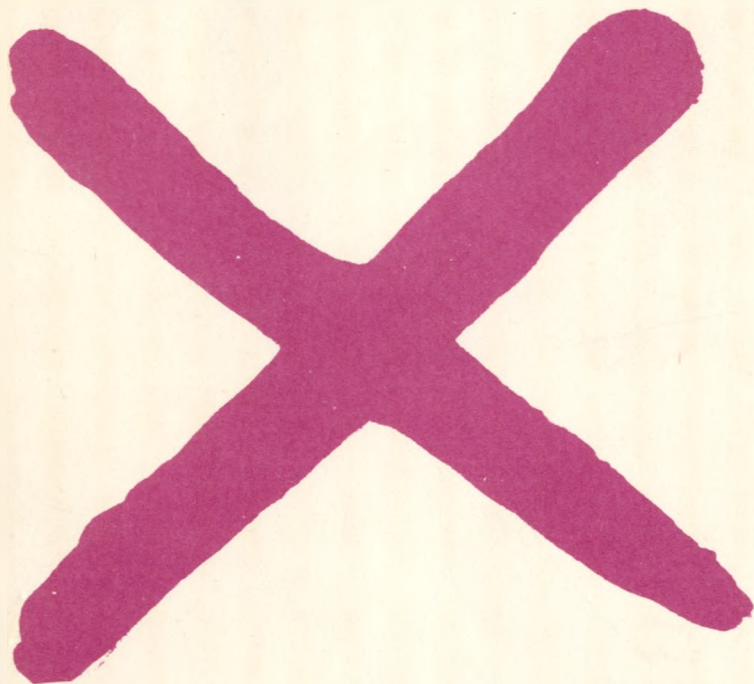

October Elections

A RECIPE FOR CONFLICT?



Nusas 1988

Students for a Democratic Future

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INTRODUCTION

On October 26 1988, for the first time in the country's history, South Africans of all races will be expected to go to the polls to elect their local government representatives. Never before have these elections been held together on the same day. That is about all that is historically "new" about the coming local authority elections.

Yet to the government, the forthcoming municipal elections are all-important. So much so, that it is now an offense to call on people to boycott the elections. This booklet will attempt to find some explanations for why the coming municipal elections are so important to the government. How do they fit into the National Party's political plans for the country and, most importantly, how do the majority of politically unrepresented South Africans view the elections and the structures of local government?

CHAPTER ONE

THE HISTORY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Urban blacks have always been a 'problem' for white governments. From colonial times the owners of industry and government officials wanted blacks to live in controllable areas close to the mines and factories, but separate from white areas. In these locations, housing, transport and living conditions would be very cheap - so black workers could be paid lower wages.

Initially, black South Africans resisted the pressures to enter wage labour. It was only once they were denied access to land and forced to pay taxes, that they were coerced into seeking jobs in the cities. If Africans had no land, then they could not survive except by working for wages.

This was achieved by the passage of the 1913 Land Act, which forced Africans, who were 80 % of the population, onto 13% of the land. As a result, during the 1914-1918 World War, thousands flocked to the cities.

In 1923, the Native Urban Areas Act was passed, based on the idea that... "The native should only be allowed to enter urban areas, which are the white man's creation, to minister to the needs of the white man, and should leave when he ceases to do so." From the start, government refused to accept the reality of permanent urban black residents.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF 60 YEARS OF TOWNSHIP RULE

In the 60 years since the 1923 Urban Act, very little has changed fundamentally in the government's thinking about municipal representation.

For the majority of South Africans, municipal structures mean:

- **control** - from the beginning municipal structures such as the Advisory Board or Urban Bantu Councils were designed to control urban Africans, and particularly the African working class. The aim was to make sure their labour remained cheap, their status temporary in the urban areas, and their location separate from workers of other

racess. When eventually their permanence was accepted, the aim was to increase control over the lives of Africans.

- **co-option** - the principles of municipal authorities has never been to represent the aspirations of the residents, but rather to represent the concerns of the government. As such, any participation in the local state structures has been co-optive, rather than representative. The government has always wanted agents from the communities to carry out repressive and unpopular administrative functions. So for the past forty years, progressive groups have boycotted these structures.
- **centralisation** - since 1923 the control of urban African affairs has become more and more centralised. From the 1950's even white municipalities have had many of their powers taken away, because the government felt that they were not implementing apartheid policies effectively. The central government took more and more powers away from local government in the 1980's, until today there are few real powers left.
- **division** - through the policies of apartheid and separate development, different races have been forcibly separated. In the beginning this was not possible, and non-racial communities sprung up. Seeing this non-racial unity as a threat, the government destroyed these areas first through anti-slum legislation, but later through removals. The Group Areas Act has been a pillar of apartheid and a cause of much division.
- **conflict** - because the local authorities have represented the government, run people's lives in an authoritarian way and been a vehicle for denying the majority political representation, they have always been resisted. The structures have been a root cause of conflict, which is now a part of everyday township life.

SOWETO ERUPTS

This rigid control over the African townships has not continued without opposition. In the early 1970's there were massive strikes. When the student explosions of 1976 happened, it was inevitable that the Administration Boards became as much of a target as the Bantu Education system. Administration buildings, beerhalls, and Board officials were targets of attacks.

In April 1977, the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB) announced an 80% rent increase for Soweto, which the Urban Bantu Council (UBC) endorsed. The rent increase was caused by a new government attempt to make the Administration Boards financially self-sufficient. Instead of the wealthy white cities subsidising the poorer African areas, the government said the Boards must provide all services and infrastructure from funds raised in their own areas. In 1977 almost 60% of the West Rand Board income was derived from houses and site rents, and an additional 10% from profits of beer and liquor sales.



