



(picture by the Natal Witness)

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AMERICAN POLICY TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA: AN AGENDA BEYOND CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT

The proposals outlined in this article are a refinement of proposals set out in the article "South Africa: Why Constructive Engagement Failed" published in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (Winter 1985/86).

The U.S. policy of Constructive Engagement has failed to adapt itself sufficiently to the growing domestic turmoil in South Africa. The policy also alienated black South Africans from the United States. The United States should pursue a more confrontationalist policy with the South African government and it is important for the American government and business interests to devise additional measures that might hurt the pride and prestige of the South African government without inflicting undue economic damage on black South Africans. Some of the measures proposed here should be selectively instituted for predetermined periods, with the American government making it clear that they may be lifted if circumstances improve. Alternatively, if the situation continues to deteriorate, these pressures could be intensified and other pressures sought.

We propose that the following measures be adopted by the United States.

- The landing rights enjoyed by South African Airways in the United States can be reduced or terminated.

The availability of almost daily direct service between Johannesburg and New York, with only a stop in the Cape Verde Islands, is a great advantage to South African businessmen and officials, and since Pan American abandoned its service for economic reasons in 1985, South African Airways has a monopoly on the route's substantial profits. Far from considering this step, which has frequently been proposed in the past, the Reagan Administration actually expanded South African Airways' landing rights in the United States in 1982, permitting direct service between Johannesburg and Houston (later suspended). The cancellation of direct air service is a sanction the United States has frequently taken to demonstrate disapproval of actions by other governments — including the Soviet Union, Cuba, Poland and Nicaragua. Because of the



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importance to South Africans of their links to the outside world, this would probably be more likely to have an effect in South Africa than it did in those other countries.

- The United States can take steps to reduce South Africa's diplomatic status in the US.

South African military attaches can be expelled especially in the wake of South African raids on its neighbours, and other objectionable actions by the South African Defence Force. The visa-application process for South Africans who wish to travel to the United States can be made as complicated and cumbersome as it is for Americans who seek to visit South Africa. If Pretoria proceeds with its policy of making it more difficult for American journalists to travel to South Africa, and to have the necessary access when they visit, then the number of official South African information officers permitted in the United States can be reduced.

- The flow of new American technology to South Africa can be further restricted, especially as it relates to the repressive domestic tactics of the South African government and its raids against neighbouring countries.

President Reagan's restriction on the shipment of computers to South Africa had little immediate effect because most of the material to which it applied was already in South African hands or could easily be obtained from other countries. Rigorous steps can be taken, however, including the use of U.S. Customs Service agents and other law enforcement personnel, to be sure that other American technological advances do not reach the South African police or military, directly or through third countries. It would also be possible to improve American compliance with the international arms embargo against South Africa and to take further steps to prevent nuclear material from reaching the country. It is widely known that some American companies operating in South Africa are

involved in strategic industries, and therefore in the regime's domestic and international war effort; this could be prevented with new rules governing American corporate behaviour in South Africa.

- The U.S. government can severely restrict, or even suspend entirely, its intelligence cooperating with the South African government.

There is reason to believe that these ties have helped the South Africans far more than the United States, and they carry the implication that the United States is complicit in some of the worst abuses committed by South Africa against neighbouring countries. The United States can be zealous in the appointment it makes to its mission to South Africa, ensuring that only opponents of Apartheid are appointed. One of the most troubling aspects of this problem is that some operatives of U.S. intelligence agencies and some State Department employees who have served in South Africa are outspokenly sympathetic to apartheid, and have occasionally used their positions to thwart official American actions and directives.

- The United States can seek to internationalize discussion of the South African issue by putting it on the agenda of the annual Western economic summits.

Not only could this be a way of coordinating economic pressures on South Africa, but it would prevent South Africa from being able to drive a wedge between the western allies. Differing economic and strategic interests in South Africa make it possible that the western alliance might fracture over South Africa and the development of a co-ordinated western policy is therefore imperative.

