

**A CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH
TO CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT**

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It should be noted that any opinions expressed in this article are the responsibility of the author and not of the Institute.

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The debate about the American policy of "constructive engagement" towards South Africa reminds me of what Winston Churchill once said about democracy, namely that it was the worst system of government except for all the others. Choosing the topic I have chosen to talk about this afternoon also reminds me of another saying, namely that fools step in where angels fear to tread. After all, this is hardly the time to try to make any kind of assessment, least of all a constructively critical one, of a policy that has so far failed to deliver very much.

A settlement in Namibia, the achievement of which is the major thrust though not the only purpose of constructive engagement, would go a very long way towards vindicating the policy. Even there, however, although there are again optimistic noises coming out of Washington, final success continues to be elusive.

Another problem in trying to assess the policy is that its chief architect and practitioner, Dr Chester Crocker, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, operates behind the scenes rather than through the press, which makes it difficult for outsiders like me to know very much about what is going on, particularly with regard to whatever pressures the Americans may be putting on Pretoria for change in its domestic policies.

We can thus do no more than surmise that American pressure may have been one of the reasons why the South African Government effectively allowed all but eleven banning orders to lapse recently, for example, for we do not know. It has been suggested that the Americans do not crow about whatever successes they do achieve for fear of providing ammunition for the Conservative Party to use against Prime Minister Botha.

What I therefore want to try and do here is really to think aloud about constructive engagement rather than presume to offer anything approaching a definitive assessment.

A few additional preliminary points need to be made. Firstly, as far as internal change goes, I think we need to bear in mind that foreign leverage over Pretoria, even American leverage, is limited anyway and cannot be expected to work miracles. Change will come about in this country only if we South Africans succeed in bringing it about. Probably the most that outsiders can do is play a supportive role.

Secondly, the extreme alternative to constructive engagement - mandatory overall economic sanctions applied against South Africa by the United Nations Security Council - is not a realistic option for any Western government. Even if sanctions were imposed, they could not be adhered to by black Africa, whose trade with South Africa has increased substantially in the past decade.

Thirdly, I am going to leave out of my discussion constructive engagement as applied by American companies in South Africa. There is little doubt that the labour practices of many American companies in South Africa have changed significantly for the better in the past few years. The reasons for this are complex, however, and I do not believe that this particular kind of constructive engagement necessarily vindicates the policy applied at official level. I would suggest that those reasons are mainly the following :

First and foremost, the successful mobilisation of black trade unions,

which dates back ten years now and is the cause rather than the result of the changes in labour legislation introduced following the recommendations of the Wiehahn Commission in 1979.

Second, the pressures within the United States for disinvestment by American subsidiaries from South Africa, which began to build up in the late 1960s and early 1970s when (though not because!) Richard Nixon was President and which forced US companies here to start improving their labour policies in order to give them ammunition to use against the disinvestment lobbyists back home.

And third, the voluntary efforts made by many US companies to comply with the recommendations of the so-called Sullivan Principles.

In other words, although American labour practices in South Africa have generally changed for the better, this is certainly not only or even largely as a result of constructive engagement. Some US firms have no doubt built up healthy relationships with black trade unions out of genuine commitment to the Sullivan Principles, others have done so reluctantly and only after unions were able by strikes or other means to force them to the bargaining table.

Outside the field of industrial relations, US companies have been spending much more money on the education of their workers and on black education in general. They have also been lobbying the government against the orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill.

A year ago I witnessed another form of pressure, when I heard senior officials of some US companies rebuke the South African Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Information for his government's detention-without-trial laws. This is obviously constructive engagement, but I do not want to deal with it any further now because my main purpose today is talk about the Reagan Administration's policy, not the actions of private companies.

Constructive engagement as an official American policy does not, as I have said, so far have much of a public record of achievement. But we can look back on the record of previous policies. One very positive change that came about as a direct result of American pressure on Pretoria was the repeal in 1974 of the law which made it a criminal offence for a black mineworker to break his contract. This provision, Section 15 of the Bantu Labour Act, was repealed, along with the archaic masters' and servants' laws, when there was a danger that a successful court action in the US would cause South Africa to lose a contract for the export of R34 000 000 worth of coal to the US on the grounds that goods produced by indentured labour under the threat of penal sanctions are banned from importation into the US by American law.

In 1973, the year before the South African laws in question were repealed in order to allow the coal export to go ahead, more than 17 000 blacks were prosecuted under them. Now they are vulnerable only to civil actions for damages. As far as I know this is the best example of a desirable change in South Africa being brought about by the threat of a specific and closely-focused economic sanction.

