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**BLACK LIBERATION POLITICS:
ANALYSES OF POLITICAL PROCESSES
IN KWAZULU-NATAL**

by

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DEVELOPMENT STUDIES UNIT

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This paper is intended to provide an overview of three current interrelated political processes in KwaZulu-Natal: township 'unrest', or more correctly, political violence; negotiation, with specific reference to the KwaZulu-Natal Indaba; and, the strategic and tactical logic of black liberation politics.

INTRODUCTION: DEFINING BLACK LIBERATION POLITICS IN KWAZULU-NATAL

In this paper the concept of liberation is applied to that hotchpotch of black¹ organisations which share an anti-apartheid stance. On the KwaZulu-Natal stage there are two principal actors opposed to the state's apartheid policies.

1. The 'Broad Alliance' .

The 'broad alliance' (for want of a more precise term) essentially refers to the civic and youth affiliates of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the independent trade unions, in the main affiliates of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Affiliates of national youth organisations, such as the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) and the South African National Students' Congress (SANSCO), churches (Diakonia) and professional bodies, including the National Medical and Dental Association (NAMDA), the National Association for Democratic Lawyers (NAMDEL) and the National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA), work in close co-operation with affiliates of the UDF and COSATU. Many of the youth and some of the professional organisations are directly affiliated to the UDF.

2. Inkatha.

Operating from within state created institutions, such as the bantustans and black local authorities, are the KwaZulu administration and numerous township/community councils. In KwaZulu-Natal many of these groups operate under the banner of Inkatha.

In theory both the 'broad alliance' and Inkatha are committed to a "non-racial democracy", or rather some form of bourgeois democratic

solution (notwithstanding some important exceptions on the part of minority organisations within the 'broad alliance'). However, fundamental differences emerge at the level of strategy. Inkatha favours a conservative moderate solution while the 'broad alliance' seeks a radical militant solution. Respective adherence to these strategies as a matter of principle exposes the full extent of the cleavage between the 'broad alliance' and Inkatha. This division has been accentuated, however, by the inability of the Inkatha leadership to coherently argue against the criticism that participation in government created structures reduces the organisation to a state functionary. At the level of appearances it is this conflict over strategy within the politics of liberation that has turned the struggle for a non-racial democracy into a battle for hegemony.

PART 1: THE POLITICS OF TOWNSHIP VIOLENCE

To understand the township 'wars' that have plagued KwaZulu-Natal since the late 1970's we must analyse the material and ideological origins of the principal actors and at the same time compare their utterances with their actions. At this point, however, the state's influence on strategy must be recognised. This influence stems directly from the state's use of coercion which, as an instrument for the extension of its apparatuses, has become a role model in black liberation politics. In South Africa the politics of coercion override the politics of negotiation. Even where the state does consent to negotiation it invariably unilaterally defines what is negotiable. While the relatively weak power base of both the 'broad alliance' and Inkatha restricts their definition of anti-state resistance to a bargaining process, the frequent use of coercion between, and within, individual organisations is casting an ominous shadow over the future and suggests that organisational capacity does not match discourse.

The Material and Ideological Bases of Liberation Politics

The presence of two diverse forces in Natal is the result of a fragmented political consciousness. This condition arises from the situational location of grievances and the material gains, or lack of them, that each force makes from its structural position within the state's carefully fostered dual system of township administration and

biased development programmes. African townships in Natal are administered by either the government through the province (previously Development Boards and prior to that Administration Boards) or the KwaZulu administration. Compared with residents in the former, people living in the bantustan townships are less financially burdened by high rents and service charges, have enjoyed secure housing and home ownership and escaped prosecution under influx control regulations. With regard to development, KwaZulu administered townships have received preferential treatment in an attempt to 'encourage' urban Africans to relocate in the bantustans. A related strategy, and one critical to this thesis, is that of raising the cost of urban residence for Africans outside the bantustans by increasing housing rents, service charges and transport costs.

The 'Broad Alliance'

The material basis of the 'broad alliance' exists at two interrelated levels: local, predominantly in state administered townships, in response to specific community grievances such as shortages of housing and high rents, inferior education, rising transportation costs and chronic unemployment; and national, as a consequence of broader political issues including the community council system, the tricameral parliament, the presence of security forces in black townships, repression of peaceful protest and other government 'initiatives'. It was in response to local issues that civic based groups initially mobilised while national issues precipitated the coalescence of these groups into broad based anti-government and anti-apartheid fronts (and - for those few groups which linked specific issues such as rents to economic exploitation at the site of production - anti-capitalist organisations).

