

Congress should impose sanctions

Congress has no choice. It should impose economic sanctions against South Africa despite the wishes of President Reagan.

Reagan's apartheid speech on Tuesday fell far short of announcing the concessions the administration had promised. The only thing it revealed is that Reagan is determined to cling to the impotent policy of constructive engagement.

Yes, Reagan acknowledged that South African blacks are second- and third-class citizens. Big surprise. And yes, he called for an end to apartheid and the state of emergency, the release of political prisoners including Nelson Mandela, and the legalization of black political movements.

And he weakly suggested the government "begin a dialogue" on government reform with its opponents.

But his calls for reform are empty. Backed only by constructive engagement, his recommendations will fall on deaf ears.

Constructive engagement has failed. Repression of blacks has thrived, not waned. Thousands of blacks have been ruthlessly killed. Media access has been snuffed out. Under the current state of emergency, those who had few rights now have none.

And if Reagan spent five minutes of his speech condemning apartheid, he spent 10 minutes defending the South African government. He heralded the tolerance of black trade unions, and the lifting of pass laws and laws against interracial marriage as major reforms.

He praised South Africa as a nation other black Africans envy for its vast opportunities for blacks. He blamed violence between blacks for standing in the way of reform.

He even managed to incorporate the infamous Evil Empire. Reagan portrayed the Soviet Union as a vulture perched above South Africa ready to dive as soon as the United States pulls out. Sanctions, he implied, would roll out the communist red carpet.

And, as if the dispute were over a McDonalds franchise, Reagan said, "It would be an act of arrogance to insist that uniquely American ideas and institutions... be transplanted to South African soil." Since when have essential human rights such as life and dignity been classified as purely American ideas?

The statement also smacks of hypocrisy within the context of the administration's policies in Central America.

Like a zebra, the president said, economic sanctions will hurt blacks and whites alike. But the vast majority of black South Africans and their leaders want sanctions. They are prepared to withstand hardship if it will bring an end to apartheid. What is a decade of high unemployment compared to a century of apartheid?

Others suggest sanctions will have no effect on the South African economy. Where there is business, someone will do it, suggested prominent economist Jane Bryant Quinn on network news. She cited examples of Japanese firms picking up South African business U.S. firms have abandoned.

If this is the case, the United States should divorce itself from South Africa simply as a matter of principle. The United States has no business dealing with a government that treats the majority of its citizens like cattle.

By refusing to "cut and run" from the South African government, as Reagan put it, the United States is acting as a conspirator. The administration is helping P.W. Botha's minority government keep its boot poised over the black majority.

The United States can no longer overlook the growing pile of black corpses in South Africa. If the president is resolved to protect the Botha regime, Congress must take it upon itself to wash America's hands of South African blood.



At the movies

Fast-paced sequel to 'Alien' is as memorable as the original

Fans of the original "Alien" will remember that the film ends with sole survivor Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) curling up with the cat Jonesy in the hibernation chamber of the Nostromo's escape pod.

The sequel, "Aliens" (aptly pluralized), begins when a freighter recovers the escape pod, drastically off course, 57 years later. Ripley has more than future shock to worry about; the "company" refuses to believe her story.

It seems that sometime during her 57-year sleep, the company had artificially created an atmosphere and set down some 70 families to begin terra-farming. None of the colonials had seen any big green aliens.

Ripley is relegated to a dingy apartment and a job loading cargo ships until Earth suddenly loses contact with the colony. A company bureaucrat, Burke (Paul Reiser), asks Ripley to accompany the investigating Marines as an adviser.

Thus, not only is Ripley headed back to a confrontation with the thing that nightmares are

made of, but she is again with the same company that caused the original disaster by ordering the capture of a live alien.

Without giving too much away, I can say that the Marines do find what they are looking for, a whole colony of aliens (remember the hundreds of pods from the first film? They hatched). They are not indestructible, not with the weaponry available to the Marines, but neither is this a turkey shoot.

By Sean Axmaker

The Marines are badly overwhelmed, and only the cool thinking of Ripley and the discovery of a survivor allow them to regroup and work their way off the planet.

If "Alien" is spooky horror with a gothic touch, "Aliens" is hard-edged action with emphasis on hardware and machinery. "Alien" was directed by Ridley Scott, a Brit whose later films ("Blade Runner," "Legend") show the same attention to expressive settings, mythic qualities and carefully orchestrated mood.

This sequel is written and directed by James Cameron, whose previous feature, "The Terminator," became a popular and critical action hit. "Aliens" shows Cameron's fascination with technology and gadgetry and shifts the emphasis from horror to action — Cameron's strong point.

The dynamics of the group is

also quite a leap from the first picture. Cameron's Marines are a smart-mouthed, wise-ass bunch of professional soldiers, a far cry from the tight-knit officers of the "Nostromo," but ultimately as likeable and as interesting (and convincing! If these guys don't act, talk and roughhouse like real Marines, I don't know who does).

To balance out the macho heroics is Newt (Carrie Henn), a 12-year-old girl who is the sole survivor of the colony. Ripley is understandably drawn to her. Both sole survivors, they suffer from incessant nightmares and fully understand the horror of their foe.

Ripley herself comes more into her own in this group, beginning as a soft-spoken adviser and quickly taking charge when the rookie commander chokes. This tough-as-nails, no-nonsense role allows Sigourney Weaver her strongest, most actively independent role since her debut in the original film. It's nice to see her again saving herself.

Even at its running time of two and a quarter hours, "Aliens" is tightly plotted, quickly paced action. The visual flourish and dark wit Cameron displayed in "The Terminator" adds the spice to his perfectly executed direction and hint toward a genuine sensibility (from an action director? Don't be silly!).

"Aliens" has all the signs of being the hit of the summer, and not merely because it is a sequel. Cameron has achieved the rare status of directing a sequel every bit as original and memorable as its source.

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