

From Page 7

change? The events of the past weeks and indeed months, and in particular the Boipatong massacre have yet again exposed the South African government's lack of will and/or inability to bring about peace and justice for all.

But we ourselves will not be doing any better, we will not be able to live the dream now, if we are haunted by the nightmarish ghost of pessimism and a "victim mentality". For pessimism and self-victimisation are the chains of our *own* forging and only *we* can free ourselves from them.

It is all too easy to see ourselves as victims. And the mood of the victim is inevitably despair, resentment and self-pity. These feelings are totally undermining of true human liberation. We cannot build a new society out of these.

'Political posturing and power positioning, corruption and skulduggery are not what ordinary South Africans want from our leaders. We want hope not euphoria'

It is not enough to resist being slaves of an oppressive and corrupt government while also being slaves of our own making - shackled to destructive patterns of behaviour, trapped by bitterness and resentment, overtaken by the violence of our emotions and actions - not free at all.

I appeal on behalf of all the citizens of our mother city, to all our brothers and sisters in those communities beset by violence, not to allow themselves to be slaves of yet another oppressive and destructive master: violence, but like truly noble and dignified human beings, who love justice and peace above all else, to resist the manipulation of *whoever* - rogue police, agent provocateurs, agents of state, of political groupings - *whoever* it is to whom your lives mean nothing.

Hear what we here and the nations of the world are saying today: your life does count for something; your deaths are grieved. Your children are our children and our land's future. You deserve more of this land than just a grave at Sharpeville. You are with us one nation, one people under God. Without you we are less than ourselves, less than a nation!

Our one hope is to live and act in the face of inhumanity and violence, in the face of despair - to live and act humanely, and peaceably and in hope...

Jihad vs McWorld

The two major political tendencies of our age - tribalism and globalism - clash at every point except one: both threaten democracy, says American political scientist BENJAMIN R BARBER.

Just beyond the horizon of current events lie two possible political futures - both bleak, neither democratic.

The first is retribalisation of large swathes of humankind by war and bloodshed: a threatened Lebanonisation of national states in which culture is pitted against culture, people against people, tribe against tribe - a Jihad in the name of a hundred narrowly conceived faiths against every kind of interdependence, social co-operation and civic mutuality.

The second is being borne in on us by the onrush of economic and ecological forces that demand integration and uniformity, and mesmerise the world with fast music, fast computers and fast food - with MTV, Macintosh and McDonald's pressing nations into one commercially homogenous global network: one McWorld tied together by technology, ecology, communications and commerce.

They have one thing in common: neither offers much hope to citizens looking for practical ways to govern themselves democratically.

Four imperatives make up the dynamic of McWorld: a market imperative, a resource imperative, an information-technology imperative and an ecological imperative.

Market imperative

All national economies are now vulnerable to the inroads of larger, transnational markets within which trade is free, currencies are convertible, access to banking is open and contracts are enforceable under law. Such markets are eroding national sovereignty and giving rise to entities - international banks, transnational lobbies like Opec and Greenpeace, world news services like CNN and the BBC, and multinational corporations - that neither reflect nor respect nationhood as an organising or regulative principle.

The market imperative has also reinforced the quest for international peace and stability, requisites of an efficient international economy.

Common markets demand a common language as well as a common currency, and they produce common behaviours of the kind bred by cosmopolitan city life everywhere. Shopping has a common signature throughout the world.

'Yet in all this hi-tech commercial world there is nothing that looks particularly democratic'

Resource imperative

The Athenians were unable to realise the ideal of autarky: political autonomy resting firmly on economic independence. Today, with the rapid depletion of resources that once seemed inexhaustible, and the maldistribution of arable soil and minerals on the planet, the reality of interdependence is inescapable.