For many years residents have protested against financing local authorities through rents.

The Soweto Student Representative Council (SSRC) responded by pressurising all members of the UBC to resign. This was the first time that councillors responded to calls from representative democratic organisations.

By 1977 the UBC's were rejected by the people they were supposed to represent, were without councillors to make them run and were in economic ruins because of government policy.

THE COMMUNITY COUNCILS

In 1977, the Community Councils were formed, shifting the responsibility of running the townships to blacks. They inherited problems of financial viability, inferior services and a lack of legitimacy. Running the township had to be paid for by the residents themselves, unlike in the white areas where services are subsidised from taxes on business. What money was available was also badly allocated. For example, when Phase 1 of Crossroads was built, R94 000 was allocated for housing whilst R650 000 was provided for liquor outlets.

The Community Councils were completely controlled by the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development. The Minister could establish or dissolve councils at will. He could regulate election, periods of office, conditions of service, conduct of meetings, employment, finance or anything that else which affected its operation.

The community councils proved a dismal failure. The first council was established in the Vaal Triangle with a poll of less than 20%. Three years later there were over 200 coun-

cils, none of them elected on a representative poll despite government attempts to encourage people to vote. In one election, pamphlets were dropped from an aeroplane saying "Vote! Be a history maker and not a sellout!"

The attitude of residents to the councils was summed up neatly in a statement from the SSRC: "We don't want to be in charge of roads and rubbish. We want real and meaningful power to run our lives outside the system of apartheid." (Post, 21 May 1980)

COLOURED AND INDIAN REPRESENTATION

By 1976, no coloured local government structures existed, and only two Indian Town Boards had been created.

As early as 1970, it was evident to Nationalist Party strategists that the existing system of Coloured representation had serious deficiencies. Nonetheless, coloureds and the Indians were removed from the Municipal voters roll in 1972. Instead, management committees were introduced. They were subordinate to local authorities and with advisory powers only. They drew little support.

In 1976 the Coloured townships in Cape Town were as much involved in the uprising as their African counterparts. By the late 1970's independent coloured local authorities were neither financially nor politically viable.

POST 1976 - THE NEW DISPENSATION

By 1977 it was clear that the system of control needed reforming. Indians and Coloureds were seen to be identifying with Africans against the government. Control in the African areas was breaking down - local authorities were not working, squatting was increasing and nearly 100 000 people per year were being sent to jail for breaking the pass laws.

It was this agenda - greater control - which formed the basis for the 'era of reform' ushered in by PW Botha's coming to power in 1978.

At the end of 1976, a Cabinet committee under the chairmanship of P.W. Botha had already been investigating a new dispensation which would include whites, coloureds and Indians in parliament. Thus was born the tri-cameral system which entrenched white rule. It extended the franchise to so-called coloured and Indian South Africans, but retained control in white hands. Africans were still completely excluded from central government.

Of significance to the African areas, however, were the recommendations of the the Riekert Commission. As part of the reform package, the Commission suggested that it was necessary to recognise some Africans as permanent urban residents. "Legals" would now qualify for housing and would be freer from the pass laws. There were, however, still "il-legals" who were supposed to return to rural areas and therefore removals continued.



The 'dompas' was scrapped but forced removals continued for those considered 'illegals'.

The recognition of permanency for urban blacks was significant. Some form of representation would have to be worked out for them within "white" South Africa. In 1982, the Black Local Authorities were brought into being as part of the constitutional "reform" package started by PW Botha's "total strategy". The white government still wanted to keep African representation restricted to ethnic homelands. But for the permanent urban African population "local representation" through the Black Local Authorities was expected to be good enough.

RESISTANCE

Commenting on the "New Dispensation", PW Botha said: "This will bring South Africa 1 000 years of peace." But within a year of being set up, the Black Local Authorities (BLAs) became the focal point of the biggest wave of mass resistance in South Africa's history.

The BLAs, like their predecessors, were politically toothless institutions given only administrative authority and subject to the powers of the Minister, provincial administrators and central government. They did little more than administer housing and provide essential services.

Civics sprang up to resist the Local Authorities. Hundreds of youth, student, women and other organisations organised against them. The national wave of resistance to the tri-cameral and local authority system was so strong that it was decided to launch a national United Democratic Front. In August, 1983 hundreds of organisations representing millions of people began a campaign that was to kill any government hopes of making their new 'reforms' work.

The government plan to co-opt coloureds and Indians and control Africans through the 'new dispensation' produced its opposite - unprecedented non-racial unity and mass resistance to apartheid.

The UDF called for a boycott of the November 1983 elections to install the Local Authorities. Less than 7% of the urban black population turned up to vote. In some townships the percentage poll was as low as 0,4%. In the following tri-cameral election coloureds and Indians endorsed the UDF and over 90 percent boycotted the elections.

LEGACY OF APARTHEID

Years of Apartheid rule had created industrialised and wealthy "white" areas on one hand, and underdeveloped, economically impoverished "black" townships and rural areas on the other. Black townships adjacent to every white urban centre had for years served as dormitory slums providing a reservoir of cheap black labour. Because these cheap labourers were temporary sojourners in "white" South Africa little money went into providing decent and permanent living conditions.

When Local Authorities took over the administration of housing and the provision of basic services, thirty years of zero development caught up with them.

