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IDASA



OCCASIONAL PAPERS



9.

**The Dynamics of Reform & Revolt in
Current South Africa**

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LECTURE THREE:

**The Dynamics of Reform:
Patterns of Resistance and Revolt**

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This series of papers is being published by IDASA as part of its contribution to the struggle for a non-racial democratic South Africa. The first six papers formed part of the proceedings of the first national conference organized by IDASA in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, on 8—9 May, 1987. The next three papers were presented by Dr F. van Zyl Slabbert as the (guest) Tanner Lecturer at Brasenose College, Oxford University, during October/November 1987. Other papers are drawn from a variety of sources. The full series, available from IDASA, is listed on the last page.

THE DYNAMICS OF REFORM: PATTERNS OF RESISTANCE & REVOLT

On 21 July 1985, P W Botha announced a State of Emergency which has twice been renewed and endures to the present. In terms of the proclamation, extraordinary powers were conferred on officers of the security forces to deal with the unrest in the townships. This was preceded by a decision of the State to use the SADF on a continuous basis to assist the SAP to cope with internal unrest. The first large-scale operation of this kind was Sebokeng in August, 1984. Since then, this kind of operation has become commonplace. The SAP has also been supplemented by the introduction of "kitskonstabels" (literally "Instant Constables") into the townships — police recruits with minimum training over a 3 month period who are given sjamboks and guns and who patrol urban black communities. The State has used "black vigilante" groups to assist it in imposing coercive control. In fact, South Africa has had the most extensive imposition of repressive control since Union in 1910. Six months after the first announcement of a State of Emergency, it was estimated that about 7 500 people had been detained or arrested. By mid-1986 this was estimated to be in the region of 12 000. The numbers have decreased significantly since then and are now considered to be about 1 500. Included in this 1 500 is a vast number of community leaders and some awaiting-trial prisoners. It is difficult to be exact because the State does not regard it to be in the "public interest" to make this kind of information available.

The manner in which the State of Emergency was implemented and the incidents of unrest, mob violence and massive funerals made South Africa prime time viewing on most of the television stations of the world. As a news item, South Africa was one of the 10 most popular news items of 1985 and 86.¹ The State soon put a stop to this by forbidding entry into townships to (particularly foreign) television crews and laying down stringent conditions for reporting on unrest. It set up its own unrest information liaison structure which carefully monitored news on the events of every day. Soon South Africa was off the front pages and editorial columns of newspapers, and particularly inside South Africa and for whites the impression was created that "normality" had returned and that everything was under control.

But there was a time during the height of the revolt and resistance when extraordinary and extravagant claims were being made about the imminence of the South African State's collapse. Confident predictions about the efficacy of sanctions, boycotts, strikes, liberated zones and mass mobilization were commonplace. This kind of euphoria about the imminence of radical change has all but disappeared, but at its height a climate existed in which a great deal of instant post-apartheid scenario building took place. This inevitably focussed attention on opposition movements and strategies and their relative significance in the widespread revolt that took place. In looking at the patterns of resistance and revolt, it is useful to keep the distinction between movements and strategies, if only for the obvious reason that different movements/parties/organisations may have different goals and agendas for change, but share the same strategies or conversely may differ on strategies, but share the same goals.

MOVEMENTS

1. The United Democratic Front

In considering the interaction between reform and revolt, it is appropriate to begin with the UDF, not because it is the oldest opposition movement (it is not), or necessarily the first to respond to the State's reform proposals, but because the UDF managed to capture the highground in mobilizing domestic resistance against the implementation of the new tricameral constitution. In doing so, it highlighted the fundamental cleavages between Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary politics and posed a crisis of legitimacy for all individuals or organisations who participated in State-created constitutional structures. The issue of black exclusion from the new tricameral constitution was effectively seized on to question the relevance of any participation in such structures and to highlight the co-optive nature of the State's constitutional programme. The UDF was careful never to elevate the issue of non-participation into an inflexible principle, but at the same time very actively encouraged people not to participate in, especially tricameral, politics for the present, whilst challenging those who did to demonstrate the relevance of such actions. This approach was so effective that it made a mockery of the first so-called Coloured and Indian elections, which registered a very low overall poll and presented those who were elected with an enduring crisis of credibility.

The UDF is not a monolithic party or organisation, but a Front with approximately 600 affiliates, distributed right across the country. Its primary initial objective was mass mobilization against tricameral politics and this inevitably meant a heavy emphasis on protest politics. This eventually broadened to include other areas of domestic politics. The diversity of organisations belonging to it, as well as the rapidity with which its membership increased, made it difficult to judge it in terms of a single policy or agenda. Gradually, however, "critical issues" emerged which became identified with a UDF position: The Freedom Charter, sanctions, non-racialism and a very sympathetic stance towards the ANC, although the UDF was insistent that it was not an ANC front and was committed to non-violent opposition. Nevertheless, it still campaigns vigorously for the unbanning of political organisations, such as the ANC and for the release of political prisoners. There is no doubt that the effectiveness of the mass mobilization of the UDF managed to achieve two things which characterized the nature of the revolt that accompanied reform, i.e. firstly, it located it as a struggle between an extra-Parliamentary executive (i.e. State President + SSC + Security Forces) and extra-Parliamentary opposition groups, and secondly, it forced the South African State to propagandize the ANC as the "vanguard" of the "total onslaught".