Does the case argue for or against constructive engagement? The answer really depends on the political viewpoint one wants to take up. It was the threat of a sanction that produced the change, but the threat was only possible because the two countries were engaged in a bilateral trade relationship in the first place. There is thus some merit in the claim of

the constructive engagers that leverage can be exerted against Pretoria only in the context of involvement that already exists.

This brings me to another point. To what extent is the difference between the Crocker policy and that of the Carter Administration fundamental in content rather than mainly a question of image and public perception? After all, constructive engagement in its most active thrust, the intervention by the American-led five-nation "contact group" in the Namibian issue after years of international stalemate, is the brainchild not of Dr Crocker but of Mr Andrew Young, when he was President Carter's ambassador to the United Nations and in which capacity he played a key role in having the Security Council pass resolution 435 - the very resolution that Dr Crocker is now spending so much time trying to bring into operation.

Dr Crocker of course revived what seemed to be rather moribund international negotiations when President Reagan replaced Jimmy Carter in the White House. He is also explicitly pursuing the question of Cuban withdrawal from Angola in the negotiations, while his diplomatic style is different from that perceived to be used by Mr Young and his deputy, Mr Don McHenry. These considerations do not, however, alter the fact of the essential continuity of US policy over Namibia from one Administration to the next.

The Carter Administration is of course perceived to have been "tougher" with Pretoria than is the present US Government. This arises partly from Vice-President Mondale's meeting in Vienna in May 1977 with Prime Minister Vorster, where the question of one-man-one-vote was raised - along with many others that were conveniently overlooked in the frenzy that Pretoria whipped up over the Carter Administration's policy in the ensuing general election in South Africa. Mr Mondale had, for instance, explicitly stated that the US should publicly praise any positive steps taken by Pretoria - a statement that Dr Crocker could himself have written for him.

In 1978, Richard Moose, who held under President Carter the job that Dr Crocker now holds, went before a congressional committee along with other Carter officials to argue against proposals for legislative action against Pretoria - something again that Dr Crocker has been doing. Again, my point about the continuity of policy arises.

It is of course true that after the death of Steve Biko, the detention of a number of black civic leaders, and the banning of eighteen "black consciousness" organisations and two black-read newspapers in October 1977, the Carter Administration imposed a general ban on the sale of American goods to South African military and police forces that went further than the mandatory arms embargo imposed by the Security Council on 4 November 1977. It is also true that the Reagan Administration subsequently introduced partial relaxations of these bans, although US policy still goes further than does the UN embargo. But the question we need to ask about the Carter bans is how effective they were not simply in punishing Pretoria but, more important, in restraining further such action.

In 1979, the year after the Carter embargoes were imposed, at least 21 more people were banned, and by November 1980 there were 156 banned people in South Africa (a net increase of four over twelve months). Can we conclude from this that the Carter embargoes failed to restrain Pretoria's hand because bannings still continued, or that they worked because the number of bannings in force did not increase very much?

Perhaps one day when some archives are opened we may find an answer to this

sort of question, but the fact that we cannot answer it now is again an indication of how cautious we need to be in assessing the relative efficacy of one or another type of American strategy.

I suggested earlier that the fact that only eleven banning orders are now in force could possibly be a plus-point for constructive engagement. But again we can't be sure of that or dismiss the idea that Pretoria has concluded that as long as it still has unrestrained powers to detain people without trial it doesn't need to ban them.

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that we do not have enough firm evidence to decide whether the tougher public approach adopted during the Carter years is more effective against Pretoria than the milder public approach of the present American Government. I do, however, believe that there are a number of counter-productive consequences of embargoes.

An American official, Mr Princeton Lyman, thus put an interesting question some months ago when he asked : "What ... has been the effect of trade controls on internal change in South Africa?" His answer was as follows :

"Over the course of the past twenty years South Africa has developed the world's tenth largest arms industry and is now becoming an exporter of arms. Over the course of the past ten years South Africa has become a world leader in synthetic fuel production. Over the course of the past five years South Africa has made giant strides towards nuclear self-sufficiency as regards the production and fabrication of low-enriched uranium. The logic of this sequence does not lead to the conclusion that all controls should be abolished ... The criteria should be the impact these controls have on events in the country. The record shows that controls have encouraged greater self-sufficiency, and that they have not in themselves been sufficient to encourage a process of change."