Thus, material inequalities clearly define the various structural positions in the social formation of the 'broad alliance': the churches and professional bodies are patently petty bourgeois in membership and programme; the youth organisations comprise a mixed membership dominated by radical fractions of the petty bourgeoisie; while intellectuals have often assumed leading roles in civic organisations and the independent trade unions. However, while civic organisations concentrate their efforts on blurring class distinctions and reinforcing solidarity using

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the "we are oppressed residents/women/blacks" approach, the latter is attempting to build a class-conscious proletariat. In the absence of a resource base from which material rewards can be offered to supporters, all these organisations have been forced to build support and foster cohesiveness by articulating the source of grievance, that is, the state's definition of social relationships and enforced objective inequalities.

In Part 3 of this paper we will analyse the strategic logic of the 'broad alliance' in detail. Here it is suffice to note that the basic strategy of "non-co-operation with the government" and "non-participation in government created institutions" is underpinned by the philosophical assumption that the antagonisms between the ruling bloc and the oppressed are simply beyond negotiation. Rather, the ruling bloc must be destroyed and replaced. In this sense, the strategies of the 'broad alliance' are consistent with their structural position.

Inkatha

Just as the strategies adopted by the unfranchised powerless 'broad alliance' are consistent with their structural position in the social formation as described above, so too does Inkatha's strategy derive from its structural location. The leadership is middle class comprising tribal chiefs, traders and professional civil servants employed in the upper echelons of the KwaZulu public service who are dependent upon the ruling bloc for their positions and apartheid's protective regulations for accumulation. Not surprisingly, they perceive domination in terms of race rather than economic exploitation. Any noise Inkatha makes about "redistribution" is ostensibly about access to opportunity within a free enterprise system.

To ensure its position the Inkatha leadership has 'captured' the KwaZulu administration by 'winning' control of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly (KLA). Of the 119 members of the KLA 65 are nominated through the tribal authority system (traditional tribal chiefs were made chairmen of rural Inkatha branches while township councillors became chairpersons in their ward) and 54 were 'elected', effectively nominated by Inkatha. The entire KwaZulu cabinet forms the executive of Inkatha.

This relationship between Inkatha and the KLA is a source of strength and weakness. On the one hand, it gives Inkatha control over resources denied to the 'broad alliance'. Inkatha allocates land and housing, provides jobs in the civil administration including education, health and crime prevention. Moreover, by operating within a state created institution the Inkatha leadership escapes state repression in the form of harassment, detentions and bannings. On the other hand, the relationship limits strategic and tactical flexibility. For example, Inkatha cannot pursue boycott tactics: it controls township administrations, education through the KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture (DEC), and many transport routes through the KwaZulu Department of Transport. Similarly, many leaders have various retail interests which effectively discounts consumer boycotts. In the same vein support for economic sanctions is contrary to development via foreign investment.

Here mention must also be made of Inkatha's appeal to the masses through its manipulation of Zulu ethnicity and its promise of 'risk free' liberation. Inkatha's doctrine delegates responsibility for liberation to the leadership. Since the latter has rejected engaging the "all powerful" state in armed struggle Inkatha supporters are reassured that their lives will not be senselessly sacrificed in the pursuit of liberation. However, while Inkatha excludes anti-state violence as a strategic option it certainly has not been shy in resorting to violence against opposition organisations which it regards as inferior.

The Conflict

While non-participation strategies are clearly incompatible with negotiation, the actual terrain of conflict in KwaZulu-Natal has largely been shaped by Inkatha's control over township administrations, its jurisdiction over education in the bantustan, and its attempts to subdue the independent trade union movement. It is these three areas, local government, education, and labour, that have precipitated the conflict between Inkatha and the 'broad alliance' and they are examined in turn.

1. Local Government

As part of the state's strategy of raising the cost of urban residence for Africans outside the bantustans, the then administrators of these

townships in the southern Natal region, the Port Natal Administration Board (PNAB), announced in early 1983 that rents and service charges would be increased by an initial 63 percent to be followed by 15 percent increases introduced at six monthly intervals for at least two years. The various township communities within the ambit of the PNAB coalesced to form the Joint Rent Action Committee (JORAC) to articulate and direct their protest.

