INDICATOR

THE STRUGGLE FOR A NON-RACIAL DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA: 'TIME OUT' FOR STOCK-TAKING

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INTRODUCTION

Indicator South Africa produced a comprehensive research report on Political Conflict in South Africa: Data Trends 1984-88 in December 1988. This provides a very valuable resource base for anyone who wishes to understand the factors, issues and actors that played a role in what has undoubtedly been the most turbulent and sustained challenge to Government and State policy up to date.

From the implementation of the Tri-Cameral Constitution in 1984 until deep into 1988 (the Report in some instances covers until October 1988) 3574 people were killed, the vast majority of them township residences (p.116); +- 45000 detained without trial (p.93, and this is considered to be a conservative estimate); the number of work stoppages and strikes climbed from 469 in 1984 to 1148 in 1987 (p.105); insurgent actions of various kinds from the ANC increased from 44 in 1984 to 203 in 1986, 183 in 1987 and 180 by October 1988 (p.96), i.e. an average escalation of more than 4 times. There was a virtual breakdown of, and rebellion against the system of black education, as well as of township/local government structures in more metropolitan areas. Even Homeland and other rural areas were swept into the turmoil (e.g. Makanjes p.73). It is no exaggeration to say that most extra-Parliamentary community and institutional life was in some way affected or involved in the revolt against State policy.

And yet, in the same Report, virtually all the commentators, who without exception are in some way or another committed to the ideal of a non-racial democratic South Africa, concede that the State has not only successfully contained the revolt, but through sustained and massive repression managed to (temporarily?) debilitate the organizational base of most extra-Parliamentary opposition:-

Bennet Quin (p.15) — "The extra-Parliamentary opposition, and to a limited extent the labour movement, wilted under the effects of a national emergency. The inability of many of the organizations to withstand the onslaught revealed not only the extent of State power, but the failure of the opposition to evolve internal structures that might have enabled them to withstand the crackdown."

Chaskelson & Seekings (p.44) — "The National State of Emergency declared in mid-1986 marked a turning point in township politics. Severe repression and the tentative introduction of counter-revolutionary measures caused wide-spread organizational paralysis and broke the back of the school boycotts and embryonic structures of "people's power".

Palmer (p.33) – points out that in the Eastern Cape – "Ex-detainees are not necessarily about to take up the struggle where they left off. The rigorous conditions of detentions have caused a decline in health in many cases. Demoralized and physically weakened on release, ex-detainees who have lost their jobs face the almost impossible task of finding new employment as branded 'politicals' in a region of very high unemployment."

Phillips (p.105) – "The extent and nature of the State's clampdown on all areas of meaningful political activity within the country has meant that popular organizations have had to reassess their current strengths and weaknesses."

Perhaps the most telling measure of the 'success' of the State's counter-revolutionary strategy, (particularly in controlling information), is that despite increasing international isolation during this period, and at the peak of industrial unrest and insurgent ANC activity in 1987-88 (p.96), business confidence climbed from a low ebb in 1985 to a high in October 1987 (p.106). Some of the indicators used to measure such confidence were : consumer price index, estimated retail sales, new companies registered, number of persons immigrating to and from South Africa, etc. As Morris put it (p.109): "The restructuring of the relations of power within the State and its ability to demonstrate most effectively that it is by no means unstable has led to a reappraisal of capital's relationship to the State."

So what conclusion does one draw from all of this? Has resistance and revolt been finally crushed? Has the "total strategy" succeeded? Is "reform" back on track? Such conclusions would reflect a very serious misunderstanding of the nature of political conflict in South Africa. To contain conflict is one thing, to resolve it, a totally different matter. The Report repeatedly makes it clear that the underlying structural conditions which provide the backdrop for issues and precipitating events to escalate into open conflict and violence, are as present and unresolved as before.

What then is to be done? It appears that the State and its major opponents are in a position of strategic deadlock, with the initiative of control, manipulation and coercion lying with the State. What do those who are seriously committed to the ideal of a non-racial democratic South Africa do in such a situation? Perhaps they should call for a "time-out" to take stock of their own strategies, tactics and options. What follows are some of the issues which have to be considered, I believe, very seriously when such stocktaking takes place.

