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THEN AND NOW: A QUAKER VIEW OF THE NEWS #50

Only one nation in the world bases its constitution and its laws on the concept that one race is superior to another. That nation is South Africa. Deeply influenced by the racial purity concepts of Adolf Hitler, the leaders of the apartheid movement have succeeded in creating pre-Holocaust conditions: a set of laws based on race, and areas of concentration, the so-called "homelands" -- where the Black 80% of the population is expected to live on 13% of the land, under the euphemism of separate development.

To persuade the U.S. that South Africa is in fact a democracy and deserves Western support, the South African Government has mounted a propaganda campaign to support the idea that all sorts of changes are being made. U.S. visitors are shown only "show case" sites in the homelands and are introduced only to those Blacks who can be counted on to be loyal to the South African Government. Many U.S. businessmen, with branches in South Africa, are inclined to support the view that changes can best be brought about if our businesses and government agencies remain in close touch. The Reagan administration calls this "constructive engagement" and under this aegis has considerably weakened U.S. observation of the U.N. sanctions against military support for the South African regime.

Small changes cannot, however, be made while the basic injustice of racial inequality is written into the laws and constitution. Nothing illustrates this point so vividly as the destruction in recent weeks of a prosperous orderly Black community, the village of Mogope, because it was a "black spot" in an area reserved for whites. Blacks whose grandparents bought land in the village had to watch while their churches and schools were bulldozed to make room for racially "pure" settlers, while they themselves were consigned to "homelands" they had never seen.

We wonder why the good Germans were unable or unwilling to stop the Holocaust. Are we playing the role of good Germans in relation to the oppression of Blacks in South Africa?

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