Inkatha was drawn into the dispute through its public support of the long discredited community council system and the fact that most councillors campaign during elections on an Inkatha ticket. Although as part of the advisory structure to the PNAB the councillors were not in fact informed of the pending increases and were caught unawares as were the rest of the community. However, they were unable to convince their respective constituents that they were not privy to the proposed increases and were accused of complicity. Attacks were directed against councillors and their property and they retreated to their support base - Inkatha. This tactical manoeuvre enabled Inkatha to redefine the attack against the councillors as an attack against Inkatha and battle lines were drawn.

At the height of this conflict in mid-1983 two events exacerbated the situation. First, the state entered the stage with its announcement that it intended to incorporate Lamont into KwaZulu. At the centre of JORAC's operations Lamont was the most strategically important of the PNAB townships. Incorporation was rejected outright by township residents as they perceived that their legal status would be adversely affected in terms of permanent urban rights, that with regard to pensions they would be worse off under a KwaZulu administration, and because they saw the KwaZulu administration as illegitimate. These conditions sharpened the focus of the conflict between JORAC as a civic association and Inkatha as representative of the KwaZulu administration. Second, the UDF was formed and its anti-bantustan rhetoric reinforced the divisions in black liberation politics. As one of the nearly 600 founding affiliates JORAC could also draw on a larger support base.

Finally, mention must be made of the state's interventions in local township politics. In 1984 and 1986 the Ningizimu community council invited the South African Police and the South African Defence Force to

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conduct "anti-crime sweeps" in Lamont and these seriously impaired Inkatha's legitimacy as a liberation movement making it possible for the 'broad alliance' to define Inkatha as a state functionary.

2. Education

That education is part of the contested terrain in South Africa is openly evident as demands for "peoples' education" and its corollary "peoples' power" indicate. These demands reflect popular perceptions of education as an instrument for laying the foundations for a non-racial and democratic society. The current crisis in education is thus not about resistance to enlightenment, literacy or information, but rather to the underlying philosophy of a politically planned system and the refusal of the state to build non-racial structures that will enable blacks to participate in the moulding of the future society.

While the passing of control over education in KwaZulu to the DEC in 1977 was in fact consistent with the government's strategy of creating separate black educational institutions to reproduce a black 'buffer' class, for the KwaZulu administration control over education meant that education under its auspices had been liberated. Not surprisingly then, Inkatha regarded resistance to education within the bantustan as the antithesis of its philosophy. Pupils, however, do not draw ideological boundaries between the DEC and the Department of Education and Training (DET) which controls education in African schools outside the bantustans. The introduction of ubuntu-botho, or Inkatha education, to DEC schools in 1979 merely confirmed that Inkatha was supplanting one set of inimical ideals, values and norms for another. For example, while the DET is charged with administering bantu education which is perceived by blacks as an education for the subservient, ubuntu-botho stresses deference to authority and reduces the status of common people to service and loyalty to the leader.

At the strategic level resistance in education has been largely based on attempts to remove the fetters of domination and to have a greater say in the organisation of educational institutions. In this regard the replacement of school committees by various combinations of parent, teacher, and pupil bodies is seen to be of paramount importance. While the state has imposed elaborate security measures in DET schools to

contain resistance, efforts in DEC schools have been roughshod. Inkatha aligned vigilantes patrol school grounds and the battles between pupils and vigilantes are well documented, and in fact are the subject of ongoing court cases. For example, the killing of seven vigilantes by school youths in KwaMashu and the retaliation against the families of members of Student Representative Councils in May 1986; and, the abduction and subsequent murder of seven schoolboys by allegedly Inkatha aligned vigilantes in KwaMashu earlier this year. Moreover, these battles have not been confined to KwaZulu. Among the resolutions passed at the National Education Crisis Committee's (NECC) consultative conference held in Durban in 1986 was that Inkatha be declared an enemy of the people. During the conference NECC delegates were assaulted by Inkatha aligned vigilantes.

3. Labour

Since the two day stayaway in the Transvaal in November 1984 the independent trade union movement has actively sided with community organisations against the state. Given that Inkatha's structural position mitigates against such strategies, which it describes as "harming the cause of liberation", these strategies have been a source of division. Resolutions passed at the launch of COSATU in 1985 exposed the full extent of ideological divisions between the two forces: for example, the right of workers to assert themselves politically; the rejection of bantustans and federalism as solutions to South Africa's problems; and, support for disinvestment. 'Socialist' alternatives proposed by COSATU obviously challenge Inkatha's road to a free-enterprise economy, which includes investment in parastatals, for example the KwaZulu Finance and Investment Corporation (KFC), and the tripartite companies, such as OK Bazaars and Checkers, within the bantustan.