Before I raise them, let me concede at the outset that such a re-evaluation, particularly for those deeply, and over an extended period, involved in the struggle and who have suffered personally, can be a painful and even objectionable exercise. Political strategies, despite their expendable means-end logic, are not cheaper by the dozen or easily settled on. They tend to develop a culture of commitment with rituals of dedication and sacrifice that very often demand uncritical loyalty. That is why they run the risk of being ends in themselves, or are often elevated into unquestioned matters of principle. But these very characteristics, necessitate a re-examination of strategy and tactics in a situation of strategic deadlock. Such re-examination does not inevitably imply a rejection of old tactics and strategies, although this is possible, but it certainly does mean taking a fresh

look at priorities, resources and results. There is an additional dimension in stock-taking of this nature. Very often a strategy or a tactic is a logical part of a particular theory of change. The prior commitment is to the theory rather than to the strategy, but the abandonment of the strategy is then seen as a rejection of the theory. My response to this dilemma is : So what? If the success of a theory of social change is predicated on the inflexible commitment to a particular strategy, it cannot be a particularly useful theory, and if the theory has to explain away all the contradictions in order to intellectually prop up a particular strategy, it becomes a useless tautology in any case. Have we not in South Africa again and again (an even now) from left and right, been theorized with "glorious inevitable outcomes" that hover like mirages in our arid political desert? It took the National Party government almost 40 years to realize that the theory of Separate Development/Apartheid was not going to work. (And now they offer us Total Onslaught/Total Strategy in its place – notice the emphasis on strategy?) Must those in opposition committed to a non-racial democracy repeat this kind of dogmatic folly? Surely in the stock-taking that takes place it is necessary to dust down both strategies and theoretical assumptions. Having thus prefaced my discussion, let me consider some of the issues.

THE ISSUE OF VIOLENCE

In looking at violence as a manifestation of political conflict, I have no intention of reviewing or taking issue with theories, whether political or theological that address the issue of violence as an instrument of political change. Let me declare my bias at the outset by stating that I remain unpersuaded as to its political predictability or usefulness or its moral defensibility. This does not mean I am a pacifist, I can easily picture situations in which I can become violent and I certainly can understand how an individual, group or organization can come to accept that violent means are a last resort to seek political redress. But I find myself unable to accept a programme for South Africa that sees violence as an absolutely essential component to bring about successful change towards a non-racial democracy. This also does not mean that violence cannot be used to bring about change. Both the State and some of its opponents have used violent means to change the domestic situation. But whether either has brought us much closer to a non-racial and democratic South Africa is another matter altogether. So much for my bias.

The Indicator Report makes it quite clear that during the period 1984 to 1988 a considerable amount of violence took place in South Africa. Of the 3574 people killed over six unrest periods, 2612 (73%) were township residents and of them 1542 (59%) died as a result of internecine warfare inside townships, i.e. feuding between extra-Parliamentary opposition groups, left wing activists attacks on collaborators, vigilante and right-wing attacks etc. The rest of the township residents killed, 1070 (41%) were killed by the security forces. The other fatalities were Security Force Members 169 (4,7%), ANC/PAC members 113 (3%) and 63 (1,7%) civilians (i.e. land mines/bombs. (p.116)

These statistics do not reflect the degree of intimidation (on all sides) or excessive use of force, nor what the +- 45000 who were detained, experienced during their incarceration. It is fair to assume that a considerable amount of brutalization was the order of the day. Literally hundreds of unexamined affidavits attest to this fact, almost all of them against the State. But a number of commentators also refer to the alienating effects of violence in townships by various elements in the "democratic movement", civic and youth organizations. (cf Bennet & Quin (p.16); Chaskelson & Seekings (p.36) and (p.41); Palmer (p.51); Cameron (p.61); Booth (p.78).

What the Report makes abundantly clear, is that it would be a gross misrepresentation of reality to give a body count analysis of the violence by juxtaposing the violence of State repression with the violence of armed struggle by the ANC or PAC. Instead it is more than apparent that the structural conditions in South Africa are such (economic inequality, atrocious housing conditions, inadequate educational facilities, rampant poverty and hunger, unemployment, totally inadequate channels for political expression or civic administration, deep feelings of relative deprivation etc. etc.), that many forms of violence are not only possible but it would be surprising if under such conducive circumstances they did not occur. The implicit, if not explicit analytical framework used by almost all commentators to give some coherence to the patterns of political violence is precisely to relate precipitating events and issues to these structural circumstances. Even the State (somewhat belatedly) acknowledged the "legitimacy of grievances". (cf the contributions of Morris and Swilling in the Report.)

During 1984-88 violence manifested itself in uncontrolled mob aggression, spontaneous anger, feuding, political retribution, thuggery, terror, planned and systematic armed violence etc. To ascribe the same motivation, pre-meditation and execution to all these various forms of violence would be a gross distortion of reality. Yet in a rapidly polarizing situation such as ours, this is very often what happens. The State bombarded the population with sustained propaganda in which almost any manifestation of violence was ascribed to the 'terrorist activities' of the ANC. Even after the ANC had publicly, and after considerable delay, repudiated 'necklacing' as a means of political retribution, this form of barbarism was presented as part and parcel of the armed struggle of the ANC. At the same time, it is clear that much of the rhetoric emanating from Sechaba and Radio Freedom during this period tended to romanticize 'a people's war' and the spontaneous 'revolutionary anger of the masses'. This was grist to the mill for the State propagandists who gave themselves permission to quote selectively from banned ANC literature to prove that virtually all forms of violence emanated from one single source. And so over time, between 1984 – 88, the domestic conflict on a propaganda level, became juxtaposed as a struggle between the State and ANC. A major reason why this happened is that the State quite deliberately and calculatingly chose to present the ANC as its major anti-propaganda target. (Surely, this in itself bears some reflection). It does not matter how chagrined other extra-Parliamentary organizations may be at the 'limelight' that the ANC has enjoyed, they are the flagship of the revolt against State policy, also because the State wishes them to enjoy that position. Why? Because, I maintain, the ANC has a theory about 'armed struggle', 'people's war', and political violence which suits the State's purposes. It is eminently exploitable for counter-revolutionary propaganda. The ANC has made it repeatedly clear that its struggle

