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A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN DILEMMA
IS THAT LOS ANGELES TIMES

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A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN DILEMMA

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SOUTH AFRICA

THE LINELIGHTS OF THE WORLD IS FOCUSING ON SOUTH AFRICA - AND FOR GOOD REASONS. WE HAVE A LEGAL SYSTEM THAT KEEPS WHITES AND BLACKS APART. AND WHILE THE WHITES ARE RICH AND POLITICALLY IN THE POWERSEATS, THE BLACKS ARE RELATIVELY POOR AND WITH LITTLE POLITICAL POWER.

AN INCREASING PROPORTION OF WHITES REALISE THAT APARTHEID MUST BE DISMANTLED IN THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE PERIOD. ALTHOUGH DISCRIMINARY PRACTICES ALSO EXISTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES, THE LEGAL SANCTION THEY ENJOY IN SOUTH AFRICA CAN NO LONGER BE JUSTIFIED. HOW TO GET RID OF LEGAL APARTHEID WITHOUT UNDERMINING CIVILISED PATTERNS AND DISRUPTING THE ECONOMY HAS BECOME THE REAL SOUTH AFRICAN DILEMMA.

BECAUSE OF APARTHEID A SHARP DIVISION EXISTS BETWEEN THOSE WITH WEALTH, PRIVILEGES AND POWER AND THOSE WITHOUT IS - AND THE DIVIDING LINE IS MAINLY THE COLOUR OF A PERSON'S SKIN.

BUT THE WORLD AT LARGE CAN ALSO BE DIVIDED BETWEEN THE WEALTHY AND POWERFUL COUNTRIES OF THE FIRST WORLD AND THE POOR AND RELATIVELY POWERLESS COUNTRIES OF THE THIRD WORLD. THE PEOPLES OF THE FIRST WORLD ARE MAINLY WHITE AND THOSE OF THE THIRD WORLD ARE TO A LARGE EXTENT BLACK.

THE POPULATION OF THE FIRST AND THIRD WORLDS ARE RESPECTIVELY 800 MILLION AND 2400 MILLION. IF WE DO NOT TAKE THE POPULATION OF COMMUNIST COUNTRIES INTO ACCOUNT, THE POPULATION OF THE FIRST WORLD (OR THE RICH NORTH) IS ONE-QUARTER, AND THE POPULATION OF THE THIRD WORLD (OR THE POOR SOUTH) IS THREE-QUARTERS OF THE POPULATION OF THE (GLOBAL) MACROCOSM.

SOUTH AFRICA'S POPULATION IS 32 MILLION. WE CAN REGARD 8 MILLION AS FIRST WORLD PEOPLE. IT IS ALL THE WHITES AND THE SMALL UPPER STRATA OF THE BLACKS THAT CAN MAINTAIN MIDDLE-CLASS LIVING STANDARDS AND ATTITUDES. THE REST OF THE POPULATION (24 MILLION) - ALL OF THEM BLACK - CAN BE REGARDED AS THIRD WORLD PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT AS IN THE THIRD WORLD. THIS ALSO GIVES US A RATIO OF 1/4 TO 3/4.

DEFINED IN THIS MANNER THE SOUTH AFRICAN MICROCOSM IS EQUAL TO 1/100TH OF THE MACROCOSM OF THE FIRST AND THIRD WORLDS.

FROM A DEVELOPMENT POINT OF VIEW A REMARKABLE SET OF STRUCTURAL SIMILARITIES EXISTS BETWEEN THE FIRST AND THIRD WORLD 'SECTORS' (OR BETWEEN THE 'NORTHERN' AND THE 'SOUTHERN' PARTS) OF THE MICRO- AND MACROCOSMS RESPECTIVELY. SOUTH AFRICA IS NOT ONLY IN QUANTITATIVE TERMS A MICROCOSM, BUT ALSO, AND ESPECIALLY, IN QUALITATIVE TERMS.

AS A QUALITATIVE REPLICA (OR A POCKET BOOK EDITION) OF THE MACROCOSM, IT HAS BECOME A KIND OF FOCAL POINT OF THE POSSIBLE PROBLEMS OF THE WORLD OF TOMORROW.

FROM THIS GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE, THE SOUTH AFRICAN DILEMMA OF HOW TO GET RID OF APARTHEID, IS A WORLD PROBLEM. WE NEED THE WORLD ... AND THE WORLD OF TOMORROW NEEDS OUR PRESENT EXPERIENCE.

IN THE LONG RUN IT MAY ALSO BECOME NECESSARY TO RESTRUCTURE THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM OF THE MACROCOSM. THE SEEMINGLY UNSOLVABLE PROBLEMS OF POVERTY AND POPULATION EXPLOSION IN THE THIRD WORLD WILL HAVE TO BE ACCOMMODATED IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. THIS MAY INDEED TURN OUT TO BE THE DILEMMA CONFRONTING THE RICH NORTH IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 21ST CENTURY.