2. The ANC

The history of the ANC is well recorded in numerous publications.² It is the oldest and arguably the largest mass liberation movement of South Africa. For about two and a half decades it has been banned and its leadership in exile or in prison, but there can be no doubt that it exerts a major influence on the quality and extent of resistance politics to the South African State. In fact, it is not possible to adequately understand the relation-

ship between reform and revolt without giving due recognition to the strategic position which the ANC occupies in this relationship. Two reasons can be given for this: the first has to do with the fact that the ANC is the oldest, broadest-based liberation movement with a fairly comprehensive strategy and goal for the liberation of South Africa; and secondly, because the South African State has targeted the ANC as its major opponent. The ANC and what it stands for, as well as its associates, epitomize the "total onslaught" for the South African State and are therefore the major rationale for "the total strategy" which in turn legitimizes "reform".

During the period June 16-23 1985 there was a Second National Consultative Conference of the ANC in Lusaka. From its proceedings as documented in Committee Reports, a comprehensive picture of the ANC structures, code of conduct, strategies and tactics as well as membership emerges. Essentially, it sees itself as a broadly based revolutionary movement with the following goals:

1. "To strive to unite the people of South Africa, the Africans in particular, for the objective of the immediate seizure of power from the racist colonial regime and its transfer to the people of South Africa as a whole.
2. To further strengthen the People's Army into a force capable of defeating the enemy and defending the gains of the revolution.
3. To create a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa based on the principles of the Freedom Charter.
4. To support the cause of National Liberation, world peace and the right to independence of nations of Africa and the rest of the world."³

The strategies and tactics to achieve these aims and objectives are spelt out in a separate report⁴ and include "a people's war or armed struggle, mass internal mobilization, setting up underground structures and international isolation". These different strategies are seen to be intimately linked and dependent on one another for their respective degrees of success. The following descriptions of the "People's War" illustrate this point very clearly:

"A people's war is fought by the people with arms and all other forms and methods of struggle. Without the organized support of the people, armed struggle is in danger of being isolated and strangled. The enemy attempts to isolate us by launching campaigns to win the "hearts and minds" of the people — of our people, the oppressed and suffering workers and peasants. To defeat the enemy we must involve the entire people in the National Democratic Revolution."⁵

"The armed struggle must be based on, and grow out of, mass political support and must eventually involve all our people. All military activities must at every stage be guided and determined by the need to generate political mobilization, organization and resistance, with the aim of progressively weakening the enemy's grip on his reins of political, economic, social and military power, by a combination of political and military action. The forms of political and military activities and the ways these activities relate to one another, go through different phases as the situation changes. It is therefore vital to have

under continuous survey the changing tactical relationships between these two inter-dependent factors in our struggle and the place which political and military actions (in the narrow sense) occupy in each phase, both nationally and within each of our main regions."⁶

Given the encompassing nature of the ANC strategies, it is inevitable that it will become involved in any significant internal resistance and revolt and that ANC supporters/members will either openly or clandestinely be active across a wide spectrum of movements, fronts, organisations and activities. That is why strikes, consumer and school boycotts, protest meetings, etc. initiated by other organizations but with the same issues at stake will enjoy ANC support and even active participation. In this sense, it sometimes becomes irrelevant whether the UDF is an ANC front or not. Oliver Tambo, the ANC President, makes this quite clear when he says: "What the UDF has been doing is part of this growing resistance to the Apartheid system, the struggle to bring about a new order. We are happy with that . . . I think the UDF represents the success of our appeals to our people to be organized and to unite in action. That doesn't make them ANC, but they have got to fight the struggle. The ANC is with them. The ANC is the people, not in terms of formations, branches and regional organizations, but it's with them and its political line is public, it is clear."⁷

The same applies to any other single purpose organization pursuing a line of action that falls within the ANC's broad definition of the struggle, whether it be the Black Sash, ECC, a trade union, a church or even the PFP. This is an important point to grasp because by choosing the ANC as its prime opponent the South African State, by implication, criminalizes or demonizes any opposition group or strategy whose actions correspond with goals or strategies of the ANC. In fact, given the goals and strategies of the South African State and the ANC respectively, it is quite evident that they define each other as the prime targets of each other's total strategies. The Total Strategy of the South African State is the NSMS and reform vs the Total Strategy of the ANC which is the National Democratic Revolution for a liberated South Africa. Each strategy's final objective is the destruction of the other. That is why reform and revolt will continue to interact with one another until this cycle is somehow broken.