To cover debts and to finance the upgrading that they needed to win any credibility, the councils decided to raise money from the township populations themselves. But the situation facing people in the townships was bad:

- Residents who were being paid poverty wages in the workplace, were being forced to give away more of their meagre wages to pay for sub-standard housing and poor services: 40% of South African households now earn less than the minimum subsistence level of R280 per month.
- Unemployment was increasing. Hundreds of thousands lost their jobs in the first years of the 1980's. As a result, the average employed worker was supporting 9 dependents. In the townships of Pretoria, for example, unemployment increased from 34% in 1975 to 52% ten years later. In some cases, the unemployment rate in a township such as Atteridgeville was close to 60%.
- The cost of living was high as the inflation rate drove prices upwards.
- Residents were being asked to pay more for sewerage removal where in many townships there was no water-borne sewerage system and where residents had for



After the funeral of a three-year-old child shot in the head by a rubber bullet, this women flings a stone at a policeman. (Atteridgeville 1985)

September 1984, the army began to occupy the townships. Angry township residents across the country attacked the very community councils which had been designed to defuse political tensions and deflect them from the Apartheid government itself.

By April 1985, the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr. Gerrit Viljoen admitted that at least 147 community councillors had resigned and 12 had been killed in mounting township violence. By that stage, 33 mayors had also resigned, a further 109 councillors had been attacked by angry residents and 66 had had their homes burnt down. By 1985 only three town councils were left functioning country-wide. To this day, many

years endured an archaic bucket system.

- Many residents were being charged for electricity even prior to the electrification of their townships.
- Rents were going up by up to 100% for houses of standard design described by residents as "matchboxes". According to the South African Institute of Race Relations, the average urban black lives in a space smaller than a double bed.

Many of these conditions have continued or worsened today.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

When local authorities put up rent and service charges, it was the last straw for residents, who turned their anger against the councillors.

In July 1984, residents of Tuma-hole township outside Parys protested against the increases. The pattern was repeated through the townships of the Vaal Triangle and quickly other black townships in South Africa caught fire. From

of the rent boycotts have continued unbroken. By the end of 1987, outstanding rents amounted to about R400m in the Transvaal alone.

PEOPLE'S POWER VERSUS COUNCIL POWER

The anti-council actions linked people's experiences of political oppression and economic exploitation. In the schools, black children were resisting the discriminatory system of Bantu Education. In the factories, workers were fighting for a living wage. In the townships, poverty stricken residents, many unemployed and with little prospect of employment, were being asked to pay for their own oppression.

Resistance to the councils was not just limited to the destruction of the councils. Township residents began to build their own civics, with democratically elected leaders and mass participation.

The very growth of these organisations, was in many instances rooted in their opposition to the state imposed structures. The same was true of the militant youth organisations which participated in campaigns to clean up the townships and build people's parks. Schools and streets were renamed and defence committees were set up to protect residents from vigilantes and evictions.

These different forms of organisation posed a major threat to the government's ability to control the townships. The rejection of the government's urban solutions was complete.

CHAPTER TWO

STATE STRATEGY: DIVIDE AND RULE, REPRESSION AND REFORM

The effective bannings of 18 organisations in February 1988, are part of a broad repressive programme paving the way towards the re-imposition of local government structures. But the thrust to smash opposition is only a part of what sometimes seems to be a contradictory agenda.

In P.W. Botha's mind, "reform" and repression are two sides of the same coin making up a complex and co-ordinated state strategy. The myriad of repressive state measures is matched by a web of "reformist" and co-optive initiatives aimed at winning support and legitimacy in the eyes of black township dwellers.

All of these reform measures have two common premises:

- Firstly, if these measures are to win any support, then all opposition to them, as well as the organisations voicing that opposition, must be systematically crushed. This explains very simply why the government sees repression and reform as two sides of the same coin.
- Secondly, the entire reformist thrust of the government is rooted in the system of local government as the basic building block upon which all of its national political solutions will be based. It is for this reason that much of the reformist energy of government is being focused on the arena of local government.

One of the things that has changed since 1982, is the form and level of repression. The period of resistance subsequent to July 1984, has seen the imposition of four declarations of a State of Emergency. The second, imposed on June 12 1986, covered the entire country and has subsequently simply been modified and repromulgated annually, signalling the effective permanence of the State of Emergency.

Significantly, the 1988 State of Emergency was modified to include a clause making it illegal to call for, or encourage, a boycott of the municipal elections of October this year.

In contrast to the "reformist era" at the beginning of the decade, the permanent State of Emergency reflects the fact that repression and the destruction of oppositional organisations is of the greatest concern to the Nationalist government in the wake of years of organised resistance to Apartheid.

The period leading up to the tri-cameral elections saw the massive growth of democratic organisations, as well as the legal space within which they were operating. Today the state's priority is to close down the space and eliminate by whatever means necessary the organisations and their leadership.

The means at their disposal are varied and far-reaching. The formal repressive measures used by the government include bannings, detentions, restriction orders, police and SADF occupation of the schools and townships as well as roadblocks and house to house "crime prevention" raids.

But right wing forces don't stop there and even more horrifying are the ever-increasing numbers of assassinations and disappearances of prominent anti-government activists. Balaklava- clad vigilantes and death squads, accompanied by arson attacks and bomb blasts aimed at progressives and their organisations, have become daily occurrences in South Africa.

REPRESSION

- **Bannings** On February 24 1988, 17 leading progressive organisations including the United Democratic Front (UDF), the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), the South African National Students Congress (SANSCO) and the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) were effectively banned, and the country's largest trade union federation, COSATU, was restricted in an attempt to prevent it from taking up political issues beyond the factory floor.

Also included in the 17 organisations were leading civic associations, as well as township based youth structures. Subsequently, the End Conscription Campaign has also been added to the list.

- **Detentions** In the wake of militant resistance from these organisations, it became essential for the Nationalist government to fall back on the repressive might at its disposal.

