a computer industry so that it can withstand the effect of sanctions.

ICL's operations in South Africa are expanding rapidly and are likely to grow even more because of the restrictions imposed on US computer companies. According to a report in June 1978 (*Sunday Times,* Johannesburg), ICL's growth rate in South Africa was 68 per cent, compared with an average of 45 per cent. In addition, ICL (South Africa), it is claimed, provides 40 per cent of the revenue outside of Britain and Europe, although according to ICL's accounts the whole of Africa only accounted for 9.5 per cent of ICL's turnover. But, as ICL's world marketing director said: 'Our business with South Africa is very healthy and we want to keep it that way.'

ICL IN NAMIBIA

Namibia — formerly South West Africa — is illegally occupied by South Africa. South Africa has persistently refused to implement United Nations' proposals for its withdrawal from the territory.

The administration of the illegal occupation, known as SWA Administration, has two ICL systems: a System 4/50 installed in June 1972, and a KE 50ı installed in 1975.

In addition, the Rossing Uranium mine which, in defiance of the UN, is extracting and exporting uranium from Namibia, has three ICL systems: a 1902S installed in March 1977, a KE 50 also installed in March 1977, and a 1903T installed in August 1977.

In addition, two municipalities have ICL computers, including Okahandja where a 1500 was installed during 1978.

THE RHODESIAN CONNECTION

A further disturbing feature of ICL's activities in Southern Africa is the Rhodesian connection. This cutting is from the Association of Rhodesian Industries' Register and Buyers Guide 1978.

INTERNATIONAL COMPUTERS (C.A.) (PVT.) LTD.
Punch cards, computer bureau data processing service, suppliers of computers, etc.
Head Office: P.O. Box 2196, Robinson House, Union Avenue/Angwa Street, Salisbury. Tel. 792641. Tel. Add.: "Datacomp."
Managing Director: Mr. J. L. Jeffreys.
Company Secretary: Mr. J. A. Stevenson.
Business Manager: Mr. T. E. S. Moffat.

Since ICL has no manufacturing capacity in South Africa or Rhodesia, if ICL is selling computers in Rhodesia then they must be being supplied presumably from Britain via South Africa. Is it possible that ICL (South Africa) is playing the same role in sanctions-busting as the subsidiaries of Shell and BP?

ICL AND INDEPENDENT AFRICA

ICL claims 'that there had been no pressure on ICL either in Britain or in any other market where it was active to reduce its commitment to South Africa' (*Sunday Times,* Johannesburg, 25 June 1978).

This statement reflects the short-sighted approach of many British companies which are all too happy to maximise their profits from South Africa whatever the long-term effects.

Unlike ICL the apartheid regime now clearly recognises that the prospect of international sanctions grows daily and it is already preparing itself so that they will have minimum impact. At the same time more and more African states are taking retaliatory action against companies which continue to operate in South Africa. ICL will be particularly vulnerable as a target because it is creating an impression that it is willing to seek contracts which are denied to other companies because of the arms embargo.

Nigeria's Ambassador to the United Nations and Chairman of the UN Special Committee against Apartheid, after being informed of the sale of an ICL computer to the South African police, 'expressed his shock at these revelations, especially since the British government had a substantial holding in ICL. He recalled that the South African regime had been trying to find alternative supplies since the US government banned the sale of computers to the South African Defence department and police' (United Nations, GA/AP/890, 6 September 1978).

CONCLUSIONS

For the first time the AAM has been able to compile a comprehensive survey of ICL's role in South Africa. ICL has supplied computers to the South African police, armaments corporations, Bantu administration authorities, Bantustan governments, municipal authorities; to the illegal administration in Namibia; to numerous mining corporations and other multinationals; and apparently, in breach of sanctions, to Rhodesia.

There can be no doubt that ICL is acting in direct contravention of the policies of the Security Council and General Assembly of the United Nations and, in certain respects, against the spirit if not the letter of British government policy. ICL has a clear programme of expanding its operations in South Africa irrespective of the consequences in relation to trade with other African and third world states.

Responsibility does not rest solely with ICL management — the British government is also responsible, both through its holding via the National Enterprise Board and in respect of its responsibility to legislate to stop such collaboration with the apartheid state.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement believes that there should be a full enquiry into ICL's activities in South Africa. In addition, in the light of the information contained in this pamphlet, it urges:

■ that the British government
1. extends the arms embargo to include computers, including software and related 'knowhow'
2. uses its holdings in ICL to compel the company immediately to freeze its expansion plans in South Africa and to embark on a policy of withdrawal
3. carries out a full investigation into any possible sanctions-busting by ICL to Rhodesia;

■ ICL to
1. publish a comprehensive list of all computers supplied to the South African military, police and other state agencies
2. suspend immediately the supply of any new computers to the South African police, military and related departments and cease the servicing of computers already supplied to these departments
3. commence a policy of withdrawal from South Africa.

APPENDIX

Customer	Model	Date of installation
POLICE		
South African police	1904S	October 1973
South African police	2 x 2960	Autumn 1978
'BANTU ADMINISTRATION'		
Department of Bantu Administration	KE 100	June 1972
Department of Bantu Administration	1903T	October 1974
Bantu Board (Natal)	2903	August 1976
Bantu Administration (Orange Free State)	2903	August 1975
Bantu Affairs Department (Transvaal)	1501	1976
BANTUSTANS		
Transkei government	2903	October 1976
Ciskei government	2903	September 1976
KwaZulu	2903	November 1977
ATLAS AIRCRAFT CORPORATION		
Atlas Aircraft	KE 100	1974
Atlas Aircraft	1903T	July 1977
NAMIBIA		
SWA Administration	KE 50	January 1975
SWA Administration	System 4/50	June 1977
Windhoek Municipality	2903	1976
Okahandja Municipality	1500	1978