An important consequence of the South African State's targeting the ANC as its major opponent is that it can propagandize against any other party or organization which shares values in common with ANC objectives. Thus one-man-one-vote, non-racial democracy, freedom of association, unbanning of organizations, the rule of law, the civil liberties of the individual as opposed to the "rights of the group" are values which immediately make a party or organization who campaigns for them suspect as either "a useful idiot" or willing collaborator of the ANC. At the same time, the State can select those aspects of ANC strategy or structure which it regards as the most useful for demonizing purposes and through guilt by association tar any other opposition grouping with the same brush. "Terrorism", "violence" and "communism" are the three most common. It is particularly in the white political arena that this rather crude tactic is very effective. A 1985 HSRC Survey amongst

white voters indicated that while 85% were in favour of "negotiating with blacks", only 3,6% of respondents believed that it should be with the ANC⁸. White voters are not only conditioned to think that negotiation *need not* include the ANC, but are constantly brainwashed to believe that any negotiations with the ANC should be avoided at all costs. The ANC is officially presented in South Africa as a gang of incorrigible villains and demons that must be eliminated and not with whom to negotiate. This approach by the South African State more than anything else lies at the root of its inability to attract credible leaders into any of its co-optive structures in the centre, such as the tricameral Parliament and National Council. Any other party or organization that petitions for the unbanning of the ANC and negotiating with it, is then rubbished as wanting to hob-nob with "terrorists" and "communists".

OTHER NON-PARTICIPATIVE OPPOSITION

A useful distinction in discussing opposition groupings to the State is between those who, like the UDF and ANC, either as a matter of deliberate policy or through convention do not participate in the constitutional structures sanctioned by the South African State, and those who do. Other non-participative opposition groups would for example be:

(a) **PAC, BC, National Forum, NEUM:** organisations which fall outside the ANC support group and are also regarded as "non-Charterist" organizations (i.e. do not subscribe to or support or adopt the Freedom Charter accepted by those who attended the 1955 Kliptown Congress of the People). Although members and/or supporters of these organizations differ strategically and in certain respects ideologically from the ANC they have in many cases felt the same impact of State repression and have also been active across a wide front in revolt against State reforms. The ANC is very sensitive to its pole position in the liberation struggle and very often reacts sharply to the perceived role of these groupings in regional and community politics. Accusations of "diluting the struggle", "divisiveness" and "undermining unity of purpose" often reflect an underlying rivalry and a battle for hegemony in opposition. The South African State is quick to exploit these differences when and wherever it suits it to "divide and rule" or fragment opposition to its policy and programmes.

(b) **The Churches**

A self-evident distinction can be drawn between an established Church's position in the revolt in terms of whether its membership is predominantly Black or White. To the extent that its membership is predominantly Black, the church will be drawn deeper into the revolt against the State's reforms or repression. An inevitable reason for this is that the Church forms a vital institutional base for community organization and communication. As the State systematically narrowed down avenues of legitimate dissent so the churches became more and more involved in dealing with reaction to and consequences of community repression. Funerals became emotional and symbolic occasions for demonstrating not only community grief, but also solidarity and determination to continue resistance. The State again acted against this by forbidding TV crews from funerals and severely restricting attendance as well as what

could and could not be said. A number of clergy have been detained, even tortured, during the State of Emergency. Quite distinct from any theological considerations, the church as a social institution is going through a fundamental redefinition of its role in "the total strategy". Recently the Free State Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church adopted a resolution forbidding discussions between its office bearers and the ANC. Whereas at the same time Bishop Desmond Tutu led a delegation to Lusaka precisely for such discussions.

(c) **The Press/Media**

Again a distinction can be drawn between so-called "established" press and "alternative" press. The latter is openly partisan to non-participative extra-Parliamentary opposition and consequently a very obvious target of State action. Recently yet further stringent press censorship measures were announced giving the State's representative carte blanche to decide whether a particular publication was assisting or contributing to a revolutionary climate. The "established" press can (broadly speaking) be divided into being supportive of Government and opposed to it, although opposition can vary from being mild to principled. No "established" publication would take the same risk as "alternative" newspapers in identifying with a particular non-participative extra-Parliamentary group. However, despite crippling restrictions on reporting on the unrest and State of Emergency, some of them have managed to expose State irregularities and excesses. They remain under continued threat of State action as long as they nudge against the official threshold of tolerance. At the same time there are managers and editors of the "opposition press" who, although they feel strongly about certain principles such as freedom of the press, rule of law, etc., are not all that averse to accepting "the reality" of the "total onslaught" and the need for a "total strategy".

PARTICIPATIVE OPPOSITION

When discussing participative opposition the issue is not only participation in the political structures sanctioned by the State e.g. Parliament, Legislative Assemblies, Regional Service Councils, Community Councils, etc., but also other structures regarded by the State to be "constitutional": trade unions, schools, universities. The issue of participative opposition is relevant to the extent that groups, parties or movements regard participation in those structures as strategically significant in pursuing their goals. The issue of participation in particularly political structures has created a great deal of tension and even open hostility between organizations and movements opposed to the State, and needless to say these divisions have been systematically exploited by the State to keep fragmentation and disunity to its "total strategy" alive.