Ideological and rhetorical struggles shifted to physical attacks on both unionists and union property following the formation of the Inkatha backed United Workers Union of South Africa (UWUSA) with its free enterprise ideology in 1986. UWUSA aggravated community conflicts because labour tensions were expressed as being between COSATU and Inkatha, rather than COSATU and UWUSA. For example, at Mpophomeni (Howick) in December 1986 members of the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) and their families were assaulted and murdered allegedly by

uniformed KwaZulu policemen and Inkatha members. At the time MAWU was fighting an Industrial Court case for the re-instatement of 950 workers dismissed by BTR-Sarmcol. UWUSA subsequently gained recognition at the factory. Moreover, the antagonistic relationship between Inkatha and the independent trade union movement is compounded by Inkatha's structural position as an employer of labour through the KwaZulu administration. Inkatha is thus placed in the contradictory position of being an employer and defender of workers' interests. Of course, how workers will resolve the contradiction of being members of both Inkatha and COSATU remains to be ascertained. Finally, while Inkatha has been the victim of coercion in the arena of local government and education, this has not been the case on the labour front with the overwhelming majority of assaults being directed against COSATU members.

At this point let us shift the focus of attention to the KwaZulu-Natal Indaba - a political exercise described by the organisers (the KLA and the Provincial Administration) as an attempt to bring together all groups in the region to negotiate a solution to local problems. Immediately the reader should be alerted to the fact that the limitations of the Indaba relate closely to the structures and forces that have shaped the terrain of conflict within black liberation politics: those which propelled Inkatha headlong into support of the Indaba and the 'broad alliance' to reject it.

PART 2: THE KWAZULU-NATAL INDABA

The recommendations of the Indaba can be grouped into administrative, economic and political measures designed to address reforms in education, health and welfare, and the much heralded bill of rights.

If the administrative proposals adopted by the Indaba reflect a common sense rationalisation and utilisation of scarce resources the same cannot be said of the economic and political recommendations.

The economic recommendations of the Indaba clearly reflect the interests of capital and its inability to meet black aspirations. While notions of equality of opportunity through a non-racial meritocracy ushered in with the demise of apartheid register loud in the pronouncements of participants, the precise mechanisms by which a non-racial meritocracy provides

for greater access to resources and opportunity are never elucidated. Presumably it is the "invisible hand" of classic liberalism. Of course, in a meritocracy the failure of individuals to achieve success falls into the realm of personal deficiencies, while institutional blockages are conveniently ignored. Additionally, there has been a shattering silence among participants regarding the redistribution of land. In these senses, access to equal opportunity in the 1990's is not intended to redress historical inequities.

In the political context, the Indaba does not address the problem of transposing a regional process to a national process. This is a critical problem because the 'broad alliance' has rejected regional solutions. By an extension of reasoning the same problem has implications for the Bill of Rights as a protective document for individual rights. In South Africa the abuse of individual rights typically manifests under security legislation, for example, detentions, bannings and the prohibition of gatherings. Constitutionally, this legislation falls under the jurisdiction of the central government which is not about to relinquish its sovereignty.

Given that conflict in South Africa is underpinned by a crisis in legitimacy, the question of representation at the Indaba is fundamental. Apart from structural factors (briefly introduced in Part 1) several mechanisms prevented participation by elements of the 'broad alliance'. First, the Indaba reflects a consociational process which by definition proceeds at the level of elites and negates grassroots participation. Second, organisations invited to attend were restricted to one representative which was hardly proportional to organisational strength and ensured that the balance of power remained with the organisers, all the more so given that it was impossible for banned organisations to attend. Similarly, those organisations which require a mandate from their members before making decisions, notably the independent trade unions, were given approximately a fortnight to debate the issue internally. Third, the discussions were conducted under a cloak of secrecy which immediately placed the process beyond the hallmarks of democracy, that is, mandates, accessibility and accountability. For these reasons the 'broad alliance' declined to participate and their absence ensured that the Indaba is unrepresentative of the people of KwaZulu-Natal.