As an official in the Reagan Administration, Mr Lyman is obviously an interested party, but he is surely right in claiming that the trade controls he refers to have not produced change.

I don't think we should ignore that, however important the resulting South African self-sufficiency in South Africa may be from a technical point of view, the cost of that achievement has been very high, because the self-sufficiency that we have achieved is highly inflationary. High inflation does far more harm to the pay-packets of the great mass of people in this country than to the pay-packets of cabinet ministers. It also damages our export potential, leading to fewer jobs in export industries. In addition, efforts to bring down the rate of increase in prices cause the rate of economic growth to be slower and so contribute to continuing high levels of unemployment. Again, Blacks bear the brunt of high joblessness.

I am well aware that the view has been put forward that Blacks are suffering already under apartheid and are willing to suffer even more if that is the price that has to be paid for bringing it to an end. This viewpoint is born of despair at the South African Government's intransigence, and those arguing against it are usually hard put to make a convincing case that apartheid can be destroyed by methods that fall short of sanctions and violence.

But two things nevertheless need to be said about the "Blacks are willing to suffer even more" school of thought. The one is that it is willing to

gamble people's jobs on what is after all no more than a possibility that economic sanctions will succeed in ending apartheid. The other is that, whatever might have been the case in the past, today I have yet to hear the argument put forward by black people who are unemployed or stand to risk losing their jobs as a result of disinvestment or sanctions. I have also yet to hear it advanced by anyone, black or white, who can demonstrate that he or she actually has a mandate from even a sizeable minority of black people to advocate such a policy.

I would like to mention two other effects of sanctions, or arguments for them, that may be negative. One is that the higher the level of unemployment, the weaker the bargaining power of the black union movement in that strikers can more readily be dismissed and replaced by freshly-requisitioned workers. Since industrial muscle-power is the most powerful potential non-violent weapon that black people in this country have, I don't believe anything should be done to weaken it.

Secondly, I wonder if the pro-sanctions lobbies are not perhaps counter-productive in another way, if they encourage false expectations as to how much the outside world is actually likely to do in bringing pressure to bear on Pretoria. In an article he wrote in the "Sunday Tribune" as President Reagan was taking office two and a half years ago, Dr Oscar Dhlomo, Minister of Education and Culture in the KwaZulu Administration and Secretary General of Inkatha, said : "We have learned through bitter political experience that Western governments (or any government for that matter) can only serve as peripheral, though sometimes useful, pressure groups in our struggle for liberation. The struggle will be won or lost here in South Africa and it is the input from South Africans themselves that will be decisive". The internal struggle against apartheid has so far been a failure - certainly as far as political rights go. It is perhaps understandable that people should turn to beseeching the outside world for help. But the campaign inside the country has to go on.

International rhetoric or symbolic gestures would in my view be counter-productive to the extent that they encourage the belief - born perhaps of wishful thinking in a desperate situation - that the outside world really offers any practical substitute. Probably few black people are naïve enough to take seriously the recent decision by the British Labour Party that a Labour government would give financial and material support to liberation movements, disengage economically from South Africa, and support comprehensive mandatory sanctions at the UN. We can be sure that the next British Labour government will safely ignore what the party conference said on this issue in the way that British Labour governments usually ignore what party conferences decide on many issues, and that the trade missions will flow back and forth between South Africa and Britain under the next Labour Prime Minister just as they have done under every previous Labour Prime Minister.

But pro-sanctions lobbyists abroad often start from the argument that nothing but sanctions will bring apartheid to an end, a logical implication of this assumption being that internal efforts at change are peripheral and organisations involved in them lacking in legitimacy. To the extent that this undermines internal initiatives for change, I think it is harmful.

Against this background, I want to look at some of the specific components of the constructive engagement policy. I have already tried to show that if its track record is no better than that of other US policies towards this country, it is certainly no worse.

The first point to note is that constructive engagement is aimed at the whole region, not just at South Africa or even South Africa, Namibia and Angola. It encompasses Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia, as well as Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. In fact, it encompasses the whole of the South African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC), whose efforts the Americans say they are supporting "while also quietly urging South Africa and its neighbours to maintain pragmatic trade and customs agreements based on mutual benefit".¹

"The question the United States must answer - alone and with its allies - is whether diplomacy can provide an alternative to violence or whether Southern Africa is in the process of condemning itself to violence as a way of life", Dr Crocker has observed, adding that "cross-border conflict risks becoming endemic". The Americans are trying to tackle what they refer to as "the over-arching question of regional security"² by a policy with the following key elements : sovereignty of all the states in the region and renunciation of the use of violence across each other's boundaries; abstention of all the states from tolerating or acquiescing in guerrilla and dissident activities and planning conducted on their soil but directed against another state; the fostering of a climate conducive to peaceful co-existence; and linkage between regional security and Pretoria's domestic policies (Eagleburger, p.6).

