



REFLECTIONS DRAWN FROM

APARTHEID

My name is Cas. Paulsen. I am a Detroitter-a Catholic Priest, ordained in 1962-a member of the Marianhill Mission Community. I have lived and worked in Southern Africa, for the most part, since 1966. There are three phases to my African experience.

A. Phase I (1966-1971) -

South Africa proper - hospital chaplain, youth work, adult education (all mainly black, 2/3 English, 1/3 Zulu language), co-pastor of a mixed (African, Indian, coloured, white) parish (a rarity), all this work, mainly urban-city and townships, some rural work.. In 1971 the South African government refused to renew my visa or grant the permanent permit and I was forced to leave.

B. Phase II (1972-1977) -

After some time spent working in the inner city of Detroit, I began work in Zambia, a genuinely independent African country-pastor of a parish, again, youth work and adult education-small town, mainly black but English speaking.

C. Phase III (1978-1987) -

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After a year Leave Of Absence in the States, I was re-assigned to one of the nominally "independent" homelands of South Africa.. Transkei-youth work, development work, adult education, and pastor of a large parish with 18 mini-parishes (working with a team of 2 Irish Dominican sisters and 7 unpaid, volunteer, local "catechists") - all black, almost rural, very little English (almost all Xhosa-the click language, like Zulu). My stay ended with arbitrary

(though legal) detention (incarceration), beginning on December 17, 1986, and ending on March 11, 1987, with the warning that I had 24 hours to leave the country, "or else!"

In my twenty odd years in South Africa, working both in urban townships and in the poverty stricken rural area;

-being involved in youth work at all levels from university to grade school;

-working as a parish priest in several different types of parishes;

-working on various development projects whose aim was to convince people that they could take responsibility for the shaping of their own history;

-being checked on and followed by the

Security Police;

-watching the poverty deepen and the suffering grow steadily;

-observing that as the anger and frustration of the people grew, so did the repression by the regime of those who dared to resist;

-being appalled by the collaboration of Western nations who uttered many denunciations but encouraged "business as usual" and took no



meaningful action to give weight to their denunciations;

-being detained without trial for three months and tortured then released only because of being an American citizen and the object of a huge letter writing campaign, I came to various conclusions, among which are the following:

1. Working for a just society in the world is not a "hobby" for a dedicated (radical) Christian. It is at the heart of the gospel message and is not an option.

2. The social teachings of the church must be an essential part of the formation of every Christian in every community (seminaries, convents, monasteries, parishes religious communities, etc.)

3. A theology without a global dimension is a theology that is not true to itself. No Christian can understand his/her relationship with God, Christ, the Spirit, without understanding the relationship with, and therefore responsibility to, our brothers and sisters in the Third World.

4. The rich get richer and the poor, poorer. The rich get richer because of/at the expense of the poor, who therefore become poorer. Poverty is not an accident or the result of laziness or stupidity. The insatiable greed for profit or power of a few leads to the exploitation of the many, bringing death to millions and subhuman living conditions to billions.

5. We must escape from the "band-aid" mentality that responds to symptoms rather than eradicates causes. We must seriously pool our talents and work hard to get to the bottom of things, the root causes. We must learn to do social analysis: cultural, societal, religious pasture fits together, understand it thoroughly, and analyses it critically, in order effectively to respond to the needs of our society.

6. Whether we speak of Nicaragua or South Africa, Chile or Korea, Haiti or the Philippines, or our own mini-Third World here in the United States, we are dealing with the same enemy: oppressive structures, exploitation, and profit on the part of big business and government of the West.

7. Although racism is a real disease to be dealt with, the roots of the racism in South Africa, and I suspect, in other parts of the world, are to be found in economics. The leadership of the African National Congress, which models its new society on the "Freedom Charter" includes all colors. The only person who is not acceptable in their new society is the person who is willing to exploit others for the sake of profit, be s/he black or white or whatever.

8. We must stop blaming "communism" for all the world's problems. I was not tortured by communists, the people in the villages I served were not starving because of the communists. The children protesting their unsatisfactory education were not shot down, not by communists. The torture that ac-

companies most detentions without trial is not perpetrated by communists I don't need a communist agent from Moscow University to explain to me that my wages are not enough to feed my family. The real problem in the world is not an East-West problem, it is a North-South problem - the haves and the have-nots. 9. Although it will take much work we must support those networks already existing and create new ones as necessary, which force our legislators to be both responsive and accountable to us, their constituents, when it comes to formulating foreign policy that will be constructive and not destructive. (Stop aid to the Contras in Nicaragua; support sanctions against South Africa; stop aid to the UNITA rebels-Angola; do not support RENAMO-Mozambique: etc..).

10. People cannot act without information. There is enough propaganda and disinformation around, even in our "reputable" newspapers. We must find a way to spread our information more broadly, not just to the converted, and we must have credible contacts with the press in major cities who will be responsible for catching the disinformation- and answering it.

My commitment is primarily to the liberation struggle in South Africa, precisely as a member of the Church. For too long we have sat on the

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A CRIME AGAINST
HUMANITY