(a) **Parliamentary Opposition**

If Parliament as a base for not only opposing those in power but unseating them is to be taken seriously, then it is most likely to be a white right-wing political party that will do the unseating. The fact that the dominant party can always undercut such a threat by making concessions to white fears and prejudices makes this an unlikely prospect. The tricameral Parliament is tailor-made for white right-wing opposition. The "revolt from the right" is often overlooked when the dynamics of reform and revolt is considered. Apart from the fact

that right-wing views are strategically well represented throughout the State bureaucracy, particularly in the security structures, and are intimately involved in the deployment of the "total strategy", Parliament provides the most prominent public forum for promoting right-wing views. To the extent that the National Party as the dominant party wishes to promote reform, but at the same time demonizes the most important organizations and movements representing blacks who are supposed to be the prime beneficiaries of reform, the right-wing can exploit any "new reform measures", no matter how timid or incremental, as a sell-out or capitulation of white interest. The irony of the reform programme as part of the "total strategy" is that it forces the National Party Government into the extra-Parliamentary arena to make it work. It is not sufficient to induce Coloureds and Indians into Parliament, it is necessary to persuade blacks onto the "reform structures" created by the State. Buthelezi sums this dilemma up concisely:

"On the level of constitutional development, the State President can make no gains from doing things which blacks reject. He has to involve blacks in constitutional development. We as black leaders have the ultimate weapon of veto right over what the State President can achieve. He can blunder without us, but he cannot succeed without us. The next two to three years is going to be a crucial time in which massive endeavours should be made to stop the State President establishing political circuses in which he can be the ringmaster."⁹

On the other hand, if the State President moves too rapidly to do things which "blacks do not reject" in the extra-Parliamentary terrain, he will run up against what whites are not prepared to accept in the Parliamentary terrain. These are the inevitable constraints within which white party politics are forced to operate, and they limit the tempo and quality of "constitutional" change. That is why white opposition from the left in Parliament is so vulnerable. The moment it identifies too strongly with a non-racial democracy, freedom of association, and one-man-one-vote, it is defined as part of the "total onslaught" and subjected to the same propaganda onslaught reserved for the ANC. At the same time, it is in no position to compete with those to the right of it in promising "white security". Consequently, "left" participative opposition of whites in Parliament can have strategic, but not substantive significance, i.e. it cannot substantially threaten any dominant party in the House of Assembly. Strategically it can enter into an alliance or coalition with other Parliamentary or extra-Parliamentary opposition groups, but at the increased risk of electoral vulnerability. However, if such opposition has relinquished any designs on "going for power", it can have a significant protesting role. In this sense it has played a part in the dynamic between reform and revolt by focussing on arbitrary State action during the different states of emergency.

What is true for white "left" opposition in Parliament is generally true for those parties in the other two chambers of the tricameral Parliament. An additional strategic significance, however, is that they can, in specific cases, constitutionally frustrate the plans of the dominant white party in Parliament. The latest example is the resignation from the Cabinet of Labour Party leader Alan Hendrickse and his declared intention to

oppose a change of the constitution unless certain concessions come from the Government. So far this kind of confrontationist horse-trading has been rare, but it is certainly a strategic advantage available to those who participate in this manner. In the absence of its being used regularly and effectively, those who participate are under continuous pressure to "deliver the goods" and have to cope with a credibility crisis from those who reject participative opposition.

(b) **Extra-Parliamentary Opposition**

(1) **Inkatha**

There is little doubt that this predominantly Zulu based movement which professes a paid-up membership of more than one and a half million and is led by M G Buthelezi occupies a strategically important position in the dynamic between reform and revolt. Its pattern of participative opposition thus far has consistently frustrated the co-optive designs of the State, but at the same time this has also frustrated the scope of the ANC's National Democratic Revolution. At the height of the revolt in 1985/86 an intensely hostile relationship existed between the UDF/ANC and Inkatha and each accused the other of murder and bloodshed. There is clear evidence of community violence between Inkatha and the UDF in a number of townships in Natal. Buthelezi differs strongly with the UDF/ANC on a number of areas of strategy and principle. Clearly committed to a system of free enterprise, he opposes sanctions actively, domestically and abroad, is dismissive of the armed struggle and did not participate in the protests and mass mobilization led by the UDF. For this, he has been depicted as an "enemy of the struggle", a "collaborator and sell out" by the ANC and other non-participative opposition groups.