While constructively confronting the South African government, the U.S. should seek to reach out to a wider South African community with the aim of developing a healthy and vigorous non-racial opposition within the

country. Such an opposition would make it difficult for the South African government to crush it if it enjoyed wide international recognition. The route to this goal would be for the United States to send clear signals to the black majority in South Africa. Some suggestions for this strategy follow:

- The United States must open a dialogue with the African National Congress and other black organizations that have widespread support among black South Africans.

Not to know what the ANC, the oldest black nationalist organization in South Africa, is thinking and doing is not only bad diplomacy but also foolish politics. If South African businessmen and white opposition politicians have recently held such discussions, certainly American officials will be taking no great risk by doing so. This contact with black South African leaders should take place at the ambassadorial level, both inside and outside South Africa, as a means of stressing the American rejection of the notion that the white government is the only meaningful political institution in the country.

- The United States should send a black ambassador — a man or woman of international stature — to South Africa as soon as possible, to demonstrate important points of principle to South Africans of all racial groups.

This would be an opportunity to emphasize the valuable role that black people play in a multi-racial society, a system which South Africans often compare to their own. Some might complain that such an appointment smacks of tokenism, but if the ambassador behaved in an appropriate manner, his presence would be of more than symbolic value. The Ambassador should provide facilities for the meetings of groups that are trying to organize peaceful protests against the apartheid system and, in other respects, make it clear that he is the ambassador of all Americans to all South Africans, not just of white America to white South Africa. He should take it upon himself to convey to South Africans the depth of American feeling against apartheid, and the inadequate steps taken thus far by the South African government to dismantle it.

- Massive programmes, funded by the American government, foundations and business, should be instituted to help black South Africans attain better education in a broad range of fields, from engineering to international relations.

The money for such programmes should be distributed to all South African educational institutions, regardless of their nature, but special attention should be paid to encouraging the further integration of the mostly white elite universities. The committees that decide how this money is to be spent should have a majority of black South African members. American-sponsored educational programmes already available have barely scratched the surface; what is needed now is an effort to help black South Africans learn how to help run their country, an eventuality that seems not to have occurred to the ruling whites.

- The United States should offer publicly to send forensic pathologists and other experts from the Federal Bureau of Investigation into South Africa to help find South Africans who have mysteriously disappeared and to help determine the cause of death of those who have been found.

This has proved to be an effective technique in Central American countries such as El Salvador, where the police do not always care to solve crimes. The South African police are accused of acting to frustrate, rather than advance, the solution of some crimes against black people, and such outside help might well be appropriate.

- The United States government, in conjunction with professional groups such as the American Bar Association, should also send legal aid to black South Africans. Although the legal systems differ in certain important respects, the American experience with public defenders and government-funded legal services is an excellent example for the South Africans. American law schools and private foundations, for example, could help train black South Africans as paralegal workers, who in turn could establish elementary legal clinics in remote areas of the country, where the civil and human rights of blacks are the most egregiously and routinely violated; these paralegal workers could in turn report to lawyers, who could make sure that the abuses are brought to the attention of the courts and the press.
- The United States should not only support the efforts of the black-led labour unions in South Africa, but where possible, should also send expert American union organizers to help them strengthen their institutions.

Until and unless other structures are established, South Africa's black unions represent one of the few ways that the disenfranchised majority can become involved in political action, and American labour organizations have relevant experience to offer in this domain.

- The American government should carefully monitor the performance of U.S. companies operating in South Africa, with a view toward creating and publicizing a list of those who treat their black workers badly.

Indeed, American companies should be pressed by their government into playing a far more progressive role in South Africa — for example, by ignoring the Group Areas Act and establishing mixed housing areas where black and white South Africans can create de facto integrated neighbourhoods. U.S. businesses operating in South Africa should also make every effort to visit any of their employees who are detained on political grounds, and should establish a fund to be used for their legal defence.

- The United States should help black South Africans increase and improve their means of communication with each other and the rest of the South African people.

The exchange of South African and American journalists should be promoted, along with technical assistance in establishing black publications at the grass roots and black-oriented radio stations. Americans can help South Africans understand that a free press can often be one of the most important safety valves available to a society where there is political discontent. Severe consequences should be invoked, such as restrictions on South African diplomatic personnel in the United States, if black publications are closed and banned in South Africa, as they often have been in the past. □