THE GROWING CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH AND THE NEED FOR A GLOBAL SOLUTION HAS BEEN ARTICULATED IN SEVERAL SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS, THE HARNESSEOLD, THE RIO- AND THE BRAND-REPORTS (AND THE CANCUN CONFERENCE) EMPHASIZE THE SHRINKING OF THE PLANET AND THE GROWING INTERDEPENDENCE BETWEEN NATIONS - ALSO BETWEEN THE FIRST AND THE THIRD WORLD- AND THE INDIVISIBILITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

BUT APART FROM SIMILARITIES, TWO IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES EXIST BETWEEN THE MICRO- AND MACROCOSMS. FIRSTLY THE MACROCOSM IS COMPOUNDED OUT OF 120 DIFFERENT NATION STATES WHILE SOUTH AFRICA IS ONE POLITICAL UNITY. IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE THIS HAS IMPORTANT LEGAL AND MORAL IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA.

SECONDLY, THE TIMESPAN IN WHICH THE NECESSARY REDISTRIBUTION IN WEALTH AND POWER CAN BE BROUGHT ABOUT, IS CONSIDERABLY SHORTER IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN MICROCOSM. WHAT CAN TAKE DECADES TO ACCOMPLISH IN THE MACROCOSM, HAD TO BE BROUGHT ABOUT IN YEARS AND EVEN MONTHS IN THE MICROCOSM.

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE MICRO- AND MACROCOSMS HAS ALREADY BECOME A CURCIAL ELEMENT IN THE PROCESS OF DISMANTLING APARTHEID. IN THE LONG RUN THE RATE OF THE DISMANTLING OF APARTHEID WILL BE DETERMINED IN A DECISIVE WAY BY FOUR FACTORS-

- THE GROWTH OF THE MODERN SECTOR OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMY AND ITS TAXPAYING CAPACITY. BOTH TEND TO BE TOO SMALL. FUTURE GROWTH WILL DEPEND ON ONGOING AND CLOSER ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE WESTERN WORLD.
- THE GROWTH RATE OF THE BLACK POPULATION - IT TENDS TO BE FAR TOO HIGH AS ELSEWHERE IN THE THIRD WORLD.
- THE AMOUNT SPENT ON BLACK EDUCATION FROM INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SOURCES - BOTH ARE STILL AT TOO LOW A LEVEL.
- THE WILLINGNESS OF THE WHITES TO MAKE THE NECESSARY SACRIFICES IN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND IDEOLOGICAL TERMS. GIVEN THAT THE WHITES HAVE BECOME VERY SPOILED BY THEIR POSITION OF PRIVILEGE, THIS IS GOING TO BE A REAL STUMBLING BLOCK.

IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE THE NECESSARY CHANGE IN POLICY WILL DEPEND ON THE WHITES' ASSESSMENT OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PRESENT INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CRISIS ON THE APARTHEID ISSUE. STRANGELY ENOUGH IT SEEMS AS IF THE AVERAGE WHITE IS STILL RATHER UNAWARE OF, AND RELATIVELY UNDISTURBED BY, THE CRISIS DIMENSIONS OF THE ANTI-APARTHEID CAMPAIGN. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THE WESTERN WORLD MUST, BE CAREFUL NOT TO USE ITS MORAL AND ECONOMIC 'STICKS' AND/OR 'CARROTS' IN AN UNCONSTRUCTIVE WAY. IF TOO MUCH PRESSURE IS EXERTED, IT CAN EASILY HAVE AN UNFORTUNATE CONTRA-PRODUCTIVE EFFECT ON WHITE ATTITUDES AND ON THE GOVERNMENT. THIS WILL GRAVELY COMPLICATE THE SITUATION.

NONE OF THESE SHORT- AND LONGTERM FACTORS CAN BE EASILY MANIPULATED. CONSEQUENTLY, THE ROAD TOWARDS THE DISMANTLING OF APARTHEID IN A PEACEFUL WAY IS GOING TO BE A LONG AND PAINFUL ONE. PERAIS IT HAS ALREADY BECOME CLEAR THAT IT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE TO DISMANTLE IT IN AN ALTOGETHER NON-VIOLENT WAY. IF SO, THE VIOLENCE MUST STILL BE CONTROLLED EFFECTIVELY, TO PREVENT A CATASTROPHIC REVOLUTION. SUCH A REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE IN THE LONGTERM INTEREST OF THE MACROCOSM.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE IS AN INDICATION THAT A FUTURE RESTRUCTURING OF THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE MACROCOSM WILL ALSO BE A LONG AND PAINFUL ONE.

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