Undoubtedly Inkatha/Buthelezi's national support suffered from the onset of constitutional reform. The tricameral Parliament not only precipitated mass mobilization against it, but brought the ANC into prominence as the flagship of revolt and raised the issue of participative opposition on all levels. But Buthelezi's support in Natal remains formidable and it is quite obvious that he can fundamentally affect the State's latest co-optive constitutional designs by deciding to participate or not. He is consistently using the threat of participation/non-participation as a bargaining chip for concessions from the State. For example:

"The State President will fail utterly if he follows a course of events in which he gives political roles to good boys and expects them to do an impossible job. I would negotiate with the State President tomorrow if the negotiating agenda would include the scrapping of the tricameral Parliament and would, for instance, make it possible for me to table a final version of the KwaZulu/Natal Indaba constitutional proposals. Obviously, black democracy must be unshackled to give black negotiators the prospects of carrying blacks with them. The only blacks worth negotiating with are blacks who would, in fact, increase their own power bases through negotiations. Of what value would I be to Mr P W Botha, to black South Africa and South Africa as a whole, if I was by now located in the South African political rubbish heap because I had prematurely involved myself in discussions with the State President."¹⁰

If the State President "is thinking of the kind of future in which whites remain the final decision-makers over all matters which add up to establishing domestic and foreign policy"¹¹ Buthelezi declares himself not available. In short, if the State is prepared to negotiate away white domination, he is on board. If not, he is prepared to wait. Given the fact that protecting white domination is the *raison d'être* of the "total strategy", Buthelezi's detractors accuse him of waiting in comfort, but both he and his detractors fail to convince each other about the effectiveness of their competing strategies.

The kind of participative opposition which Inkatha represents, certainly differs from that of the non-participative kind on more levels than strategy and principle alone. Inkatha is essentially a constituency organization that can function legally. The leadership is thus more immediately accountable and, because it does cooperate in administering part of the State structure, is involved in dispensing reward and patronage. This alone introduces constraints and vested interests which do not affect the quality of leadership of non-participative organizations. Buthelezi epitomizes the trials and tribulations of this kind of participative opposition, which is also the fate, to a lesser extent, of other homeland leaders who do not have his scope and depth of support.

(2) Trade Unions

South African trade unionism is one of the best documented developments of recent years.¹² Black unionism has made spectacular advances. One of the central characteristics of this development is the extent to which unions have used the industrial machinery created by the State to pursue goals unintended by those who set up the structures. Given the manner in which the State cut off other legitimate channels of political dissent, it was almost inevitable that the unions would begin to experience a "political overload". Because of this trade unionism is an inherent part of the dynamic between reform and revolt. Although unions may differ in their affiliation/support for the UDF/ANC or whether they are "charterist" or "workerist", all of them are in some way or other part of the "struggle for liberation". Consequently, the State has been particularly aggressive, even brutal, in the actions it has taken against unions. Many leaders have also been detained, tortured and in some cases killed in mysterious circumstances.

Because of its participative nature, the unions are constitutional/legal and have opportunities denied to banned or other non-participative organisations and movements. There is no doubt that their experience in bargaining, organizing and disciplining membership has increased dramatically as industrial disputes have multiplied in recent years. An unknown factor is the extent to which unions will retain their independence when/if conditions of freedom of organization and association exist in South Africa. Will they become purely functional labour organizations, or be subsumed under broader political movements? This is not purely an academic question, because this issue also lies at the heart of some union's resistance to becoming too "involved in politics" or losing their independence to the hegemonic demands of a liberation movement. Whatever the answer, trade unions will increasingly

become a force to be reckoned with as the State deepens its commitment to "the total strategy". The fact that they straddle the economic and political demands of the workers will guarantee this.

(3) Schools

Particularly since the June 16 school riots of 1976, black schoolchildren have symbolized the revolt against the reforms of the State. Their actions have convulsed urban communities, divided opposition groups and posed fundamental questions of strategy and control to them. Given their location in community life, the black youth drew almost the entire spectrum of opposition groups into their struggle: parents, teachers, workers, political organizations and churches. Understandably many of the extravagant demands and predictions originated from them, as well as some of the worst excesses at the height of the revolt. It was from them that the cry of "Education after Liberation" came as well as the gruesome "necklacing" of enemies of the struggle. Given their youth and anger with the present, it is to be expected that they constitute an enduring source of radicalism in revolt. It is also easy to romanticize or over-evaluate their claims in the broader scope of revolt. However, any opposition group, whether participatory or non-participatory, would be foolish to ignore them in planning any large scale strategy of resistance.

It was also black youth that, perhaps inadvertently, illustrated a fundamental dilemma in the choice between participation and non-participation. At one stage during the revolt and in pursuing the goal of "people's education", it was decided to boycott schools and State education. The longer this was done, the more it became evident that an important base of organization and communication had been sacrificed and that there was a very real danger that a whole generation of children would get no education at all. Thus participation facilitated organization, communication and the development of skills, whereas it lost the dramatic and confrontationist advantage of non-participation. At the same time, participation always held the danger of succumbing to co-optive control.