In a systematic attempt to destroy the leadership of the resistance movement, over 50 000 people have been detained without trial under the emergency regulations since 1985. In some townships, whole street committees were effectively removed, along with entire executives of local youth structures. As the leadership was replaced, so the next layer was detained.

The process was much the same for the national structures, where the imperative of preventing any co-ordinated opposition has seen leadership figures detained and put on trial for treason.

- **Press Censorship.** Through restricting the right to print what information is available, the government is able to ensure that only its own propaganda is publicised. The alternative views are kept from the South African public.
- **Army Occupations.** The army has in many townships taken over the very places that the people used themselves for building their organisations, such as the stadiums, parks and schools.

In some townships, barbed wire quite literally divides the communities into neat, controlable units - sowing division where street committees had before created unity. There are now permanent army barracks in at least fourteen townships.

- **Rent Boycott Evictions.** In response to the rent boycott in opposition to the community councils and the imposition of the State of Emergency, the government's repressive response has been to evict people from their homes across the country.
- **Vigilantes and Death Squads.** A number of opposition leaders across the country have been eliminated through extra-legal means by unknown assailants. Assassinations, fire-bombs, disappearances and harrassment have become a way of life for anti-apartheid activists.
- **Actions by Municipal Police.** The municipal police are clearly there to back up the Community Councils. They guard councillors and their homes, evict rent defaulters and have even been alleged to have co-operated with vigilante groups. By July 1986, there were 429 municipal police in 19 Eastern Cape townships.



Repression involves both naked force and more subtle methods of crushing opposition.. (Police at Wits University, 1985)

REFORM - THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

- **Infrastructural Upgrading.** Key townships have been identified and earmarked for improvements and upgrading. This will involve pouring in massive resources in the hope of winning over the people by removing some of the material grievances which led to resistance in the preceding years. 34 townships have been identified for such attention, and a further 200 have also been identified for some upgrading projects.
- **Housing Programmes.** Despite the fact that the housing shortage is almost irresolvable because of the massive backlog, the government - with some support from the private sector - is embarking on the most extensive housing programme since the 1950s.

In Mamelodi township outside Pretoria, for example, R120m has already been spent on housing and another R400m is going to be spent in the next 12 years. However, to overcome the housing shortage nationally will cost approximately R3.1 billion every year for the next 12 years!

- **The Great Indaba.** The National Council Bill is designed to integrate Africans into "higher levels" of "multi-racial" government through the establishment of the "Great Indaba" or the National Council. This Council would then supposedly play a role in hammering out a new constitution.

CENTRALISATION NOT DEVOLUTION OF POWER

In the attempts to reimpose state-designed local government structures we can detect the key thrust of governmental strategy. P.W. Botha claims that power is being shared out. He suggests that this is done through the "devolution of power". But is this true? Where does real power lie?

Despite the talk of "devolution of power", repression of the 1984-6 uprising in fact necessitated increased centralisation and tighter control.

The NP's co-optive and repressive concerns find expression not in the institutions of the B.L.A.'s alone, but in the myriad of more centralised local and regional structures which are at best appointed rather than elected, and at worst are often entirely clandestine in their operations. "Devolution of power", along with "power sharing", is a myth.

This can be shown by briefly looking at the different tiers of government at a local, regional and national level. At every level it can be seen that the government's new structures remove power from the hands of the people rather than extending it to them.

The different structures which we need to examine are: the local authorities (referred to as town councils in the black townships, municipalities in the white areas and management committees in the Coloured and Indian areas), the Regional Service Councils, the Provincial Administrations and the proposed National Statutory Council. It is through



*P W Botha's
happy
face - 'reform'
masks sinister
repression
and entrenches
apartheid.*

these "tiers" of government that the National Party is expressing its future vision of South Africa.

1. PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION.

- Run each province.
- Provincial Administrations are appointed by the State President instead of being elected. Some appointees are black, but the majority are loyal National Party politicians.
- Provincial Administrations have considerable power over local government.
- Not accountable to the electorate, they simply report to parliament.

2. THE REGIONAL SERVICE COUNCILS (RSCS).

- RSC members include blacks, but are nominated by local authorities rather than elected directly.
- RSC chairmen are government appointees - appointed by the provincial administrator.
- Voting rights on the RSCs are determined by the amount of services used by a local authority. Because whites use more services, they have more power on the RSC.
- RSCs have mandatory powers over local authorities, but central government can review any decision made by an RSC.
- Provide about 21 different services to all areas. They are supposed to ensure that services go to those who need them most.

-
- RSCs raise funds through levies on: 1. businesses' payrolls, and 2. companies' total turnover.

3. LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- Coloured and Indian Management Committees, white Municipalities and BLAs, based in their own group areas, are all supposed to have uniform powers.
- New powers include:
 1. Access to funds from RSCs, Provincial Administrations and various government departments.
 2. Some control over land for building houses.
 3. Their own police forces or kitskonstabels.
- Subject to control by RSCs, Provincial Administrations and central government.

PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATIONS

The current Provincial Administrations are nominated rather than elected as they were before.

As such, the Provincial Administrations are a very good example of how the Nats have taken active steps to erode what little democracy did exist. What is more, they have substantial power over the much vaunted local government institutions. So "elected" institutions are subject to the control of those institutions and individuals nominated at the discretion of the State President.

