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GENESEE ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES • 17 S. FITZHUGH ST • ROCHESTER, NY 14614  
(716) 232-6530

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Desmond Stone  
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LOSING OUR CAPACITY FOR MORAL OUTRAGE

The American people seem to be losing their capacity for moral outrage. Consider South Africa. Through its policy of "constructive engagement" the Reagan administration has given its imprimatur to the apartheid government of P. W. Botha. It has been constructive engagement with a tiny white elite.

Our administration has praised the "non-aggression" pacts Botha has negotiated with black front-line states pressured by South Africa's military and economic superiority. It has established a liaison office in Windhoek, Namibia, in violation of the U.N. resolution on the future of that unfortunate land which South Africa continues to occupy.

Our government has increased sales of strategic military equipment to the South African government despite a U.N. sanctioned arms embargo. It has paved the way for U.S. corporate investment there despite former Prime Minister John Vorster's comment that "Each trade agreement, each bank loan, each new investment is another brick in the wall of our continued existence."

Our administration has supported the "new dispensation" in which the South African government has co-opted a minority of Indians and coloreds to an inferior status in a white dominated parliament. This has only added fuel to the fire of unrest smoldering in the hearts of black South Africans, 23 million of them, who are still denied the most basic of human rights and excluded from political participation.

The civil unrest in South Africa is dramatic testimony to the failure of "constructive engagement." The plight of the vast majority of black South Africans continues to worsen, even as American companies point to improvement in the lot of a tiny few. Millions have been and continue to be herded into phantom "homelands" to eak out a living on the dregs of South Africa's land.

During all this our administration smiles benignly and continges to "get along by going along" with moral outrages that can only be compared to the Nazi period. And the American people, somnolent under the "new dispensation" of another Reagan reign, appear to be above the fray. Whatever happened to our capacity for moral outrage?

Sincerely yours,

Richard S. Gilbert  
for the RCJSA