At first glance any notion that the KwaZulu-Natal region could simultaneously witness processes of confrontation and negotiation would appear as a contradiction, particularly in view of the overlap of actors involved in both processes. This 'contradiction' dissolves, however, in light of the structural positions of the 'broad alliance' and Inkatha: it is these very positions that have given rise to the antagonistic relationship within black liberation politics. The current township 'wars' are indicative of the intensity of this relationship.

It is interesting to reflect on the forms this violence assumes and how it has been distorted by the state and the white liberal and conservative press. Most obviously, this distortion is reflected through the wide use of the euphemism 'unrest' and the misleading concepts of faction fighting and black on black violence. While the "non-participation" policy is not by definition violent, boycott and protest strategies (see Part 3) have tended to end in violence. This occurs at two levels: when protesters confront a high profile and aggressive state 'defensive' machinery; and, when disorganised protests rely on coercion for 'support'. In contrast, Inkatha's non-violent image stems from its well publicised rejection of anti-state violence and its skilful manipulation of the media to the extent that its (alleged) use of coercion for 'support' (e.g. the UWUSA launch) is carefully disguised while its violent forays against the 'broad alliance' are portrayed as being in self-defence. Given that violence in self-defence is justified in law, Inkatha's violence is widely accepted, and in some cases tacitly condoned, because its structural position means that it is not only defending itself, but also the ruling bloc.

Only an imprudent observer would deny that Inkatha is an actor in the politics of liberation. However, in rejecting the state's apartheid policies, Inkatha has adopted a contradictory stance: it both challenges the state's interests (mainly by issuing threats at conferences and rallies) and serves the state's interests (through its participation in government created structures). Whether or not Inkatha's politics of negotiation will liberate blacks from apartheid is one issue but it clearly has no intention of trying to transform society. What, then, of the 'broad alliance' - is it capable of bringing about any form of liberation? This is the theme in Part 3 of this paper.

PART 3: THE 'BROAD ALLIANCE': A CRITIQUE OF RESISTANCE STRATEGIES

Defining Resistance

The South African state has traditionally relied upon coercion to crush challenges to structural inequalities which manifest themselves as material and status inequalities between black and white. Within the 'broad alliance' the state thus became defined as organised coercion lacking any semblance of legitimate authority. Strategic shifts in the state's mode of containment, notably social reforms, have done little to alleviate negative perceptions of the state (all the more so because of its failure to address material grievances). Regardless of the state's tactical manoeuvres the 'broad alliance's' resistance continues to be conceptualised as a bargaining process: an attempt by disadvantaged groups to redefine the power relations.

While the anti-state and anti-racial solidarity of the 'broad alliance' disguises critical internal tensions in what are otherwise essentially heterogeneous collectives, at this point it is important to note the strategic advantages accruing from such alliances. First, if single organisations are easily isolated (e.g., by legislation, decree, or the removal of leadership by detention or assassination) this is not the case with broad areas of confluence. Cross cutting leadership and membership facilitate not only the continuity of organisation but the diffusion of ideas. Second, whole communities, including traditionally conservative strata, are more easily conscientised and drawn into broad based collectives. Examples abound of groups that have inadvertently been drawn into resistance organisations because of the very structure of these organisations. One example is taxidrivers providing transport to commuters boycotting transport monopolies especially when the drivers themselves become the victims of police harassment.

Visions of the Future

Resistance in South Africa is a bargaining process to gain access to power. To the powerless, politics and economics are not irrelevant theoretical constructs but manifest in the form of unfranchised workers and chronic unemployment. Visions of the future are articulated through calls for a "democratic non-racial" society where resources are

"equitably distributed" and "people have control over their own lives". However, more often than not these values are vague notions lacking both a theoretical and analytical base. Moreover, they are expressed in negative terms rather than articulated in a positive programme. In this sense these values reflect the opposite of an existential anguish under apartheid and capitalism: a negation of systems they hold responsible for their plight. Thus, "democracy and non-racialism" are contrary to "racial oppression"; "equitable redistribution" and "socialism" negate "exploitation and poverty"; and, "control over our own lives" reinforces the perception that people are denied this right. If these visions appear idealistic this reflects the extent to which the powerless nurture illusions. But their actions demonstrate a determination to escape their predicament and are the reality of these illusions - an often tragic, occasionally heroic, reality which is quantifiable in terms of casualties and deaths. While the 'luminaries' do have visions of the highway to the future, it must be stressed that they have not explicated these visions in concrete programmes (e.g., the Freedom Charter).