against the State is a multiple strategy one, in fact a four-pronged strategy, (cf Phillips p.97), of which the armed struggle is one facet. In targeting the ANC as its major opponent, the State chooses to focus only on the armed struggle of the ANC to the exclusion of all else: thus we have the 'terror' (armed struggle) of the ANC vs. the 'law and order' (tyranny) of the State. This juxtaposition, if sustained by either side must keep the issue of political violence, whether by or against the State, center stage. The critical question is: <u>Do those who wish to see a non-racial democracy become a reality in South Africa want this to be the case?</u>

As I said, what is quite clear from the Report is that credibility is stretched beyond reason if we have to understand that 3574 killed and +- 45000 detained between 1984-88 is evidence of an armed struggle between the State and its major opponents. If anything, it resembles a one-sided massacre of township residents (73%) either by security forces or through internecine conflict within the townships themselves. It is demonstrable nonsense to claim that all forms of political violence between 1984-88 can be ascribed to either the State or the ANC. Whether the State or the ANC wishes to do so or not, the fact is that the structural conditions in South Africa are such that a variety of forms of violence are likely to occur which cannot simply be romanticized away by juxtaposing the State against the ANC. The critical question for the ANC is, how does it separate the violence of the armed struggle from the violence that emanates from mob anger, vengeance, thuggery and crime? More important, by doing so, how does it rob the State of the propaganda initiative of lumping all forms of violence into the ANC's armed struggle or 'people's war'? These are not simply rhetorical questions, they are of critical strategic significance. To the extent that they remain unanswered, confusion abounds. This confusion was at the heart of the tragedy that was the Delmas trial. The judgement revolved around a simple and simplistic syllogism: the ANC uses violence, the UDF supports the ANC, therefore the UDF supports violence. Nothing could budge the Judge from this over simplification. All that remained for the prosecution to do was to show that wherever violence occurred and the UDF was present, the one was inextricably linked to the other, no matter whether township residents were incensed with appalling living conditions, rent increases, unemployment, hunger or poverty. In fact, to expect justice from a legal decision in these circumstances was patently unrealistic. The injustice lay outside the court in the absence of political judgement which created the circumstances that precipitated violence. The trial for both the State as well as the defendants was an exercise in damage control, not establishing justice. But the central issue remained violence as an instrument of political change. Phillips (p.98) argues in the Report that: "The armed struggle (of the ANC) is not meant to challenge directly the armed might of the State. It is meant more to undermine white confidence and security, to galvanize state opponents with the conviction and evidence of State vulnerability and to steadily build up a force of better trained cadres who will be better able to take advantage of instances of state retreat." The Report provides very little evidence to give cheer for attaining any or most of these objectives. But more important, implicit in such a statement is a theory about the role of the State in South Africa, and this is the next issue I wish to consider.

THE ISSUE OF THE STATE

To talk about a theory of the State in this context may be methodologically imprecise; more correctly one should talk about a set of assumptions concerning the role of the State in the political conflict in South Africa. It should be self-evident that any strategy to achieve a non-racial democracy in South Africa must deal with the reality of the State as either an asset or obstacle towards this goal. In discussions about political change in South Africa there appear to be three sets of assumptions about the role of the State.

First, the conventional Marxist assumption is that the State is simply an extension of Capital in some variation or the other and therefore any manifestation of establishment power, i.e. Parliament, RSC's, local government councils, etc., is linked to the class interests of those in power. As the contradictions of capitalism 'deepen' or 'ripen' so the State will come under increasing pressure and eventually succumb to the 'historical forces' which will sweep it aside, for a 'new order' to be established. From this perspective we repeatedly heard statements during 1984-88 that the Apartheid State was 'crumbling' or was in a 'state of blind panic' etc. As Morris (p108) correctly points out, nothing was further from the truth, (and he writes as a Marxist scholar).

