

Our efforts have made a difference. Vrye Weekblad, the outspoken Afrikaans-language weekly, which recently broke the story on the operation of death squads, would not be in existence today were it not for Canadian Government support. On Christmas eve, 1988, the moving men were in Vrye Weekblad's offices to repossess their rented computers. The Canadian Embassy stepped in and bought the computers on the spot so that publication could continue. That newspaper has since become a crucial catalyst for change in the Afrikaner community.

Canada has also been effective in supporting newspapers which are key vehicles for the black community in South Africa. Our provision of training, and the purchase of equipment, for the New Nation and Saamstaan has been a concrete expression of our support for the embattled opposition press.

The fight against apartheid is not a quixotic exercise in moral diplomacy. It reflects a sober analysis of the economic potential of the southern Africa region, a potential which has been sadly stunted by apartheid.

Apartheid has imposed enormous social and political costs on South Africa. Segregating the social services under apartheid - apart from being abhorrent - is grossly inefficient. The massive security structure has come at great financial cost. And as we have seen in the current education crisis, apartheid is also tragically expensive in blighted lives and wasted human resources.

Apartheid has also been an enormous drag on the economic potential of South Africa's neighbours. But a southern Africa freed of apartheid would be a southern Africa open to business. South Africa could be a more important engine of growth. Indeed, the abolition of apartheid could trigger the long-sought economic development of the entire, impoverished African continent.

But there is another important point to be made here. The fight against apartheid is also important for the future of relations between the developed and developing world. To a degree which must not be underestimated, the Third World regards Western attitudes towards apartheid as a crucial test of our commitment to the values we profess.

A new political atmosphere appears to have taken root in South Africa - one that recognizes that only a negotiated political settlement can turn that country around. A golden final opportunity exists, but it must be grasped now and grasped firmly. If the dosages are too small, political change will lose momentum, and the moderation generated thus far will evaporate.

The world - including Canada - has been prepared to pause these past few months; willing to give Mr. de Klerk a chance to prove his declared intentions; willing to give rhetoric a chance to become reality.