The first lane facilitates political participation and the 'visionaries' demand that the government: renounces violence and removes "political" police (as distinct from anti-crime police) from the townships; frees political prisoners; releases detainees; allows people to express their political opinions; and, calls a national convention of the "people's representatives" to draw up a programme for the transfer of power. The second lane leads to "socialism". The argument of liberal economists that only a free enterprise economy can generate the wealth necessary to support the underdeveloped component of South Africa is dismissed. 'Visionaries' articulate demands for the nationalisation of portions of industry; a taxation system that redistributes profits more effectively; and, a social security system that provides support for the unemployed, aged and infirm. The third lane leads to "education for liberation". Demands for "peoples' education" and its corollary "peoples' power" reflect popular perceptions of the role of education in "preparing and building a democratic South Africa".

Demands alone do not produce change, all the more so when these demands are vague notions (e.g., "peoples' education" sic). To this end we must

examine the strategic logic of those resistance organisations which make such demands. Consideration must also be given to whether or not the strategies adopted by the 'broad alliance' are consistent with their choice of tactics and, of course, their visions of the future.

Strategy and Tactics: A Critique

The evidence, that is the utterances and actions of the various resistance organisations, suggests a two stage process of transformation. The first stage will culminate in the end of apartheid, the second will usher in a "democratic socialist" society. However, not all fractions of the 'broad alliance' necessarily subscribe to the second process, rather they merely seek the abolition of apartheid.

The initial stage combines non-participation strategies (e.g., non-participation in government created structures such as community councils), boycott strategies (e.g., commuter, consumer, education, and rent boycotts, and work stayaways and strikes) and protest strategies (e.g., peaceful protests, economic sanctions, disinvestment, divestment and cultural, academic and sporting boycotts) with the building of alternative institutional structures (e.g., street committees, courts, schools and newspapers). The object of this process is to weaken the government so that when "the time is right" power can either be seized or negotiated from a position of strength. (Negotiation is the product of a balance of equal forces. At the present conjuncture the balance of power rests with the state which unilaterally defines what is negotiable.)

"Non-co-operation with the government" and "non-participation in government created institutions" are cardinal attributes shared by resistance organisations. Violation of this principle has been responsible for the so called "black on black violence" - violence directed against those who have been co-opted into government created structures on the pretext that they are the people's leaders and represent their interests.

While non-participation, protest, and boycott strategies do, of course, address day to day problems, particularly the alleviation of material

grievances, only in rare instances have they been conceived to force structural change in the broader political sense. More fundamentally, these strategies are an extension of those employed by the Black Consciousness Movement in the early 1970's: that is, as part of an "unfolding process" conceived to conscientise and mobilise people and make them aware that they have control over their lives. Conscientisation strategies have not only been directed at the most exploited segments in the community but both the black middle class and elements of the white race group have been identified as potential allies. The opinions and reactions of both groups to economic sanctions and cultural boycotts, in particular, have been monitored and attempts made to motivate a wider cross section of support for these strategies.

In the post-Black Consciousness era the most powerful strategy in the conscientisation and mobilisation process has undoubtedly been the micro-committee formed as part of the alternative structure strategy, for example pupil, parent and teacher committees at individual schools and street committees in the townships. In some cases micro-committees have proved effective conscientising agents: street committees, for example, have spread the concept of democracy in many areas and have helped to eradicate petty crime by drawing the distinction between 'right and wrong' on the one hand and 'legal and illegal' on the other.

In this view the process of transformation to a "democratic socialist" society will begin once the fetters of apartheid are removed and "the people" gain access to power structures. Reformist strategies will then pave the way to a new social formation. By definition reform is a strategy conducted within existing social institutions. At the macro-level reform emphasises constitutionalism, electoralism and representation. Interestingly, resistance organisations reject the notion of reform at the present conjuncture. Yet, its very actions have forced the government to create the space in which it could at least begin to adopt reform strategies. For example, via participation in black local authorities, regional services councils, the tricameral parliament and the national statutory council, or even by forging alliances with white opposition political parties. Similarly, and contrary to government pronouncements (and notwithstanding the occasional 'blunder'), resistance organisations reject the path of insurrection as a matter of

policy. In fact most organisations recognise that psychological advantages accrue from speaking in pacific tones of negotiation and reconciliation.

Because neither process is bound by time constraints evaluative assessments of strategy are somewhat limited. Nonetheless judgements and projections can be made on the basis of what has been achieved. Let us look at the successes.