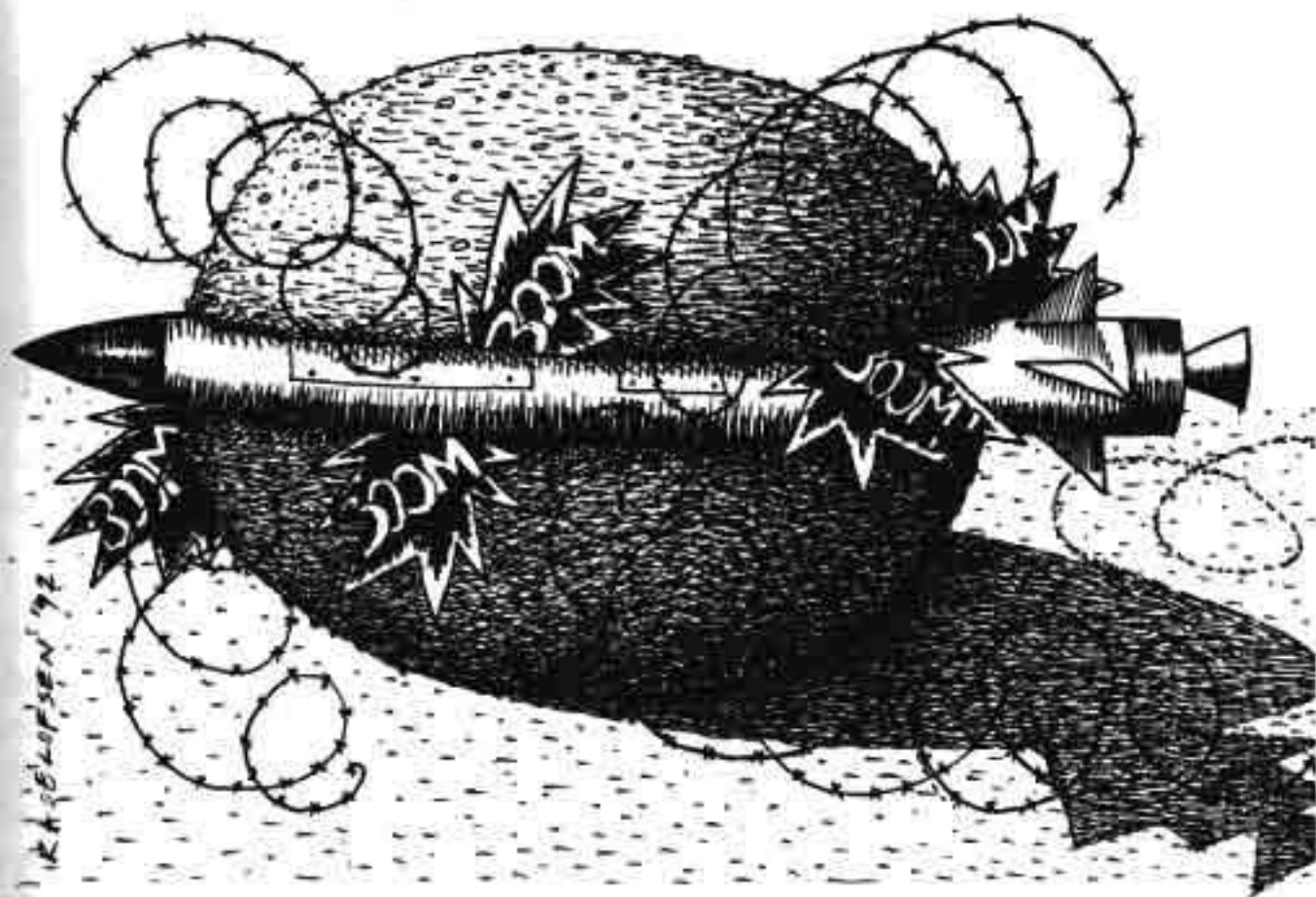
Information-technology imperative

Business, banking and commerce all depend on information flow and are facilitated by new communication technologies. The hardware of these technologies tends to be systemic and integrated - computer, television, cable, satellite, fiber-optic and microchip technologies combining to create a vast interactive network.

Moreover, the pursuit of science and technology asks for, even compels, open societies. Satellite footprints do not respect national borders; telephone wires penetrate the most closed societies.

The new technology's software is perhaps even more globalising than its hardware, because culture has become more potent than armaments. What is the power of the Pentagon compared with Disneyland? Can the Sixth Fleet keep up with CNN? McDonald's in Moscow and Coke in China will do more to create a global culture than military colonisation ever could.

