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Shaheed Mirza Rajie

THE CURRENT POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Abstract

Der Autor — Leiter der Abteilung Entwicklungspolitik des ANC, skizziert den entwicklungspolitischen Ansatz des African National Congress und seine Unterschiede zur Politik des weißen Minderheitsregimes. Er unterstreicht nicht nur die Notwendigkeit, das soziale Erbe der Apartheid zu bewältigen und die ungerechte Machtverteilung auf allen Ebenen der südafrikanischen Gesellschaft zu verändern, sondern plädiert auch für die Einbeziehung der demokratischen Massenorganisationen auf Gemeindeebene in den entwicklungspolitischen Entscheidungsprozeß. Für Südafrika — so der Autor in seinem Referat, das vor einer Konferenz der Vereinigung Westeuropäischer Parlamentarier gegen Apartheid (AWEPA) in Kopenhagen gehalten wurde — müssen neue politische Rahmenbedingungen für Entwicklungspolitik durchgesetzt werden.

An Inheritance of "Separate Development"

The political changes of the past 30 months in South Africa have had major implications for socio-economic developmental issues. Problems of Black poverty, apartheid inequalities, lack of access of the majority to basic needs enjoy a high place on the agenda of most social and political forces in the country.

For the African National Congress and the broad Democratic Movement, addressing basic needs and development issues is the logical extension of our struggle for democratic rights and the only way of ensuring that the political changes we are struggling for are made meaningful and sustainable.

For the Apartheid Government and its development institutions/parastatals, the issue is more one of admitting that whilst being forced to effect certain political changes, they still want to maintain control over socio-economic resources and continue to control development delivery systems in order to perpetuate the "dependency" of the majority.

Guided by this overall perspective, their development approach emphasises a technocratic, top-down, delivery of product process, which sees little for community empowerment or Institution building.

This approach can generally be detected in Government-related bodies like the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA); Independent Development Trust (IDT), Industrial Development Corporation (IDC); Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC); South African Development Trust Corporation (SADT); South African Housing Trust (SAHT); Land and Agricultural Bank etc.

The policy of Apartheid (euphemistically called "Separate Development") forms the basis for the present institutional structures of government, their development policy framework and current manoeuvres to maintain in place the present status quo.

Towards a New Development Framework

There are a number of features of South African society that are widely agreed upon within the ANC and the broad Democratic Movement in South Africa.

These *features* provide the basis for the construction of a broadly approved framework through which to approach the urgent tasks of social reconstruction, national development and nation building.

Firstly, the history of racial domination, and particularly the legacy of apartheid, has created a society of enormous inequalities in wealth, opportunity and, at the most basic level, of ability to survive.

Secondly, the economic distortions created by apartheid, coupled with the inevitable effects of the struggle against apartheid has resulted in a weak declining economy which will be unable to support a process of social reconstruction.

Thirdly the level of violence, coupled with poverty, homelessness, unemployment and land hunger are breeding a desperation in which life is held to be cheap and the prospects of national reconstruction become increasingly bleak.

Finally, the fragmentation and polarisation of South African society, politically, socially, geographically and institutionally constitutes a major obstacle to the rejuvenation of South African society. Much of this fragmentation is a direct consequence of the decades of apartheid rule.

As a matter of urgency we need in South Africa a constitutional settlement, and the unleashing of a unifying development *framework* that harnesses the resources of the country.

This means:

- * Building a society in which it is possible for the material, social and cultural needs of the majority of South Africans to be met. A paramount priority is to enable the millions of South Africans who are jobless, homeless and threatened by political violence to escape from poverty and desperation;
- * Constructing political and social processes through which all South Africans can exercise a reasonable say over their own, their community's and their country's future. In particular this means giving priority to "empowering" those who have been most deprived by the history of discrimination and oppression that we are seeking to put behind us;
- * Ensuring that all South Africans, beginning with the poor, have access to a progressively raised level of essential goods and services.

Within this framework, our development approach is seen to involve three inter-related processes:

1. Changing existing unequal social power relations that transcends all levels of society, the democratisation of all institutions and decision making processes. Establishing a democratic state which will create an enabling development environment and allow for a meaningful role for Community-Based and Non-Governmental Organisations (CBO's and NGO's), and build the capacity of ordinary people to enjoy increased control over their lives at work and at home.
2. Meeting the basic needs of the majority of people in a way which contributes to building human and institutional capacity which allows for people to participate in the process and the product.
3. To reverse the current trend of economic stagnation towards a national development strategy that places South Africa on a new growth path oriented to meeting basic needs and altering its current primary goods export emphasis, but which is both environmentally and economically sustainable.

The challenge facing us

In South Africa we have a long tradition of mass based organisation and struggle, and have a strong network of both Community-Based Organisations (CBO's) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's).

In our struggle to democratise all the institutions and processes that affect our daily lives (and not merely the structures of government) the key challenge facing us is how to effectively wield power when it comes to developmental issues.

The apartheid bureaucracy is entrenched, experienced and has enormous technical, financial and human resources — but no legitimacy.

We have legitimacy, but lack the technical, financial and human resource capacity.

Thus there are key challenges facing both the future democratic government and the CBO's and NGO's of the Democratic Movement if we are to fulfil the critical role of initiating projects to improve local conditions.

But unlike the present government, the future democratic government will play a leading and central role in launching development programmes aimed at redressing historical imbalances, make funding available to support the activities of CBO's and NGO's, and help develop their capacity to make their projects successful.

In addition, a range of "development-friendly legislation" would be on the Statute Book.

The role of International NGO's/Foundations

The underdevelopment that has taken place under apartheid (the so-called "separate development scenario") will have major consequences for any future development.

The stagnating economy, the massive inequalities and the high levels of concentration of economic power will all act as major constraints on the capacity of the economy to grow in the future.

This is important, noting the high expectations that the majority have at the moment. Black people, who have been denied access to basic needs under apartheid will inherit a situation in which it will be difficult to fulfil their expectations within a short space of time.

Given the state and structure of the South African economy it will remain difficult for even a democratic government to provide the millions of jobs, houses for all, proper education and health services that are needed by the majority.

It is therefore of crucial importance for international intervention (both governmental and non governmental) to assist in addressing the high expectations of the majority in order to ensure that the political changes being envisaged are accompanied with changes in their day-to-day material conditions.

It is critical that this development assistance be channelled in a way that changes social power relations by empowering both the "beneficiaries of development", and those CBO's/NGO's of the Democratic Movement whose function it is to administer programmes.

This would help to ensure that the victory of our national liberation struggle makes a forceful impact on changing the material conditions of the majority of our people.

The African-American communities, in particular, can play a very meaningful role in the realisation of this goal. They have hands on experience in fighting the problems of unemployment and housing, drug abuse and crime etc. in the ghettoes of the big US cities.

Programmes can be designed where experiences are shared, approaches evaluated and ways investigated where maximum impact can be achieved.

This can only further strengthen our bonds of solidarity and friendship, and help to establish "partnerships in action" between our peoples.

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