* The proliferation of community organisations and the quality of debate about the future of South Africa, conducted under the auspices of the 'broad alliance', indicate large numbers of people have been conscientised and mobilised against the state. In the past decade nearly every aspect of South African society has been politicised. Positive effects arising from these developments include co-operation between disparate groups (e.g., the NECC and the schools' boycott) and critical evaluation and clarification of strategic objectives (e.g., the strategic shifts of the Soweto Parents' Crisis Committee and the NECC based on self analysis and the assessment of state power). Pilgrimages to Lusaka and Dakar demonstrate that business groups and white professional associations have been drawn into the process.

* Compared with the 'forces of moderation' (i.e., high profile bantustan leaders, transnational companies operating under the guise of corporate responsibility and white opposition political parties) the 'broad alliance' has elicited international sympathy for its cause and isolated the South African state. These pressures have forced the government to deviate from its policy of overt repression and undertake social reform. This strategic shift has exposed underlying tensions within the government, between the reformists on the one hand and 'reactionaries' on the other, and point to a structural weakness open to further exploitation.

* In two notable cases, the NECC and the independent trade unions, effective alternative structures have been developed and recognised. For example, the NECC has proposed an alternative curriculum and the unions have spread the concept of democracy on the factory floor.

Notwithstanding the above, the strategies and tactics adopted raise

practical problems and critical conceptual issues.

Practical problems have largely arisen through the choice of tactics which, by definition, activate strategies. For example, in terms of the strategy of non-participation in black local authorities resistance organisations have forced councillors to resign. Unfortunately, many of the tactics have been spontaneous expressions of protest in response to specific 'fuse' factors and as such situated at the street level. Although spontaneous tactics range from peaceful demonstrations to violent outbursts, reaction does not necessarily reflect the intensity of the 'fuse' nor would it necessarily be repeated under similar circumstances. The spontaneity of many tactics highlights another facet of the 'broad alliance' in the mid-1980's: what counts above all else is the act of decision making (i.e., having "control over our own lives") regardless of the costs of that decision.

Not surprisingly, spontaneous resistance has resulted in numerous 'blunders' which have contributed to the mobilisation of 'reactionary' forces (e.g., Inkatha). 'Blunders', such as failing to give adequate notice to commuters of an impending transport boycott and then stoning buses, arise from poor communication and inadequate planning. Such actions are often perceived as criminal acts, particularly when the distinction between political protest and crime is blurred (e.g., when businesses are looted). Redefining political protest as 'crime' initially served the interests of conservative vigilante groups in their pogrom against 'criminals' in the name of "law and order" (i.e., an excuse to consolidate local power bases). In the past 18 months however, the pendulum has swung again. Vigilantes are being openly criticised for their excesses and people are turning to organisations within the 'broad alliance' for 'protection'. As noted above, the current township 'wars' in Durban and Pietermaritzburg reflect such divisions. The real benefactor under these circumstances is, of course, the state which uses "black on black" violence to justify apartheid doctrine.

Other tactics have been poorly conceptualised. The tactic of rendering townships ungovernable created power vacuums which, instead of being filled by organised and disciplined forces, created niches for criminals and/or vigilantes. Protracted school boycotts raised logistic and

communication problems for organisers who were no longer afforded the cover provided by official institutions. Tactics responsible for increasing material hardship among the poor, such as confiscating shopping during consumer boycotts, merely blur the distinction between 'victor' and 'victim'. While coercion may legitimately override an individual's autonomy, where 'free riders' reap the benefits of collective action while avoiding the private costs, the problem lies in striking a balance between force and effective communication and decision making. Finally, the destruction of public property (regardless of how inadequate) results in the loss of facilities which are not easily replaced.

The government's consistently confirmed commitment to the protection of minority group rights implies that apartheid is far from being abolished. Moreover, the state of emergency demonstrates the regime's capacity to defend its interests (i.e., minority group rights). Alternative structures defined by the government as "threatening law and order" have been simply crushed or severely curtailed. It should be remembered that independent trade unions and the NECC (mentioned above as having achieved success) function with a relative measure of tolerance from the state.