Yet in all this hi-tech commercial world



there is nothing that looks particularly democratic. It lends itself to surveillance as well as liberty, to new forms of manipulation and covert control as well as new kinds of participation, to skewed, unjust market outcomes as well as greater productivity.

The consumer society and the open society are not quite synonymous. Capitalism and democracy have a relationship, but it is something less than a marriage.

Ecological imperative

The impact of globalisation on ecology is a cliché even to the world leaders who ignore it. We know well enough that the German forests can be destroyed by Swiss and Italians driving cars fueled by leaded petrol. We also know that the planet can be asphyxiated by greenhouse gases because Brazilian farmers are burning down tropical rain forests to clear a little land to plough.

Yet this ecological consciousness has meant not only greater awareness but also greater inequality, as modernised nations try to slam the door behind them, saying to developing nations, "The world cannot afford your modernisation; ours has wrung it dry!"

The headlines feature the subnational factions of Jihad regularly: they are cultures, not countries; parts, not wholes; sects, not religions; rebellious factions and dissenting minorities at war not just with globalism but with the traditional nation-state.

They include Kurds, Basques, Puerto Ricans, Quebecois, the Catholics of Northern Ireland, the Zulus of Inkatha, Catalonians, Tamils, and, of course, Palestinians - people without countries, inhabiting nations not their own, seeking smaller worlds within borders that will seal them off from modernity.

There were more than 30 wars in progress last year, most of them ethnic, racial, tribal or religious in character. The aim of many of these small-scale wars is to redraw boundaries, to implode states and rescue parochial identities. The mood is that of Jihad: war not as an instrument of policy but as an emblem of identity, an expression of community, and an end in itself.

'The tortoises among democratisers may ultimately outlive or outpace the hares'

Even where there is no shooting war there is fractiousness, secession and the quest for smaller communities. Disintegration in the former Soviet Union may well continue unabated - not just a Ukraine independent from the Soviet Union but a Bessarabian Ukraine independent from the Ukrainian republic - while Yugoslavia makes even the Soviet experience look integrated.

Among the tribes, religion is also a battlefield. Whatever Enlightenment universalism might once have come to grace such historically related forms of monotheism as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in many of their modern incarnations they are parochial rather than cosmopolitan, angry rather than loving, proselytising rather than ecumenical, zealous rather than rationalist, sectarian rather than deistic, ethnocentric rather than universalising.

How can democracy be secured and spread in a world whose primary tendencies are at best indifferent to it (McWorld) and at worst deeply antithetical to it (Jihad)?

With its concern for accountability, the protection of minorities, and the universal rule of law, a confederalised representative system would serve the political needs of McWorld as well as oligarchic bureaucratism or meritocratic elitism is currently doing. As we are already beginning to see, many nations may survive in the long term only as confederations that afford local regions smaller than "nations" extensive jurisdiction.

Recommended reading for democrats of the 21st century is not the US Constitution or the French Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen but the Articles of Confederation, that suddenly pertinent document which stitched together the 13 American colonies into what then seemed too loose a confederation of independent states, but now appears a new form of political realism, as veterans of the new Europe created at Maastricht will attest.

By the same token, the participatory and direct form of democracy that engages citizens in civic activity and civic judgment and goes well beyond just voting and accountability - the system I have called "strong democracy" - suits the political needs of decentralised communities as well as theocratic and nationalist party dictatorships have done.

Democrats need to seek out indigenous democratic impulses. There is always a desire for self-government, always some expression of participation, accountability, consent and representation, even in traditional hierarchical societies. These need to be identified, tapped, modified and incorporated into new democratic practices with an indigenous flavour.

The tortoises among democratisers may ultimately outlive or outpace the hares, for they will have the time and patience to explore conditions along the way, and to adapt their gait to changing circumstances.

It certainly seems possible that the most attractive democratic ideal in the face of the brutal realities of Jihad and the dull realities of McWorld will be a confederal union of semi-autonomous communities smaller than nation-states, tied together into regional economic associations and markets larger than nation-states - participatory and self-determining in local matters at the bottom, representative and accountable at the top.

The nation-state would play a diminished role, and sovereignty would lose some of its political potency. The Green movement adage "think globally, act locally" would actually come to describe the conduct of politics.

This is an edited version of an article published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1992.