SUMMARY

Although this overview of movements/organizations/parties involved in some way or the other in the revolt against the reforms of the South African State is brief, even cursory, it is sufficient to allow a general juxtaposition between the nature of reform and revolt:

REFORM	REVOLT
1. Creates a <i>group</i> based democracy	1. Creates an <i>individually</i> based democracy
2. Concerned with reforming <i>in</i> state structures	2. Concerned with reforming <i>of</i> state structures
3. Broadens participation through <i>co-option</i>	3. Broadens participation through <i>negotiation</i>
4. Wants to <i>multi-racialize</i> South Africa	4. Wants to <i>non-racialize</i> South Africa
5. <i>Adjusts</i> white domination	5. <i>Removes</i> white domination

The ultimate objective of reform is to establish a multi-racial Government of an *autocratic* nature; the ultimate objective of revolt is to establish a non-racial Government

of a *democratic* nature. Those caught up in revolt may differ amongst themselves about the nature of that democracy and the socio-economic structure of society to accompany it, but there is unanimity of purpose that the alternative should be democratic and non-racial. Those concerned with reform and the "total strategy" may differ amongst themselves about the scope and quality of reform, but have unanimity of purpose that white minority control must not be sacrificed under any circumstances. Although those involved with the State's total strategy and reform programme are in the minority and lack legitimacy, they have control over powerful resources and are well organized and cohesive. Those who are caught up in revolt are in the majority and enjoy considerable legitimacy, but are more divided and organizationally vulnerable. One course of vulnerability and division concerns fundamental differences in strategy.

DIFFERENT STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE

Sometimes differences in strategies between opposition groupings are tolerable and reflect different histories and emphases. Given the wide range of opposition groupings involved in the revolt against the State policy, this is almost inevitable. But it is when specific strategies are elevated into differences of principle and become an issue on which potential allies in opposition to the State's policies are excommunicated or defined as part of the problem that a measure of the division and fragmentation of opposition can be gained. Very often adherence to a particular strategy reflects an inflexible and dogmatic commitment to a particular theory or agenda of change in South Africa. The reluctance to abandon or even be flexible on aspects of this agenda is transferred into a rigid insistence that a particular strategy is non-negotiable and its acceptance and support a pre-condition for qualifying as part of the "democratic struggle" against the State. To the extent that this involves a number of competing strategies, a great deal of opposition energy is wasted in defining and redefining thresholds of commitment: questioning bona fides and formulating hidden agendas to co-opt and/or weaken perceived competitors in the "struggle". A brief discussion of three opposition strategies will illustrate these problems in the current South African situation.

(a) The "Armed Struggle"

The reasons why the ANC committed itself to the armed struggle are familiar. It was only after it had pursued all available peaceful means over a period of 50 years and these channels had been systematically removed by the State as well as their organization banned and its leadership incarcerated that the ANC turned to violence. Initially the armed struggle was extremely limited and circumscribed, but gradually the theatre of conflict widened and today ANC rhetoric on the armed struggle depicts it as a full scale "people's war" against the South African State as the enemy. As such, it has become a powerful and symbolic source of mobilization, particularly for black youth in the townships. Anyone who has attended a funeral or protest meeting in one of them and observed the youth "toi-toi-ing" (dancing) and simulating battles and scenes of confrontation, can verify how much this kind of militancy has become part of the culture of resistance.

For a number of reasons, it would be unreasonable to expect the ANC to unconditionally renounce violence.

Unreasonable in the sense that no political organization would consciously pursue a course of action that would weaken its support or undermine its bargaining ability. At the recent Dakar conference the ANC made it clear again that unless the conditions which led them to embrace the armed struggle were removed, there was no way in which they would reconsider, i.e. the existence of Apartheid/Separate Development laws, continued banning of the organization and imprisonment of the leadership. As Tambo said before then:

"It has been suggested that the regime will talk to us if we abandon violence. Well, this is not serious because it is the regime which is violent and always has been. It is their violence which has resulted in us embracing violence. Unless they stop their violence, which is very difficult because it is the violence of the apartheid system itself, then it would be unreasonable to expect us to stop our violence."¹³

There is no question that if the ANC should abandon violence in the absence of major concessions from the State, this would lead to considerable loss of standing amongst the militant youth in the townships where the call for arms has become louder and more persistent. It is often not appreciated that the source of radicalization and increasing militancy of the ANC is much more domestic than external, and the manner in which the State of Emergency has been handled by the State gave this added momentum.

However, it is one thing to accept the armed struggle as part of the unfortunate reality of the South African conflict. It is quite another to insist that its acceptance and support is a precondition for participation in any effective opposition to the State's policies. For example, there are a significant number of particularly white South Africans who have abandoned Apartheid and any variation of white domination and are willing to oppose co-option and repression, and work for a democratic alternative, but who drift into a state of immobilized confusion if told that the only way to organize for it is through a commitment to a "people's war" or an "armed struggle".