I will return to this last vital point in a moment, but we can meanwhile take note of some of the other major implications of the American policy. One is that it does not see South African trade and transport links with its neighbours as incompatible with the SADCC's aim of reducing its members' dependence on South African transport systems. This view is shared certainly by some of the key people within the South African exporting community, who see regional stability, prosperity, and the upgrading of the SADCC's transport systems as helpful rather than harmful to South African business interests. These people thus deprecate the activities of the Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana (RNM) in disrupting roads and railways in Mozambique, if for no other reason than the disruption it causes to South African exports to Malawi that use these routes.

Another major implication of the US policy is its apparently even-handed approach to cross-border violence. This means that Pretoria must cease what the Americans have openly stated to be its support for the RNM, while the Mozambique Government must curb the activities of the external mission of the African National Congress on their soil. The Americans have clearly been actively engaged in trying to bring this about. They have increased their own involvement with Mozambique by sending food aid and appointing an Ambassador in Maputo, and played a role in bringing about two rounds of talks at ministerial level between Pretoria and Maputo that have obviously addressed the question of cross-border violence.

To what extent what the US admits is a "fragile" dialogue between South Africa and Mozambique (Eagleburger, p.5) has succeeded in reducing RNM and ANC activities is not yet clear, though there seems to have been some

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1. Address by the US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Mr Lawrence Eagleburger, on 23 June 1983. p. 8.
 2. Mid-term statement on the Reagan Administration's Southern Africa policy, by the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Dr Chester A Crocker, on 15 February 1983. pp. 2, 5.

advance towards this objective - evidently more so than has been the case between Pretoria and Maseru, where several rounds of ministerial-level discussions on cross-border violence and other issues have not so far been rewarded by a firm non-aggression agreement of the kind that Pretoria says it wants with all its neighbours.

The Americans seem to be quite strongly committed to the stability of the present Zimbabwe Government, a point perhaps rather understated by the Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Mr Lawrence Eagleburger, in his major policy speech on Southern Africa on 23 June when he said "it is important that Zimbabwe not fail as a new nation". I think it is probably fair to assume that the US has made very clear to Pretoria that it would be very angry with any South African activity that undermines Mr Robert Mugabe.

Mr Herman Nickel, the present American Ambassador in South Africa, made some interesting remarks in Johannesburg earlier this year which were obviously partly directed at Pretoria: "The United States is particularly concerned about South Africa's relations with Zimbabwe ... To those in this country who take exception to Mr Mugabe's public utterances, we would give the friendly advice to pay at least as much attention to what Mr Mugabe actually does and does not do with respect to South Africa, and to consider the alternatives. Deeds, after all, speak louder than words". It is possible, if not probable, that pressure from the US was one of the reasons why Pretoria did not proceed with its intention a few years ago to terminate its preferential trade agreement with Zimbabwe.

Turning to the last element in US regional security policy that I referred to - its linkage with Pretoria's domestic policies - it is worth quoting in full what Mr Eagleburger said:

"A structure of regional stability in Southern Africa is unlikely to take root in the absence of basic movement away from a system of legally-entrenched rule by the white minority in South Africa. By the same token, peaceful change toward justice and equality for all South Africans is unlikely to happen in a regional climate of escalating strife and polarization".

Earlier in his speech, Mr Eagleburger put the second point even more strongly: "Unless there is peace and stability in Southern Africa, it will prove impossible to encourage essential change in South Africa - and by change I mean a basic shift away from apartheid".

The first point - that regional stability requires a movement by Pretoria away from political apartheid - is, I think, more obviously true than the second (apartheid won't go without regional security). There is also an element of Catch-22 in the American argument. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and I don't think we should simply dismiss the possibility that the American view may ultimately prove to be correct.

However, there are a number of comments that can be made about it. The first, which tends to support it, is that continuing acts of insurgency in South Africa will harden white attitudes, and make the government more vulnerable to pressure from parties further to the right that do not want change of any kind. The second, which does not support the American case, is that the government's own record creates, rightly or wrongly, the impression in the minds of many people that violent methods have been more successful than peaceful methods in bringing about change.