REGIONAL SERVICES COUNCILS

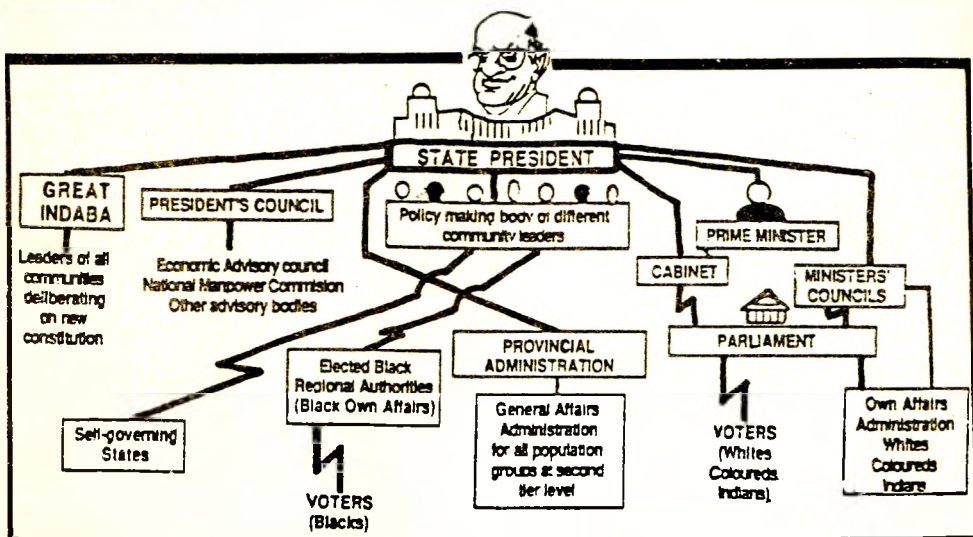
RSCs provide services which were previously the direct responsibility of the municipal authorities.

In the wake of the 1984-5 urban uprising, government had no choice but to include the Black Local Authorities in the RSCs in an attempt to improve their legitimacy and financial viability. On this basis, government tries to suggest that the RSCs are non-racial. But whites still hold all the power.

More than anything else, this RSC strategy is viewed by state officials as central to resolving the political crisis of the preceding period.

Through the RSCs, it is argued that upgrading can be financed without imposing too heavily on the local communities themselves. In this manner the RSCs are seen as an essential cog in the state strategy attempting to remove the material grievances underpinning the militant political struggles of the period after 1983.

However, the forms of taxation imposed by the RSCs will hurt the poorer communities most. The RSC levy on business' turnover, for example, will undoubtedly be a new cost which is simply passed on to the consumer, rather than being borne by businesses them-



selves. Furthermore, the RSC levy on company's payrolls will only encourage employers to keep wages as low as possible.

Employers will be eager to keep employment down to the bare minimum so as to minimise the RSC levy they have to pay.

Even some whites are complaining about the extent to which the RSCs promise to further erode the limited accountability to the racially exclusive white electorate. The Conservative Party in particular, eager to preserve white privilege, were quick to realise that they might lose income to the black areas.

Nonetheless, aware of this opposition from conservative municipalities, government took steps to prevent possible obstruction of the envisaged functions of the RSCs by them. This was done through ensuring central government's right to review decisions made by any RSC.

As a result, the Regional Services Councils are a perfect indicator of how, in South Africa, "devolution of power" actually means greater centralisation of power. This centralisation of power is merely disguised by a multiplicity of complicated tiers of government, through which power actually devolves upwards towards the State President.

3. LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

Despite any changes to the powers of the local authorities, the fundamental weaknesses of the community councils remain. They have too little money and nowhere to raise more

from, there appears to be widespread corruption and inefficiency and, most importantly, they have no real power or any influence in decision making in central government.

Of all the structures of government, the black local authorities and the coloured and Indian Management Committees are the most politically meaningless. Yet despite this lack of any meaningful power at a local level, government insists that it is involved in the devolution of power.

At the same time the state sees it as a priority to tighten rather than loosen its grip on security - this is best demonstrated by the establishment and functioning of the Joint Management Centres (JMCs).

The JMCs especially reflect the trend towards executive rule and have enhanced the role of the State Security Council in the decision making process whilst simultaneously integrating the military into regional and local government. It is to this "silent coup" by the "security forces" at every level of government that we now turn.

THE NATIONAL SECURITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (NSMS) AND JOINT MANAGEMENT CENTRES (JMCs)

The JMC is an instrument of the government's National Security Management System (NSMS) at a local level in every township and community in South Africa.

Behind the NSMS lies the "WHAM" strategy of South African security experts. "WHAM" stands for "winning hearts and minds" and is based on the notion, drawn from military strategists in the US and elsewhere, that 80% of any war is about winning the hearts and minds of the people, and only 20% is won through military might.

The WHAM method has involved fighting a "total war" in South Africa, using political, economic and propaganda warfare, as well as military methods.

P.W. Botha's attempt to achieve this has been encapsulated in his "total strategy" approach, upon which basis the National Security Management System was structured.

The NSMS is effectively a security network which forms a shadow structure mirroring government structures at every level.

In these shadowy structures of the NSMS, dominated by the SADF and the SAP, it is argued by some, resides the silent coup which has taken place in South Africa putting paid to even the last remnants of democracy. It is in these structures, unelected and unaccountable even to a racially exclusive electorate, that real power lies.

At the local level, this power resides in the Joint Management Centres (JMCs) which probably best reflect the government's concerns and strategies at this level. The existence of these "security" structures was revealed to the public of South Africa on the 11 March 1986, when their existence was acknowledged by Minister of Defence Magnus Malan. The structures had existed for some time before this without the knowledge of even the privileged white electorate!