How central and non-negotiable is the "armed struggle" in the National Democratic Revolution of the ANC? How does the manner in which it is conducted exclude or affect other strategies of resistance or opposition? Consider the rhetoric of the following extract from Radio Freedom (Addis Ababa) and reflect on what a white who wishes to persuade other whites to participate in the democratic opposition must do:

"the first and most important things to do at this time is to organize all combatants and militants into underground cells of the ANC. These cells must consist of a very few persons who know one another very well. These cells must then organize ways of obtaining weapons of war.

"We have to realise also that these weapons that are in our country today are meant to commit massacres against our nation. They are there to murder our people. The privileged white community is armed to the teeth. Those weapons also are meant to mow down our people . . . Those weapons in white hands have to be transferred. We have to use all means available to get them.

"In this regard, we call on our compatriots who

are working as domestic servants to take a leading role. They know where their employers keep their weapons and they are the ones who can devise plans of transferring the ownership of the weapons . . . These weapons must be removed from the hands of these trigger-happy murderers. . . .

It is high time now that we put paid to the notion that our struggle will remain confined to the black areas. We who have started confronting the enemy in all directions must make plans for extending our activities into the white areas. The regime's police and soldiers who have been massacring our people in millions over these years still return to their homes and spend comfortable nights in the warmth of their beds."¹⁴

One can place this kind of rhetoric within the context of a rapidly polarizing situation and dismiss the extravagance of the language as a consequence of brutalizing experiences by those on the receiving end of the State's repressive measures. But it would be short-sighted to underestimate the extent to which Radio Freedom and *Sechaba* (ANC journal) are being used by the State as counter-propaganda instruments for white consumption. As I said earlier, the fact that 85% of the whites agreed that there had to be negotiation with blacks, but 83% said not with the ANC, must be seen in this context. At the same time, it is clear that without ANC participation no negotiations can succeed.

Quite apart from moral considerations, on or even questioning the legitimacy of the armed struggle, the effectiveness of it in opposing the State should not be put beyond debate. This point was stressed, in particular by Dr André du Toit at the recent Dakar talks:

"The State is relying on the gun, but the power of the gun is limited in what it can achieve. You cannot get children to go to school or get people to pay their rent or choose local governments at the point of a gun.

"What then must we make of this paradox? I submit that when we begin to think about strategies of political opposition and resistance, we should not look to a coercive showdown with the State. We should not take on the State where it is strongest. We should rather take on the State where it is weakest, and that is on the political front. That means, I believe, that we have to rethink the whole relation of internal and external opposition, and extra-parliamentary and parliamentary politics."¹⁵

(b) Sanctions

Sanctions as a strategy to achieve political objectives are a highly involved and complex issue that has enjoyed considerable attention from scholars over a wide range of interests. The one thing that strikes one when reading them, whether of radical or moderate persuasion, is the qualified caution with which they preface their predictions and generalizations on sanctions. This is in sharp contrast to the confident statements of those who argued for and against sanctions as a means of resolving or ending the conflict in South Africa. More hot air and nonsense has been spoken on sanctions than makes sense. It is as ridiculous to claim that sanctions will not have an impact as it is to claim that it will certainly be successful in achieving the proclaimed objectives.

However, people's attitudes on sanctions against the South African regime have been used to judge them on their "commitment to the struggle" or their "opposition to Apartheid". The simplistic argument is that "if you're for sanctions, you're against Apartheid" and "if you're against sanctions, you're for Apartheid". If the issue of "sanctions" is not to continue being a divisive factor in opposition, or obscuring more relevant problems, then at least the debate must be kept open to the extent that questioning accepted strategies in one movement or organization is not immediately a cause for excommunication from the general "struggle".

It is important to distinguish sanctions from disinvestment and divestment. *Sanctions* refer to governmental action of a punitive kind directed at a target state with the purpose of realizing specific objectives, such as a regime change or destabilization. *Disinvestment* refers to the sale of foreign companies' assets to local interests. *Divestment* refers to the selling of stocks and shares in companies that trade with a target state. Sanctions is primarily a political action, disinvestment and divestment are economic ones. What is more, sanctions are imposed by *another* state against a target state; it is an external factor that presumably has to affect an internal situation. Different states can impose different sanctions on different aspects of the internal situation. The consequences of such sanctions may be direct or indirect, positive or negative, long-term or short-term. Furthermore, sanctions can have both economic and political consequences and evidence is fairly conclusive that economic effects do not necessarily have the desired political effects.¹⁶

Two general observations concerning the South African economic and political situation should caution one on being too optimistic about the inevitable success of sanctions.

The economy has a viable industrial base; some 60% of its export earnings are from low-volume, high-value difficult-to-sanction items, such as strategic minerals. Accordingly, the economy has a capacity to generate a significant percentage of its annual capital needs internally.