There is one major field where this is not true, that of industrial relations, where peaceful action by the black trade union movement eventually forced the government to grant them the rights they had been seeking. But in other fields, one cannot simply dismiss the view that violence has produced results.

A National Party MP thus recently linked the introduction of the 99-year lease system in certain black townships to the Soweto riots : if the system had been in operation earlier, there would have been much less destruction of property in the riots. This point has been made by other pro-government people as well. It would also be difficult to gainsay claims that the efforts of the Urban Foundation to improve living conditions in the townships are a direct result of the riots, along with the significantly increased public spending that is now going into black education.

Even though one could advance the counter-argument that the renewed campaign of insurgency in South Africa in the last seven or eight years - which has included a number of attacks on buildings connected with influx control enforcement - has not stopped the government from steadily tightening up the pass laws, the perception that the Soweto upheavals have produced certain changes is inevitably likely to be used by people who want to argue that violence is the only way. One also needs to bear in mind that the reason why any South African Black turned to violence in the first place was that the government banned the ANC and the Pan-Africanist Congress in the wake of the post-Sharpeville disturbances, and then gave renewed impetus to the urge towards insurgency by banning eighteen "black consciousness" organisations in 1977. These bans remain in force.

Moreover, things like the hasty negative public reaction by the government to the recommendations of the Buthelezi Commission last year tend to undermine the position of black leaders, like Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, who are constantly trying to find ways and means of bringing about change without violence. The fact that the ban on public meetings imposed during the Soweto riots has been regularly renewed since then undermines the position of other black leaders, like Dr Nthato Motlana of the Soweto "Committee of Ten", who are also engaged in a search for peaceful solutions.

Dr Crocker and his colleagues are no doubt aware of all of this, but what they have failed to spell out is how, if their diplomatic initiatives succeed in their objective of curbing insurgency within the region, they will persuade Pretoria to engage in proper discussions with internal black leaders about a real agenda for change.

The lack of such internal dialogue could hardly be greater. Even an organisation like the Urban Councils Association of South Africa (UCASA), which groups together leaders of the much-despised community councils, finds that Dr Koornhof refuses to talk to it as an association, saying he will meet only individual leaders.

Although I said at the outset that American leverage over Pretoria was limited, I note that Mr Nickel said in February in a speech entitled "Constructive Engagement at Mid-Term" : "Let no one doubt that we do have influence - and that we are prepared to use it. The state of relations between this country and the United States Government, I believe, matters very much to the South African leadership". Assuming he is right, the credibility of the policy of constructive engagement must depend on the extent to which the US uses its influence to get Pretoria into negotiations with internal black leadership that begin to produce tangible political results. "Western policy toward South Africa today," Mr Eagleburger said,

"must focus on how various black groups acquire the basis and influence necessary to participate in a genuine bargaining process that produces change acceptable to all". To that, one has to say "Hear! Hear!"

"Constructive engagement", Mr Eagleburger went on, "seeks to support trade unionists, students, entrepreneurs, government leaders, cultural-political movements, civic associations, and religious organisations which ... can help to make a better future for all citizens of South Africa". I would like to make a few observations about this list.

- Firstly, the Americans are of course correct in identifying trade unions as forces for change. But I am not at all sure that their most recent efforts of support for the black and non-racial trade union movement have been particularly wise, for, rightly or wrongly, these unions have a rather negative view of the AFL-CIO, which recently sent a delegation to South Africa that many of them snubbed. There is also a suspicion among the unions that some of the people that the Americans seem to have been trying to involve in contacts with them have undesirable intelligence connections.

- Secondly, with regard to students, I have no doubt that the efforts being made by the Americans - at a cost of several million dollars - to take black South Africans to universities in the United States and also provide scholarships within South Africa are worthwhile, as are the efforts of private American companies to contribute in this field through Pace (the new college in Soweto) and other projects. Black education in South Africa is a politically-charged minefield, and the current US efforts in this area have already run into criticism both in South Africa and at home. My feeling, however, is that the numbers of students who are eagerly taking up the assistance offered is evidence enough that it is welcomed.

