

Claim 4: Apartheid 'Reformed'

That apartheid is being reformed to an extent which obviates significant black opposition, justifying US and Western support through 'constructive engagement'.

The facts

(a) None of the 'reforms' announced or implemented by the Botha administration is significant, and none has struck at the core of apartheid. On the contrary, they are refinements which strengthen the core of apartheid;

(b) Continued support for 'constructive engagement' has brought no benefits to black South Africans, only further disadvantages.

(a) The essence of apartheid is white minority monopoly of political and economic power and control of the black majority. The new South African constitution strengthens this by creating an Executive President who now wields even more individual power to accelerate such policies as compulsory removal of black communities to rural Bantustans or 'homelands'; to treble the previous penalties under the pass laws (under which blacks can be expelled from urban areas) and therefore to deprive more blacks of South African citizenship and to enforce more severe restrictions on remaining urban blacks in the white-zoned areas.

At the same time the constitution is designed to co-opt the 'Coloured' and 'Indian' minorities into a partial alliance with the whites to reinforce resistance to black demands. Although these two minority communities heavily boycotted elections to their racially separate parliaments, showing their rejection of this attempt to co-opt them and demonstrating their solidarity with their African compatriots, the very presence, in a parliament of sorts, of darker-skinned 'MPs' will be used by Pretoria in its international propaganda to give the impression that major changes are occurring in South Africa, and that things are getting significantly better for at least some of the 'non-whites' there. The new tricameral parliament is in any case not a real power-sharing forum, because votes in the all-white chamber amount to more than the combined votes in the two smaller chambers, so that white power is retained, while the President's right to appoint members to his President's Council and to his Cabinet ensures that he holds the ultimate power.

South African propaganda relies heavily on world ignorance of the details of apartheid. For example it is widely believed abroad that the Immorality Act and Mixed Marriages Act, forbidding interracial sex and marriage, have always been the cornerstone of apartheid. They have not. For most blacks they have been no more

than an insulting irrelevancy. The cornerstone of apartheid is the disfranchisement of all indigenous black Africans, who constitute more than 80 per cent of the population. From this all the other 316 apartheid laws flow including, in particular, the Bantustan laws. Yet the South African government has claimed and received considerable credit abroad for undertaking to scrap the Immorality Act, although this undertaking was accompanied by a renewed commitment to the continued disfranchisement of the black majority.

(b) 'Constructive Engagement' purports to persuade South Africa to dismantle apartheid. However, four years of 'constructive engagement' have seen an acceleration of forced removals of black communities from white-zoned areas, an intensification of penalties under the influx control regulations (trebling of fines and prison terms) and an escalation of the war in Namibia, as well as an increase in South African bullying of neighbouring states, with incursions and invasions into several of these states, and rising numbers of blacks killed by white soldiers and policemen in South Africa. Sharpeville has now been joined by Langa and Crossroads as symbols of ruthless repression.

'Constructive engagement' has been interpreted by Pretoria as connivance by the West, enabling South Africa repeatedly to invade Angola, launch raids into Lesotho and Mozambique, sponsor and organise civil disruption in Mozambique, Lesotho and Zimbabwe, and apply pressures on Lesotho to conform to Pretoria's requirements. Within four years of 'constructive engagement' Pretoria directly or indirectly caused the deaths of more blacks than in the previous 20 years. During the same period, the Namibian economy was plundered so that what was an economically viable territory now has a seriously impaired economy. Namibia's agricultural output in 1984 was less than half what it was in 1976; Karakul sheep herds are 40 per cent of what they were in 1978; the fishing industry, once a major economic asset, is only 20 per cent of what it was before seven years of gross over-fishing by South African and other foreign vessels, and mining is in serious decline. Diamond and uranium extraction have been intensified during the same period, as the operations of transnational corporations have continued in spite of United Nations Decree No 1 passed in 1974.

Conclusion Black South Africans will settle for nothing less than the abolition of all the apartheid laws, and they regard 'constructive engagement' as protective collaboration for commercial gain.