The second set of assumptions views the State as a kind of neutral arbitrator between the contending political forces – the disinterested servant of whoever happens to govern at the moment. Thus Parliamentary politics is seen as functioning according to its own set of rules independent from any State interests. This is the conventional British Westminster or West European view of the State and also the official propaganda of the South African State. To bring about change all that has to be done is that a political interest group has to play according to the party political rules, capture the critical sites of power and the State will assist one in bringing about the desired change. Anyone who has read the contributions of Swilling, Phillips, Morris, Zulu and Schlemmer in the Report, and still clings to this view of the State in South Africa simply loves to be deluded. And yet this 'conventional' view of the State is shared by many who declare themselves committed to a non-racial democracy for South Africa.

The third set of assumptions are more implicit than explicit. They basically give no role to the State at all in the process of change – in fact, the State is seen to be irrelevant. This is the case with analyses presented by Dennis Becket : Permanent Peace; Louw & Kendall: The Solution; and Clem Sunter: SA in the 1990's. The common denominator for change in all these analyses is a fundamental 'if-only' clause which simply sweeps aside the reality of the State. "If only", "everyone", "someone", "the Government", "whoever will accept "one-man-one-vote" (Beckett), "individual liberty" (Louw and Kendall) or that "we" have to move from the "low road" to the "high road" then everything will "come right". These exercises in scenario building are useful to propagate certain values and debate alternatives but they bear no relation to the reality of the South African State or to strategies for change. They have very little to offer in telling us how to get from A to B.

It should be obvious that the goal of a non-racial democratic South Africa could quite comfortably fit into any one of these three sets of assumptions about the State. But what

should also be equally obvious is that no sensible discussion on strategy to bring about such a South Africa can take place if such widely divergent views of the State are held, particularly when, as I believe, they bear very little relation to the actual State in South Africa. It is inconceivable that much sense can come out of a discussion or re-evaluation on strategy if at the same time the State is seen as a major obstacle, a major resource and facilitator and basically irrelevant, to achieving a non-racial democracy.

The set of assumptions about the State in South Africa that bear closest approximation to reality are contained in the body of the Indicator Report on Political Conflict in South Africa. What are they?

a) The state is an independent actor – I am not perpetrating some holistic fallacy by saying this. The State consists of identifiable groups of people with more or less influence in directing the State's course but with a common set of interests in maintaining the State as an independent actor. The State Security Council with its subsidiary bodies (cf Swilling p.89), the Permanent Force of the SADF, the SAP, Homeland Governments, RSC's etc., are essentially groups of people with more or less interest and influence in maintaining the structure of the State intact. The interests of the State may or may not coincide with the interests of the business community or 'the Church' or a particular political party.

b) Civilian and accountable politics is subservient to the interests of the State – If anything became abundantly clear between 1984 – 88 it was this point. Ordinary civilians knew less and less about more and more that was going on and increasingly there was nothing they could do about it. This is particularly true of the NP itself. The shift to tricameralism and the extraordinary powers of the Executive saw a fundamental change in the role of the NP caucus in political decisionmaking. Sometimes even Cabinet Ministers were unaware of crucial decisions that had been taken and executed.

c) Increasingly South Africa is ruled by the State – not by a political party or an independent government – When Makanje says (p.64): "Homeland administrations have ably succeeded in reproducing Pretoria's (my emphasis) elaborate system of social and political controls, through adopting the same security legislation and extending the National State of Emergency. Curfews, emergencies, bannings, union bans, detentions, the suppression of opposition, and activist fatalities have become common features of politics in homelands". Who is Pretoria? Who do "kitskonstabels" work for? Who pays vigilantes? Who intervenes in homeland coups? What are the common interests shared by Bantu Holomisa of the Transkei, Ngxobonywana of Crossroads, and General Charles Lloyd, Secretary-General of the State Security Council? To maintain control of the State's power, privilege and patronage.

What I am suggesting is that the South African Government has increasingly become part of the machinery of State and not the other way around. This

was brought about largely through the actions of P W Botha who shifted on two important grounds: he integrated civilian and security management through the State Security Council and he adopted a one nation concept for South Africa which increasingly enables the State to reintegrate the Homelands and Blacks into a common State structure (cf Swilling (p.91), and Morris (p.113) in the Report.)

d) <u>The State has a clearly defined theory about itself</u> – If one thing shows up quite clearly in the various contributions in the Report it is the fact that most of the organizations involved in the revolt and resistance between 1984 – 88 refused to come to terms with the fact that the State had been preparing itself for an 'onslaught' since the adoption of the National Security Management System on 16 August 1979. The deployment of the National Security Management System has been thoroughly documented since then. Even if one does not have a coherent theory of the State it is at least prudent, when devising strategies for a non-racial democratic society to take note of the State's own theory about itself. Repeatedly we have been told that it is the duty of the State to mobilize a 'total strategy' to meet the 'total onslaught'. Defence White Papers were tabled in Parliament to this effect; a diversity of interest groups were systematically briefed about this over an extended period of time and the SSC gave bureaucratic content from the central to the local level to this ideology/theory. As former spy Craig Williamson put it: "When the revolt started in 1984, everything was in place. All we had to do was to throw the switch." No doubt there is a bit of self-indulgent breast beating in this statement, but it would be foolish to underestimate the underlying significance of it.