National Security Management System

Official state structures

State Security Council (SSC)



Cabinet

SSC Work Committee



Cabinet Committee of Department Heads

Interdepartmental Committees



Departments

Joint Management Committees (JMCs)



Provincial Executive Committees

Sub-JMCs



Regional Services Councils (RSCs)

Mini-JMCs



Local authorities

How the state security network and JMCs form a shadow structure mirroring the government structures and relating at every level

There are eleven JMCs country-wide, which almost coincide with the SADF regional commands and the RSCs. The Bureau of Information has also organised itself into regions to coincide with the JMCs.

Below the 12 JMCs there are 60 sub-JMCs and about 450 mini-JMCs. The JMCs are made up by officials from various departments within regions. Their members are appointed by state departments and they are all chaired by police or senior members of the military.

Each JMC has three sub-committees: a Joint Intelligence Committee, a Political, Economic and Sociological Committee (otherwise referred to as a "Welfare Committee") and a Communications Committee. Sub-JMCs also have a monitoring committee which meets daily.

The mini-JMCs have a "Community Liason Committee"

which forms an interlink between the JMCs and the "representatives" of the community, usually including principals, teachers, businessmen, councillors, vigilante leaders and other professionals within the township community.

The powers and functions of the various sub-committees are as follows:

- Joint Intelligence Committee. Consists of an intelligence division and a security division.

The latter consists of riot police, soldiers, municipal police and kitskonstabels and is responsible for co-ordinating the actions of the various branches of the

security forces. Its functions involve identifying organisations or individuals to ban, detain, remove or put on trial.

The intelligence department consists of security police, military police and National Intelligence Service personnel. Its tasks are to gather information on activists and democratic organisations, which is then passed to the security department to co-ordinate repression.

The intelligence committee also collects information on people's day to day grievances. These are then passed on to the Welfare Committee;

- **Welfare Committee.** Consists of officials from various government departments, including Education and Training, Transport and Constitutional Development. The committee engineers co-optive schemes to upgrade the townships, thereby removing the material underpinnings to popular resistance through attending to things which would otherwise become a source of tension and thus a security risk;
- **Communications Committee.** Consists of Bureau of Information officials and town council newspapers.

The committee produces propaganda designed to win hearts and minds, such as security force pamphlets, town council newspapers, Bureau of Information adverts, etc. It is also alleged that the committees are involved in producing disinformation pamphlets aimed at progressive organisations and individuals.

It was somewhat surprising to many township residents that at the very time that local town councils were seen to be bankrupt because of ongoing rent boycotts, schemes to upgrade key townships involving millions of rands were launched.

During 1987/8 alone, R3,2 billion has been spent on upgrading. It is somewhat less surprising that all these schemes only got under way once thousands of activists in the townships affected were in detention under the emergency regulations.

Perhaps least surprising, was the fact that all this coincided with the precise time that the JMCs became public knowledge as an integral part of the National Security Management System.

BUYING CREDIBILITY OR BUYING TIME?

It has been shown that the RSCs and the JMCs are essential elements in the state's attempt to put back in place the rejected BLA's. It is through these structures that the reform and repression of the government are integrated.

The government's strategy is dependent on their ability to win support and buy credibility in the eyes of the township residents.

This strategy is premised on the ability to finance upgrading programmes in the townships so as to remove potential "security threats" without overtaxing black residents themselves in the process. But can "upgrading" work for the JMCs and the government?



The government's 'oilspot' upgrading programme is fighting massive backlogs.

The government's programme of selective upgrading of "oilspots" seems destined to fail as a means of winning credibility. There probably isn't enough money available to make it work. The South African economy is in a crisis and most people are getting poorer all the time. The government is in debt and overseas banks have refused to lend South Africa any more money.

In its attempt to find an alternative to governmental monetary support, the state set up the RSCs in the various regions of the country.

The RSCs have been able to raise a certain amount of money from businesses, but it is not nearly enough. The Johannesburg/Witwatersrand RSC has said that it needs R364 m over the next 5 years just to clear the housing backlog! Even the Deputy Reserve Bank Governor, Jan Lombard, has suggested that for South Africa to finance all its housing needs would demand "fundamentally changing the structure of the South African economy."

Especially significant, is the encouragement being given to the "privatisation" of housing and local government services. But privatisation is not going to solve the housing crisis. Most township residents are too poor to afford the cheapest house. Business interests are therefore not willing to enter a market where they cannot make big profits.

In the final analysis, whether directly or indirectly, it is the black working class residents of the townships of Apartheid who will themselves be called on to foot the bills for the upgrading process.

The government's inability to finance housing and upgrading in the black townships, is precisely the reason that they find themselves once again trying to limit the numbers

of people in the urban centres. For this purpose, the government is attempting to introduce a whole set of new laws. These new laws reflect a complete admission of the failure of the government's urban policy - new laws, but old Apartheid.

NEW LAWS

- The first of these new laws is a law to try to control squatting.

It is estimated that 7 million black people live in squatter areas like Inanda (Durban), Crossroads (Cape Town), Botshabelo (Bloemfontein) and Winterveld (near Pretoria).

The new laws bind the courts to certain procedures and anyone found guilty of squatting illegally will pay a fine of R2 000 or be imprisoned for 12 months.

The courts are also bound to order that the shack or dwelling of the squatter be demolished immediately - even if the case is to go on appeal. Finally, the new law gives a magistrate vast powers to order removals of people.

- The second new law of special significance is the new law against "slums".

This law says that the government can demolish a building or an area if it considers it "dangerous" or "unsafe". In the old days this could only be done with the approval of the Medical Officer of Health and a special court. Now the new law says that the local authority itself can make such a decision. This could be used by local authorities to remove anyone who is a political "nuisance".

- Another new law is designed to break the rent boycotts which have continued despite all government's repressive measures.