The political dynamics of the South African State and the way in which power and privilege are structured makes for a well insulated power elite. The Afrikaner group in particular is by far the best insulated with 40% employed in the State and its supporting structures. Therefore the paradox of sanctions will be (at least in the short to medium term) that certain blacks and English businesses (especially those that rely heavily on exports) will be hurt more than the power elite itself.¹⁷

The present British Ambassador to South Africa was intimately involved with the British involvement in Rhodesia's transformation to Zimbabwe and made a first-hand analysis of the impact of his Government's sanctions on that country:

"The purpose of sanctions was conceived initially as being either preventative or remedial. Their main effect, however, has invariably been punitive. There are international circumstances in which it may become necessary to take some punitive action, falling short of the use of force, either to weaken the regime to which sanctions are applied, or, by penalizing it for one undesirable action, to try to deter it from further action of that kind . . .

To abandon altogether the idea of recourse to sanctions in response to acts of aggression or other flagrant violations of international law or human rights, would be to reduce the choice of response to one between military action and acquiescence — an unattractive choice at best of times, and particularly so in the nuclear age. In cases where “real” sanctions are applied, provided (a) they affect a significant proportion of the target country’s external trade (or external finance), and (b) there is sufficient international support, they can impose some penalty on the target country. They may have some deterrent effect, though they are not likely to do so if the regime believes its survival in any event to be at stake. Once applied they may, if sufficiently effective, weaken the target regime, but they will not necessarily change its behaviour.”¹⁸

To reduce such complex arguments to the empty tautology that if the outside world were to impose mandatory sanctions, this would bring those in control of the South African State either to their senses, or to their knees, is ridiculous. But to further insist that such a view be uncritically supported as a pre-condition to be part of the “democratic struggle” is simply counter-productive.

(c) Participation vs Non-Participation

This issue as a matter of strategy has been dealt with by implication in the discussion on opposition movements and groups. Suffice it to say here that, to the extent that non-participation as a strategy becomes an end in itself, rather than a means to an end, it will be a divisive issue in the opposition to the State’s policies. It has been shown that participation in some spheres is more effective than in others and that these circumstances can change. Rather than adopt an inflexible approach to participating on structures sanctioned by the State, each such opportunity should be evaluated as a basis for organizing resistance and working for a democratic alternative. At present it is more effective to do so in the areas of labour and education than in politics, but this too can change, as the State is forced to make concessions or relax its co-optive demands.

CONCLUSION

The three lectures have attempted to come to grips with the current dynamics of reform and revolt in South Africa. We started off by tracing the ideological shift from Apartheid to Separate Development to the Total Onslaught. Each shift was necessitated to adjust and legitimize white minority domination, which remains the central issue of domestic and international conflict on South Africa. It was also shown how the shift to the Total Onslaught ideology coincided with and facilitated the South African State’s reform policy.

In the second lecture, we tried to trace the organizational background and changes for reform. The point was made that it was difficult to understand the problems relating to the State’s reform policy without placing it within the overall context of the South African State’s redefinition of its security interests. This is reflected in the deployment of a National Security Management System. This security system pervades the State bureaucracy and directly affects the nature of the reform process on the different constitutional, social and economic levels. The distinctive feature

of the State’s constitutional reform is one of co-optive inclusion of the different racial groups without sacrificing white control. Just as revolt against Apartheid and Separate Development was revolt against the minority domination, so the revolt against the South African State’s reform policy as part of the Total Strategy to meet the Total Onslaught continues to be a revolt against white minority domination.

Thus reform and revolt are intimately linked to one another. The objective of reform is to establish a multi-racial autocratic government. The broad objective of those caught up in revolt is to establish a non-racial democratic government. However, there is a fundamental disparity in access and control of resources between those who reform and those who revolt. Although the State is low on legitimacy, it is extremely powerful and, security-wise, well organized. Those in revolt enjoy high legitimacy, but because of repression and other circumstances are not as cohesive and well organized. One of the circumstances responsible for this is deep division on matters of strategy. Greater flexibility is needed to overcome this and consolidate democratic opposition to the State on a broad front.

The Struggle is essentially political. Just as the myths of Apartheid and Separate Development had to be exposed as an ideological justification for white domination, so the Total Onslaught will have to be exposed as well. Until a strategically significant number of whites, and particularly Afrikaners, accept that their future cannot be ensured by continued minority domination, but by identifying with a genuine democratic alternative, the pattern of reform, revolt and repression is likely to continue for quite a while. This still remains the enduring challenge of those who would wish to rid South Africa of racism and exploitation and who work for a non-racial and democratic alternative.

Notes:

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3. “Report of Commission on National Structures, Constitutional Guidelines and Codes of Conduct”, *ANC National Consultative Conference*, June 1985, p. 6.
4. “Commission on Cadre Policy, Political and Ideological Work, Internal Commission Report, Commission on Strategy and Tactics”, *ANC National Consultative Conference*, June 1985.
5. “Report of Commission on National Structures, etc.”, *Ibid* p. 15.
6. “Commission on Cadre Policy, etc.”, *Ibid* p. 12.
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17. *Ibid* p. 4.
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