To avoid immediate misunderstanding, let me state quite clearly that I am not suggesting that every individual, sub-system or department of the State is a myopic goose-stepping devotee of the 'total onslaught' theory of the State. The extent to which this is or is not so is a matter of investigation not *a priori* assumptions. It is hard to imagine that the urbane and cosmopolitan members of the Treasury or Reserve Bank would be as uncritical supporters of the theory as the Hawks on the various levels of the NSMS. But it is quite clear that during the six unrest periods between 1984-88 the security policy of the State was not formulated and executed by the Reserve Bank or the Department of Tourism. The hallmark of the P W Botha era is simply that State Security is priority number one and as long as this is not jeopardized 'reform', 'free enterprise', 'systematic urbanization', 'liberal press', 'regional peace', etc., will be tolerated (cf Swilling p.93). Thus the formulators of the State's theory about itself see the State as a counter-revolutionary bulwark against a 'total revolutionary onslaught' and the circular logic it uses in this regard defines virtually everything and everyone as part of this 'onslaught' that does not form part or co-operate with its 'total strategy'. To this effect the State is prepared to jettison aspects of Separate Development/apartheid which hinder the smooth working of its strategy; co-opt clients into its State structure; use kitskonstabels and vigilantes to maintain 'law and order',

'multi-racialize' institutions of government; negotiate with communists to seek regional peace etc. As Morris puts it (p.113): "Unlike Verwoerdian Apartheid that State is not concerned with implementing a uniform policy for all blacks. It is rather, by being intentionally selective and favouring certain areas and classes at the expense of others, aiming at facilitating class and regional differentiation within black society. The aim is to foster maximum division and through a strategy make the creation of a broad alliance of black communities against the State so much more difficult."

e) <u>The State is a dynamic and flexible entity</u> – This point follows logically from the previous one. The most stupid thing to do is to regard the South African State as some paralyzed bullfrog confronted by a hungry python awaiting its inevitable 'historical destiny'. If the gold price could rise to 10 dollars an ounce for every time the demise of the South African State has been predicted over the last 20 years, South Africa would be awash with enough money to more than adequately finance every conceivable political fantasy from the 'left' or the 'right. The point is that the State has shifted and changed to meet new developments. If this flexibility is met with a strategic inflexibility, then disappointment and frustration is inevitable. After all, it is only realistic to assume that 'they' have as highly trained, intelligent "Indians" reading the same smoke signals as the "Indians" on the "other side".

<u>To sum up</u>: The South African State is an independent political entity with definable interests, a huge bureaucracy, a definite ideology or theory about itself, that may or may not, depending on the particular circumstances, coincide with the interests of business, labour, church, educational or other political interest groups. Although it is reasonably flexible in deploying its policy, it is subject to tensions and divisions within its own ranks.

I would suggest that any strategy which hopes to promote a non-racial democracy for South Africa must do so in relation to this reality of the South African State. For example, a conventional revolutionary agenda is tailor made for the 'total strategy' of the South African State, if for no other reason than that it is so crushingly predictable. Surely it makes sense to conclude that a State that has geared most of its resources to meet some 'revolutionary onslaught', real or imagined, has also burnt the midnight oil brushing up on counter revolutionary strategies all over the world, (particularly Latin America).

The above view of the State is not a novel one. In fact, in most countries where civilian and accountable politics has been made subservient to State interests, this form of Statism is present. Thus in South Africa and most of Africa, to the extent that electoral or civilian participation in politics is tolerated, it serves to provide the State with executive personnel with varying degrees of popular legitimation, rather than to change the Government or to present the whole adult population with 'genuine' political alternatives. This shift to tricameralism in 1984 in South Africa was a major step towards ritualizing this kind of State politics here as well,

(although in pure white politics, particularly from the right, State interests may still have a limited vulnerability.)

Given this growing reality of the South African State, strategies such as protest, boycotts, strikes, participation, etc., take on a different dimension than say in the USA, UK or Western Europe where supporting institutions and constitutions can become involved in the deployment of strategy. In our context, it is a much tougher and longer haul for the simple reason that should a non-racial democracy become a reality, the very structure of the South African State would have undergone a fundamental transformation. Against this background let me focus on another issue of strategic significance.