This new law will propose that bosses be forced to deduct rents straight from the wage packets of the workers. However, even many of the bosses have rejected the new rents law. They say it isn't their job to collect rents.

- Perhaps most significant of the "new" laws are the measures being pushed through to streamline the Group Areas Act.

This is of particular importance as the Group Areas is one of the key pillars of Apartheid and the system of local government. The new Group Areas legislation makes simple nonsense about any of the Nationalist Party's pretences of being on a road to meaningful change.

The new law makes breaking of the Group Areas Act punishable by a fine of R10 000 or five years in jail. It also makes it easier for government officials to evict people who break the law.

It goes on to stipulate that the government has the right to forcibly sell property if people living on the property are breaking the Act. This is an attempt to stop landlords from allowing people to live on their premises if they are meant to live in a different area. The new act will also establish some "free settlement areas"

where the Group Areas Act has broken down so badly that government has "allowed" these areas to be lived in by anyone.

The municipalities and local authorities voted in on October 26 will be powerless to change any of these measures.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS - ISSUES AND RESPONSES

The elections on October 26 are essential to the government's plan to resurrect local structures in order to establish the foundations upon which its national political solutions are based. The government will therefore do almost anything to ensure that the elections go ahead unimpeded. As one General on the State Security Council said:

"We want to use the local authorities as a means by which things can happen ... That is why we are forced to protect them ... That is why the army is there." (September, 1988) Botha also wants people to vote because he wants the world to think that black South Africans have meaningful political rights. He needs a high poll so that he can argue the Black Local Authorities are legitimate and credible structures.

THE GOVERNMENT WANTS A HIGH POLL

The government has put a lot of money and energy into making these elections work. The money and effort, however, does not guarantee that the elections are 'free and fair'.

The government has attempted to ban or detain anyone who may ignore their laws and call for or organise an election boycott. The following are some of the strategies adopted to ensure a high poll:

1. Government Publicity Campaigns

The Bureau of Information is to spend R4,5 million on a publicity campaign.

When confronted on this question Stoffel Van Der Merwe, the Minister of Information, said "many people are not experienced in participating in local government". He argued that the publicity campaign is "pro-democracy and anti-revolution".

Other publicity includes multiple television interviews with candidates, TV information programmes, billboards, newspaper adverts and radio coverage.

2. Excluding Half the Black Population

There are about 24 million Africans living in South Africa. About 10 million are under the age of 18 and do not vote. But there are millions more who are excluded from voting in the municipal elections. These include:

- all those who live in the homelands. There will be no elections, for example, in huge homeland townships such as Umlazi or KwaMashu in Durban, or in Mdantsane near East London, which is the second biggest township in South Africa. At least five million will be affected;
- people who live on land controlled by the SA Development Trust, such as Inanda near Durban and Edendale near Pietermaritzburg;
- anyone who has not lived in a local authority area for more than three months;
- anyone who lives in shacks not controlled by the local authority. This includes millions of shack dwellers around the country;
- anyone who lives in an area where there is no local authority. In rural areas, like in some parts of the Western Cape, rural towns have no local authority despite there being a resident black population.
- anyone convicted for 'political crimes' such as treason or 'terrorism' cannot vote.

This is nearly half of the African population. So whatever percentage poll the government claims after the election will not be an accurate reflection and would deserve closer scrutiny.

3. Registering Voters - Whether They Know it or Not

The government, determined to prove that there is interest in these elections, is pointing to high voter registration. They claim that 60% to 70% of the people who could vote have registered.

In fact, very few have registered by placing their names on the Voters Roll. In many cases the Voters Roll was compiled by government officials from rent slips, housing lists, passes, electricity receipts. As a result, most black voters do not even know they are registered.

Even though one can go and check the voters' roll, it is difficult to check its accuracy. In the black community even dead people may appear on the voters' roll. In the tri-cameral election some dead people were found to have voted.

4. Prior Votes - Turning a Day's Voting into Two Weeks of Voting

The Prior Votes Act allows for votes to be cast from 10 - 22 October. No special reasons have to be given. This will effectively add 13 additional days of voting before October 26.

According to Chris Heunis, the Minister of Constitutional Development, "protection of black voters" was one of the main reasons for the Act.

It has been heavily criticised on the basis that there will be more time for people to be pressured into voting against their will. In mines and factories the possibility exists that workers will be pressurised by their employers into voting.

The Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) has warned that prior votes could be abused. In the tri-cameral elections, the TIC uncovered voting fraud and helped several people bring successful applications to the Supreme Court to have their votes set aside.

There are fears that there will be large-scale corruption in voting. Names and addresses of voters have been recorded, but no identity numbers - which could encourage fraudulent voting.

In addition, only candidates can scrutinise voting.

5. Where are all the Candidates?

Despite government propaganda and possible financial reward, remarkably few candidates have come forward. Earlier this year salaries for black town councillors were increased by 35 percent, the highest increase in the public service.

In some townships not a single candidate could be found from hundreds of thousands of residents. In many areas the elections are uncontested because there are too few candidates. Candidates will be "elected" without voting.

There will only be elections in 25 out of the 52 townships in the Eastern Cape. In Motherwell and Cradock there are no candidates. At KwaNobuhle, Uitenhage, there are only 8 candidates for 16 wards. For the remaining 24 there are either no candidates or only one candidate has come forward and is elected unopposed. (Cape Times 31 August)

The Business Day (27 Sept.) reported that in the whole of the Cape, only 730 candidates applied for 629 seats in 92 black municipalities. Of these 92 municipalities, there will only be elections in 46.

HIGH POLLS OR HIGH JINX?

