"ISRAEL" & "SOUTH AFRICA" as SYMPATHETIC VIBRATION ----- ELLIOTT #2129

This thinksheet describes a psychopolitical factor (1) whose power is proportionate to its invisibility (ie, the less is the public's awareness of it, the greater its influence) and (2) whose importance needs critical adjustment vis-a-vis other factors on the national & global maps of psychopolitics (= how people/groups feel-think about situations & issues vis-a-vis resources & options).

1. Everybody's familiar with the physical fact I'm using to illumine the psychosocial fact this Thinksheet is concerned with: "s....v....: a vibration produced in one body by the vibrations of exactly the same period in a neighboring body." Within this whole phenomenon, the detail relevant for what I'm getting at is the fact that the intensity of the influence on the "neighboring" body declines with distance as the single factor, given continuity of the medium. To transpose to the psychosocial sphere, we Americans have more Polish than Afghan "neighbors," so we get more disburbed (and are easier to disturb) when the USSR is tough on Poland than when the USSR is tough on Afghanistan....

2....but the instances I want to deal with here are Israel & South Africa. In the Thinksheet title, I've used quotation marks to indicate that I'm speaking not of those nations-governments but of our present (Jan/87) Am. reactions to certain internal & international realities of those nations-governments. In the USA, what's threatening Israel sets up sympathetic vibrations in (1) our Jews (and how much poorer a culture we would be, historically & at present, without them!) & (2) our gentiles who've a bad conscience about antisemitism in general & holocaust in particular (on the latter, the repeated refusals of Pres.FDR to provide refuge to European Jews even though our country had a proud heritage of refuge: "Give me...your huddled masses"). And in the USA, Afroblack "liberation" pressures against Pretoria set up sympathetic vibrations in (2) our Afroblacks (and how much poorer our culture would be without their contribution yesterday & today!) & (2) our whites whose ancestry in Am. goes back to slavery days & who've a bad conscience about past & present bad treatment of Afroblacks by whites & white power in the USA....Note: (1) Whites who've come to the USA since the Civil War can be distinguished (and are being so, in some studies now in progress) from the descendants of antebellum whites; (2) "Afroblacks" are--in contrast to the British situation --most of America's blacks (but less than ½ of Guyana's blacks, the bulk being South Indian)--which I allude to in order to relativize the pigmentation factor in racism.

3. In geopolitical terms, both Israel & S.Africa are constitutional though flawed democracies (as our own country also is) & aligned with the West against one-party states-nations denying the right of dissenting-parties formation. Just how important to "democracy" are (1) multi-party freedom & (2) equality without any regard for sexual, religious, racial, ethnic factors? As to (1), I say absolute: governments denying this freedom (eg, the USSR & Nicaragua) use the word "democracy," but it's a language abuse. As to (2), I'd like to see all democracies, including ours, more advanced than they are toward this ideal. In each democracy, the movement toward this equality is evolutionary (no matter at what speed) and, though not inevitable, real for the reason that multi-party freedom predisposes a society toward the political equality of all permanent residents within its territory.

4. In the USA, thank God everybody--all persons & groups, including churches & councils of churches--is free to lobby, ie to influence government decision-making & action, within the limits of laws-rules-regulations. We have also, again within certain limits, freedom of access to information, including freedom to travel abroad in the interest of information-gathering. With these two freedoms go correlative responsibilities, and

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I have a special (convictional & professional) concern for the quality of Christian individual-and-group exercizing of these responsibilities. So much of what the churches (including special papers of Cath. & Prot. bishops) are pushing for seems to me simplistic, halfass & sometimes worse. "The media" has to say something about everything: do church folk now see themselves as a media category, under this logorrheic pressure (and are my Thinksheets an instance?)? I'm esp. disturbed when somebody tries to persuade me with "Christian principles" as argument. Eg, is it a Christian principle, applicable to our relation with Nicaragua, that our government should not try to overthrow a foreign government (but NOT applicable in the case of S.Africa!)? To me, the moralizing of politics is even more urpy than the politicizing of morals.

5. Support Israel because we have a lot of Jews & DON'T support S.Africa because we have a lot of Afroblacks (instead, support the ANC, which intends the overthrow of the S.African government). But sometimes a contrary wind blows: proPalestinianism in Am. churches is an instance. My own, UCC, sent a fact-finding team to the Middle East & came up with an egregiously proPLO report, eliciting from me this letter (Jan'87 UNITED CHURCH NEWS). From its birth, the PLO has unwaveringly worked for the destruction of the State of Israel, whose existence it refuses to recognize on Islamic-ideological as well as pragmatic grounds. Tell me about the "Christian principles" loading the case on the PLO side. Being for the loser, the underdog, the outsider --and against the winner, the topdog, the insider--is as Am. as apple pie, and some even say that God is prejudiced in favor of the former & against the latter (a claim easy to make plausible by proof-texting, for so much of the Bible was written by saints who were out of power).

Report falls flat

While I applaud the goodwill and data-gathering of the UCC study group that visited the Holy Land, your report was overeager to be fair to the Palestinian cause.

Under the heading "Who speaks for the Palestinians?" the report is entirely supine about the PLO as the answer of choice when outsiders ask Palestinians. If you were a Palestinian, would you respond "Nobody" or "Many clashing groups" instead of "The PLO"? And to whom do you think the PLO "speaks"? It won't speak with Israel: why doesn't the report admit that? The PLO is diplomatically and militarily disastrous for the Palestinian people and is now causing hundreds of deaths in Lebanon as it tries to creep back into strongholds after its trouncing by Israel.

The report assumes that "the security of Israel" and the "self-determination of Palestinian people" are compatible. Possibly so, but I've seen no convincing scenario. How can something be assumed that nobody has managed to present even as a plausible prospect?

Love conquers all, but not without hardheadedness.

Willis Elliott
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6. What's "the world" think of the way the churches have been behaving on foreign-policy issues? One of the papers I read today provides an inkling, though the churches are not mentioned. The writer calls divestment "nonsensical self-flagellation." For the churches to appear foolish is even worse promo for Jesus than for them to appear wrong! In both the USA & S.Africa, race relations are (I think) evolving, slowly improving. And after more than two years of boycotting the public schools, yesterday 1.8 million black students returned to their classes without "LIBERATION BEFORE EDUCATION!" posters.

Supposedly intelligent college students and liberal political leaders are agitating their institutions to divest ownership in stock in American companies doing business with or in South Africa. That the divesiture of such stock has no effect on either South Africa or the involved companies is indicates an ignorance of how this little segment of our economic system really works.

To sell the stock of IBM, for example, any American must go to a stock broker, who then on his own or with the assistance of another broker finds another American who wants to buy IBM. Then, depending on the balance of forces in the stock market that day, a price is established and a sale and a buy is made. Neither IBM or South Africa knows anything nor cares about the transaction. The selling broker and the buying broker have each made nice commissions.

If the selling pressure has been great that day, agreed price will be less than "normal" so that the seller, be he an individual, college, state, or pension fund, will suffer loss of net worth. The buyer on the other hand, gains a lower base for greater potential profit.

I fail to see how any transferral of social guilt takes place in all this nonsense. One could appreciate the sincerity of these agitators if they were demonstrating more strongly against ownership in companies doing business with China, Russia, and most third-world developing nations where genocide, political murder and export of terror are standard fare on a scale that makes South Africa look like a Bruins hockey game.