THE ISSUE OF PARLIAMENTARY/EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS

The underlying issue in this juxtaposition is of course the issue of participation or non-collaboration in state structures. I honestly believe that this issue should consistently be discussed as a matter of strategy and not of principle. Surely the reasons which have motivated participation or non-collaboration over a period of 40 years bears some re-investigation and debate. The circumstances bearing on these reasons have undergone important shifts. For example, now the State wishes to integrate Whites, Coloureds, Asians and Blacks (albeit on its own terms) into a common State structure, a kind of 'multi-racial' government whereas previously the National Party Government wanted to jettison segregated structures so that they would mature into 'separate governments'. There is more than ample evidence that the State will find enough clients for the former rather than the latter approach. (Cf. Morris, Swilling, Zulu)

One argument against participation is that this 'legitimizes' state structures. There is an element of truth in this, but the argument does not have the same force it used to have. The legitimacy of the tri-cameral system is formally rejected by most of its own participants and its fiercest participatory opponents, the CP, blatantly state that they do so for strategic reasons only. The key question is: What purpose does participation serve for the State? I do not believe legitimacy is the major concern. Civilian participation for the State on all levels of Government serves an organizational and control purpose. "It needs customers to do the job". This is a contradiction that deserves strategic consideration. When I say participation, I do not mean participation only in overt political structures, i.e. Parliament, RSC's, local government, etc., I mean participation in any State controlled/supported structures e.g. education, labour, homeland institutions, etc. The State's theory of 'total onslaught' has 'politicized almost all institutions of society – this is part of its 'total strategy' to create a multi-racial State structure for South Africa. Should those who work for a non-racial democratic South Africa not take a new and serious look at different forms of participation as a counter-strategy?

When I say this, I am well aware of the considerable organizational, logistical and not least ideological problems that cluster around this issue. On a relatively minor

scale this is evident in the trials and tribulations experienced in forming one united democratic oriented opposition in the white House of Parliament. The critical underlying issue "Does a new party seek white support at the cost of extra-Parliamentary legitimacy or vice versa, or is a strategy possible where both can be achieved?" The issue of participation is riddled with far more serious problems in extra-Parliamentary politics. But perhaps the time has come to look at this issue precisely because of recent experiences and changes. Palmer (p.53) makes his sobering comment: "The struggle" seems to have been replaced by a struggle for existence as economic conditions continue to worsen ... Among the formerly politically active, the subtraction, for months, of more than a thousand members was highly disruptive of extra-Parliamentary organization; after release, hundreds of ex-detainees, having lost their jobs, not only contributed to the unemployment problem in certain categories, but also experience such difficulties of re-adjustment that there is little time and energy or motivation to reorganize. Under these difficult circumstances, the siren-song of co-optation is, for many hard pressed individuals, irresistible." He is talking mainly of the East Cape region, but especially there, the point is well taken. What alternative of strategic consequences is there for those he refers to?

THE ISSUE OF MASS/POPULAR PROTEST

The period 1984-88 saw a great many instances of mass protest meetings. Given the nature of the grievances, as well as State reaction to popular response to them, this is understandable. The Report demonstrates clearly how different occasions, e.g. funerals, release/banning of detainees, etc., were used for such protests and in particular the State's increasingly coercive and suppressive reaction to such meetings. It is difficult, however, not to conclude that a great deal of the energy for mobilization politics went into the organization of such meetings and that the success of mobilization politics depended on the turnout and frequency of such meetings. I believe this to be a serious mistake. Protest meetings may serve the useful purpose of popularizing grievances or developing a common political awareness, but if this is done through excessive sloganeering in which the curses and blessings of Providence are invoked for support and the promises of political salvation are in direct contradiction to their prospects of being realized, then such meetings must be of questionable strategic value. Particularly if they also serve the purpose of promoting the attempts of 'agent provocateurs' as well as enabling the state to use the extravagant rhetoric as proof of its 'total onslaught' and facilitating the identification and elimination of valuable community leadership.

As I understand it, mobilization politics is much more than mass or protest politics. It involves grassroots organization and consolidation behind a clearly defined strategy in order to achieve a particular objective. If the objective is unrealistic or obscured by romantic and extravagant rhetoric at mass protest meetings, then such meetings become ends in themselves and the point of mobilization politics is lost. A lot of people may get all fired up, but they are not quite sure what to do next. It in such an atmosphere that different forms of spontaneous and uncontrolled behaviour thrive which is, of course, grist to the

mill in the State's 'counter-revolutionary' strategy. How often has one not read of a similar account during the periods 1984-88 (Chaskelson & Seekings p.31)" "On Sunday, 15 July, 1984, Tumahole residents staged a peaceful protest march. Police shadowed the marchers, ordered them to disperse and then fired teargas before the allotted time was up. In the subsequent anger and confusion some resident burnt down a councillor's supermarket/café, looted his butchery and also the OVBD bottle store. Barricades were constructed. One resident who was arrested died in their custody".

In no way must these remarks be seen as a dismissal of protest or mass meetings. To the extent that the State will allow or tolerate them, they could serve a useful purpose. But, I do believe it is wrong to equate mobilization politics with protest or mass meetings and if the one is denied, it is naturally assumed the other is impossible. The important prior question must be: mobilization for what?