I hope, however, that the US will not uncritically follow the trend of shying away from involvement in education in the "homelands". This is a particularly tricky question for technical diplomatic and other reasons, but I believe that it would be possible to design a formula for assistance to schoolchildren and students there that is politically acceptable. There are a great many of them, of course, and their need, in many ways, is the greatest. I certainly don't find very helpful some of the comments in a report made in December 1982 by a "staff study mission to South Africa" to the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the American House of Representatives, when it said; "We did not venture into the rural areas of white South Africa or the 'homelands';" but then did not refrain from passing sweeping judgement that "the centre of black political activity in South Africa is not in the rural areas, where political organisation is actually declining; overt independent political organisations are virtually non-existent, and disproportionate numbers of women, children and elders attempt to eke out a bare survival, but rather in the white cities where a majority of economically active blacks work and where political consciousness is rising". This statement is not only arrogant and unsubstantiated, but smacks of a "Pontius Pilate" mentality towards the people who suffer the worst hardships and deprivations under apartheid, namely those dumped in the "homelands" or confined there by influx control laws.

- Thirdly, with reference to another category of people qualifying for support under "constructive engagement" - "government leaders" - I wonder sometimes if the Americans have not been setting too much store by the so-called "verligtes" and their supposed commitment to real change. Mr Fanie Botha is the only man in the Cabinet with any real claim to be a reformer in the racial field. Dr Koornhof, often identified as a "verligte", is responsible, on the other hand, for drastic tightening up of

the pass laws. For the policy of constructive engagement to have any positive results for South Africans as a whole - which must include black people that have already been denationalised - it must be based on a sound analysis of internal politics. I believe that the Americans need to make a much more critical assessment of the role of "verligtes" and what their agenda for change (or lack of it) really is.

I want to conclude by making a few points of a more general nature. One is that the Americans sometimes contradict themselves on major issues. Mr Eagleburger said that it was not their business to endorse the constitutional proposals now under consideration in South Africa or "offer tactical advice to any of the interested parties". This does not square with the public support the State Department gave to the Labour Party's decision to enter the Government's proposed new tricameral Parliament. That statement might not have constituted tactical advice to the Labour Party, but it was certainly an endorsement of their tactics and Chief Buthelezi in my view was quite right to repudiate it as a "slap in the face" for Blacks.

I am also not at all certain that the US is paying enough attention to the whole issue of denationalisation of black South Africans beyond stating that it rejects it "unequivocally" (Eagleburger, p.9). The fact that nearly eight million Blacks have already been denationalised - a process which neither the previous nor the present US Government has been able to stop - makes Dr Crocker's statement that South Africa is "certainly closer" to "equal political participation" now than it has been for thirty years look very odd. Mr Eagleburger rightly distinguishes between the mere "making of statements" and the "ability to influence events", clearly placing current US policy in the latter category. So far, however, the American response to denationalisation has not gone beyond the mere making of statements.

The denationalisation question brings me to another point. Mr Eagleburger said that the US could not "expect South Africa's would-be reformers to announce their game plan and their bottom line to the world at large" - provoking an immediate response by Prime Minister Botha that he had no "hidden agenda" for change. Of course, even if Mr Botha did have such an agenda, he would still deny it for obvious reasons. Maybe the Americans know something that we don't. Maybe they are merely making an assumption that Mr Botha does have a "hidden agenda for real change politically acceptable to most South Africans, for if there is no such agenda then the whole policy of constructive engagement is based on a heavy dose of wishful thinking.

I would suggest, however, that Pretoria does have a bottom line which it has announced to the world at large, namely that there must one day be no black people who are South African citizens. Though this was first stated in those terms by a man who is no longer in power, Dr Connie Mulder, the policy is being steadily implemented by the Botha Government - with all Blacks supposedly linked ethnically to the Kwandebele "homeland" apparently next on the list to be stripped of their South African citizenship.

I do not believe the US Government is paying sufficient heed to the view that denationalisation is taking us further and further away from the possibility of equal political participation by removing the very foundation of any black claim on the parliamentary franchise. I believe that Chief Buthelezi is right when he expresses the fear that Western governments have miscalculated current South African constitutional developments in the sense that, as he puts it, "there will soon not be a South Africa as we know it" and that "the struggle for liberation will

become prolonged by at least a generation if the confederal plans of the Government of South Africa are implemented".

Ironically, this point brings us back to where we started. Much of the major present political and diplomatic thrust of constructive engagement is directed at the Southern African region as a whole. In a way, Dr Crocker and his colleagues are busy with a form of shuttle diplomacy in the region, though without the fanfare that Dr Henry Kissinger liked so much.

If the South African Government succeeds in its aim of denationalising millions more black people and turning the single state South Africa into a whole constellation of sovereign independent states, will not some future American Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs find that efforts to solve what are now the internal political problems of a single state involve him in another round of regional shuttle diplomacy as he negotiates with Pretoria and Umtata and the rest how to put a constitutionally fragmented country back together again?