Other strategies are fallacious. For example, the notion that economic sanctions will precipitate the collapse of the government. Far from questioning why sanctions were imposed and exerting political pressure for more social reform, business has sought economic solutions and geared itself to turning the negative aspects of sanctions into advantages (to paraphrase a recent newspaper headline, "Sanctions produce millionaires"!). Remember also the positive effect of the arms embargo, not only on the economy but on Defence Force morale. Non-selectively applied academic and cultural boycotts of South Africa are double-edged swords that limit the diffusion of ideas, opinions and options and finally, international sympathy should not be misconstrued as concrete support.

Let us assume for the moment that apartheid is abolished and resistance organisations are invited to take part in government - what then? A likely answer is - not much.

The 'broad alliance' is essentially a loose coalition at a specific conjuncture with little more than the specificity of apartheid holding it together. The strength of resistance is based on a very tentative alliance between 'populism' (itself an alliance of classes whose economic interests differ but who find a common cause against the regime) and 'workerism' (independent workers' organisations which serve the interests of the proletariat). The weakness of such alliances has been demonstrated in Zimbabwe, for example, where independent trade unions have been suppressed. Simply, once access to the power structures has been facilitated internal cleavages invariably surface between those groups committed to ideological purity (in some instances at the expense of tactical flexibility) and those groups whose interests match their bourgeois positions.

The vague pronouncements of the 'populists' (e.g., "the people shall govern") suggest they are more concerned with social reform leading to a welfare state, than wholesale transformation. Social, or conservative, reform is simply the process of redressing grievances: it is synonymous with 'improvement'. While trade union consciousness and welfare states have developed elsewhere during periods of social reform, the process invariably leaves the inherent characteristics of the existing social formation intact. In other words, 'improvements' negate neither class exploitation nor oppression.

Reformist strategies will confront agents of conservatism and stabilisation which cannot be dismissed as irrelevant in the process of transformation. These will include not only the firmly entrenched ruling bloc (industrial, commercial and financial interests, 'non-political' conservative associations, pressure groups and organisations, and the bureaucracy) but the affluent and influential middle classes, including a burgeoning black middle class ushered in by the demise of apartheid. These groups will variously appeal to the government to reject workers' demands, to be 'reasonable' and to 'postpone' further change until a more 'appropriate' time. Right wing fascist-type groups can also be expected to emerge which may even seek alliances with conservative elements. In other words, access to government is not the power to govern.

The 'Fluid' Space

A decade of intense resistance based on non-participation, boycott and protest strategies has not brought the Pretoria regime to its knees. Nonetheless it has provided the 'broad alliance' with one very tangible reward - space in which to manoeuvre. However, this space is 'fluid': some times expanding, at other times contracting. At the present conjuncture, under the state of emergency, this space is rapidly diminishing. This imposes a severe constraint under which resistance organisations must re-evaluate their strategies and tactics. They must continue to build effective alternative structures and at the same time reappraise their spontaneous protest 'cretenism' .

CONCLUSION: THE ROAD TO LIBERATION

Black liberation will only be realised in South Africa when there is a shift in the balance of power between the state and the opposition to a point where the state is either forced to negotiate or capitulate. Whether the principal actors can sufficiently increase their power bases to the desired levels to force transition depends upon their ability to continue to build organisational strength (i.e., to spread the concept of participatory democracy) and, of course, their tactical flexibility in the face of the state's strategic and counter manoeuvres.

As we have seen, the potential for building organisational strength displays wide variation. While the independent trade unions demonstrate a high potential, Inkatha under Buthelezi's leadership reflects the opposite. Inkatha is in fact the antithesis of participatory democracy. Between these two extremes exist a range of potentials.

The post-Soweto decade confirms that the state is not a passive observer. On the contrary, since 1979 it has been successfully reorganising its internal security apparatus and forming crucial alliances (the latter in the name of social reform). The building blocks of the new insidious system of covert repression, the Joint Management Committees (JMC's), have permeated nearly every aspect of social life in South Africa and undoubtedly provided the state with the facility to move with incredible swiftness against its opponents under the state of

emergency. Simultaneously, community councillors, bantustan leaders and Indian and coloured politicians have blurred 'resistance' consciousness by paying their clients handsomely for "faithful service".

For the 'broad alliance' the road to liberation is paved with many obstructions. In KwaZulu-Natal it is particularly treacherous.

NOTE

1. Terminology: The following words are used to denote membership of the respective racial groups: African, coloured, Indian and white. The term black is used to collectively denote those people referred to by the government as 'non-white'. The term bantustan is used in preference to the commonly used term 'homeland'.

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