CONCLUSION

In this abbreviated 'time-out for stock-taking' on strategy, the one reasonably well documented (based on the Indicator Report) conclusion that can be reached is that, to the extent that resources, energy and planning are devoted to confrontational, violent, protest and mass strategies, the initiative and advantages are heavily loaded in favour of the State. This is also so because the State's conception of its own role is defined precisely to counter any overt threat to its own security. In other words, a considerable part of the resources, planning and energy of the State is devoted to crushing confrontational, violent, protest and mass strategies against it. In short, the State is least vulnerable when its coercive power base is directly challenged and no amount of revolutionary rhetoric can argue away this fact.

But as the Report points out, the State is certainly not invulnerable. There are a number of contradictions with which it is confronted that are certainly worth exploring for strategic initiatives to promote the goal of a non-racial democracy.

CONTRADICTIONS AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Swilling makes the points (p.94) that the State does not have a purely repressive strategy. The flipside of repression is reform. Whether the immediate manifestation of reform is socio-economic upgrading and the elimination of 'legitimate grievances' the long term goal is undoubtedly to induce a sufficient number of compliant, co-operative, 'good', 'moderate' blacks into the State structure to assist in the administration of a multi-racial autocracy. By administration I especially mean the control of patronage and privilege. This is usually the defining characteristic of States and control of a society.

The first contradiction that is obvious from such an objective, is that a white dominated State increasingly will depend on blacks to maintain white control. The simple demographic evolution of South Africa underscores this contradiction.

There is no self-evident reason why the State should not succeed in finding such blacks. Particularly, if those who are concerned about a democratic alternative sit on their strategic hands and allow this to happen by default. Even under the much more racist period of old style Apartheid/Separate Development the NP government managed to find enough customers to let its deeply flawed "Independent States" policy run.

The second contradiction is pointed out by Schlemmer (p.123) when he says: "One message, the broadest, perhaps is that the most active aspiring section of the country's black youth are fundamentally estranged, not only from the present mode of government, but also from its possible future trajectory .... More specifically, for every year that South Africa's economy grows less than 4.5% to 5,5% per annum, youth unemployment and alienation will increase. This is a critical 'political' problem for a white controlled government because it cannot be seen to be acting on behalf of black communities." Again, there is no obvious reason why the alienation of black youth from a white controlled State will automatically translate into a concentrated political commitment for a non-racial democratic alternative. This is a problem of strategic commitment. There is enough empirical evidence to show how urbanized alienated youth drift into crime, normlessness and nihilism.

A third contradiction is that although the State in many important respects exercises unaccountable power, it does depend on civilian participation to recruit executive personnel at different levels of government. It even allows a considerable degree of racially controlled popular electoral participation to determine a pool of potential co-optive clients. This does pose problems for it that can be exploited by those who are opposed to the politics of the State. This is true not only for the CP or a 'left' white political party, or a non-compliant House of Representatives or Delegates, but also in Homeland Governments and RSC's or Black Local Governments. This is the area where participation as a strategy has to be considered.

A fourth contradiction lies in the area of a State strategy which hallmark is control being undermined by socio-economic forces beyond its control. The pattern and tempo of urbanization epitomizes this dilemma. The number of black people being born in, and streaming towards the major metropolitan areas increasingly undermine State control of housing, education, transport and employment. At the same time, these developments pose major challenges to those organizations concerned with democratic politics who wish to play a constructive role in grass roots and community organization. If new and innovative strategies are not forthcoming the threat of war-lordism, gangsterism, vigilante action etc., becomes a very real possibility. Already the State has found willing allies in squatter communities to assist in maintaining 'law and order'. (cf Palmer p.52 and Cameron p.61).

A fifth contradiction is that the more that the State has politicized virtually all sections of South African society through its 'total strategy' the more it has had to

incorporate sections who do not share this ideology. Obvious areas where this is the case is Black education and labour and certain sections of business and the churches. Given proper strategic and even long term planning, these are areas where the State can increasingly be confronted with democratic and non-racial alternatives.

No doubt other contradictions can be found which can further highlight the vulnerability of the State's 'reform' policy. But pointing out a contradiction is not the same as formulating a strategy. It serves to identify opportunities for exploring strategic alternatives. And once this is done, the difficult backbreaking work of mobilization begins.

Let me finally conclude by sticking my neck out and formulating some strategic guidelines in terms of the foregoing analysis which I believe to be important for promoting a non-racial democratic political culture.

STRATEGIC GUIDELINES

1. Do not dissipate popular or mass support in confronting the State where it is strongest.

2. Do not weaken the forces for a democratic alternative. Morris says on p.111: "Disinvestment as a strategy has led to the opposite political result, however. Instead of increasing forces for positive change within South Africa, it has led to a decrease in such power." If an unreflective and unselective blanket sanctions campaign has this result, then it is simple political lunacy.

3. Never promise what cannot be realistically delivered. There is a tendency amongst certain spokesmen to believe that the more extravagant and unrealistic the prediction about change, the more likely that some 'miracle' or 'magic' will bring it about. Particularly those with public influence and support should refrain from whipping up such emotions that will inevitably be frustrated. More important, it neutralizes a lot of people for more mundane and necessary strategic tasks because of the belief that some 'miracle' is around the corner.

4. Take an immediate, principled and clear view on all forms of uncontrolled, irrational and/or authoritarian violence. As Schlemmer puts it (p.129): ".... Township violence, no matter how compelling its causes and how justified the sentiments associated with it, is pushing up against immovable resistance at this stage. As it increases in intensity, so the sentiments of whites and even many blacks, turn against it. Almost inevitably, political violence will exhaust itself and in the end undermine its own organization, leaving the security agencies better informed and more sophisticated, with the economy and job creation severely weakened."

5.   Identify tensions/divisions within the State structure and <u>engage</u> those favorable for democratic politics. As I tried to point out, it is a mistake to treat the whole State apparatus as a hegemonic/monolithic entity or as an uncritical extension of National Party thinking. My own view is that even those hostile to democratic politics should be engaged in workshops, seminars or conferences to put and defend their view. Very often their views thrive in an insulated, sycophantic and uncritical environment which they then interpret as proof of validity of their views.

6.   Seek out business interests amenable and sympathetic to democratic politics. There is no doubt that there are businessmen who confirm to the conventional Marxist stereotype of the 'capitalist exploiter'. They tend to treat the South African economy as a cow dead on its feet that needs to be milked to the last drop before they move on. But this is by no means true of all businessmen, particularly the younger generation. I lecture to a fair number of them at the Wits Business School, and know that many are committed to the reconstruction of a prosperous and more just South Africa, but if they are uncritically lumped with 'capitalist', 'bourgeois' exploiters who have no rule in the future 'post-Apartheid' South Africa, their instinctive reaction is: Why bother? There is no reason why they cannot play a significant role in promoting new employment opportunities and becoming involved in co-operative economic ventures.

7.   Concentrate on grassroots mobilization and community organization in new housing areas and particularly where the State is active in socio-economic upgrading. This is particularly a challenge to black communities and I believe it is in this context that the appeal for "Nation Building" of Aggrey Klaaste and Sam Mabe of the Sowetan has to be understood.

8.   Focus as much energy as possible on Black and White youth <u>and</u> their interaction with one another. White Afrikaner youth in particular are the political life blood of the State's policy of control. Nothing on the 'democratic' scene matches the intensity of indoctrination that they have been subjected to. Deliberately seek out opportunities to break down the dialogue barriers that the State wishes to maintain between divergent groups inside and outside South Africa.

9.   Do not give priority to external factors to bring about internal change. The international situation is dynamic and changing; *vide* Russia and USA in 1988. External pressure can be a contributing factor but not a primary cause of adequate domestic change. Too much faith/hope placed on the external factor paralyzes domestic initiative. The 'outside world' is not going to save South Africa.

10. The key to a successful non-racial democracy in South Africa lies with the extra-Parliamentary majority. Any strategic initiative which ignores this

fact is wasting time and energy. I do not say this because I am infatuated with 'mass' or 'people's politics'. On the contrary. We have had enough intellectual cowboys promising us 'instant' democracies and 'quick fix' solutions in the period between 1984-88. When I maintain that the key to a democratic future lies with the majority, it is simply a logical inference drawn from what a democratic culture is all about. No democracy can be sustained without the organized and institutionalized support coming from the majority of the citizens in a society. That is why I believe it is futile for those in white politics to play racially entrenched 'democratic' games with one another while they put the rest of society on 'hold' as it were.

It should be obvious that these guidelines are formulated on the assumption that the transformation of South African society to a non-racial democracy will be a negotiated/bargained one. Furthermore, that such negotiations cannot begin until the circumstances conducive to negotiations exist. At present we are not even in the pre-negotiation phase. To get there, those concerned with achieving a non-racial democracy would have to penetrate, mobilize and consolidate every available site of organizational and institutional activity and demonstrate that they can be controlled for democratic politics. This will have to be reflected in educational, business, community and cultural spheres. Increasingly these will be the spheres where a State bent on authoritarian management will lose control. To the extent that a democratic alternative can be established successfully, the State will have no option but to take it seriously in bargaining the future for itself and for South Africa. Loss of control for the State does not automatically mean growth of a democratic alternative. There are enough historical precedents to show that we too can drift into a prolonged period of unresolved violent evolution in which a poverty of culture, morality and quality of life becomes the accepted inevitability.