The government has introduced a special type of election mathematics to get a high poll. First, only half of the African population are allowed to vote. Then the government bans calls for boycotts and detains activists. It allows prior secret votes and a voting period of two weeks. It will not count 'zero percentage' areas where either no candidates could be found, or a single candidate was automatically elected unopposed.

After all this the government has hinted that anything approaching a 30% or higher poll will be regarded as a strong sign of support for government policies and structures. But, in reality this could represent as few as 6% of all black South Africans.

**Vote on 26 October
and you
can make it happen.**

26



TRANSSVAALSE PROVINSIALE
ADMINISTRASIE
TRANSSVAAL PROVINCIAL
ADMINISTRATION
GEMEENSAP DIENSTE
COMMUNITY SERVICES
STREEK KANTOOR REGIONAL OFFICE
JOHANNESBURG



Even if a high poll is claimed, many will wonder how high the poll really was, or would have been if the boycott had not been banned.

Beaufort, Alexandria, Cape Town and elsewhere there have been detentions of activists which have been assumed to be because of the coming elections. In Potchefstroom one activist was told he was being detained until the end of the elections "for his own safety".

RESPONSES FROM THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

Anti-apartheid organisations have argued that local government is rooted in apartheid, that the BLA's are a political trick to create the impression that black South Africans have adequate political representation.

Black Local Authorities have never had the power to meet the daily needs of township residents and consequently lack credibility among residents. Since the early sixties popular organisations have boycotted what they view as ineffective, racist and corrupt structures.

The government has effectively tried to ban all resistance to the elections, making it illegal to call for a boycott and tying the hands of those who have called for boycotts before. It has been reported that people are being told that they have to vote, while there is no law that obliges people to vote. There is only a law that says that no-one can call publically for a boycott.

The state has already launched 'anti-boycott' crackdowns. In Grahamstown, Pretoria, Fort

The United Democratic Front organised the overwhelming boycott of the 1983 Local Authority elections and the 1984 tri-cameral elections. This time it is not allowed to call for a boycott.

CALLS TO BOYCOTT THE ELECTIONS

Under the state of emergency it is "subversive" to call for a boycott of the elections. The penalty is a R20 000 fine or 10 years imprisonment.

Despite this there have been numerous calls to boycott the elections - ranging from calls made by church leaders, UDF leaders and from parliamentarian Jan Van Eck who used his parliamentary privilege to do so on behalf of the democratic movement.

Because of the strict regulations surrounding a boycott call it is very difficult to even report what these people have said without falling foul of the law.

This means it is also impossible to say how the democratic movement - the political force most decisive in shaping politics and representative of the majority of South Africans - is responding to the municipal elections.

Some representatives of the press have also shown a determination to resist the attempts to silence them on the issue. In Durban, an attempt was made to place a full-page advert in the Muslim newspaper *Al Qalam* explaining "You have the right not to vote in the October elections." Police swooped on the newspaper and seized 5 000 copies.

Crisis News, the publication of the Western Cape Council of Churches, was seized by police for publicising the SACC response to the elections.

In refusing to publish advertisements which would promote a vote in the elections, the SOWETAN said:

"That the elections are the basis for true grassroots democracy as is alleged by the Bureau (of Information), is a matter we would be too happy to debate anytime, if only we were expected not to fight with our hands tied behind our backs"

THE RESPONSE TO THE ELECTIONS IN THE WHITE AREAS

Because municipalities have been systematically stripped of their powers over the past 40 years, the results of these elections will not seriously affect the balance of power in South Africa. The real issue of these elections in the white areas is the legitimacy of National Party policy.

All the white political parties are using these municipal elections to strengthen their organisation and broaden their appeal, although they are not contesting the elections as parties in all areas. In this sense, changes in the strength and popularity of political parties could contribute to shifts in the balance of political power.

A large ultra-right Conservative Party win would be a major blow to the Nationalist government. Although it would not give the CP the ability to effect large changes to the



The key contest in most white areas is between the CP and the NP.

social and political landscape of South Africa, it would give them political advantages in the event of a general election.

A CP municipality could re-segregate parks and buses, impose curfews, stonewall the RSCs - and then challenge the government to over-ride their decisions. The Nationalist government has the power to over-ride these decisions, but could only do so at great cost to the legitimacy of local government structures, and to the remaining semblance of democratic practice in white areas.

Thus the campaigns of all the white parties is to convince white voters of the validity of their respective party's programmes and ideas. This is being done by publicising as many pillars of party policy as possible through 'local' issues. The Group Areas Act is one such major issue in the white areas. The central contest in these elections is, in most areas, clearly between the CP and the National Party.

Among anti-apartheid whites there is debate about whether to vote tactically to keep the Nats and the CP out wherever possible or to abstain from voting so as not to give credibility to an election based on apartheid.

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY - WRECKING FROM THE RIGHT

The CP began its election campaign early with the explicit purpose of winning a large number of wards and municipalities and forcing the government to commit itself to a general election next year. It also aims to wreck the RSCs "from the inside" - which may or may not be possible. They are hoping to win 70% of Transvaal seats.

The CP are standing for traditional apartheid. The CP is calling for total segregation in all facets of life and have made ominous repressive threats like dusk to dawn curfews for blacks.

In addition to up-front party candidates, the CP have fielded over 200 'independents'.

THE NATIONALIST PARTY - LOOKING LEFT AND RIGHT

The Nationalist Party is contesting all the white municipalities in the country except Alberton. In many areas independent candidates are clearly Nat sympathisers.

For the Nationalist government, legitimacy is the major issue in these elections. Their determination to ram through the new Groups Areas Act has signalled a major attempt to win back support lost to the CP. The recent 15% wage increase for the Civil Service, which employs about 40% of economically active Afrikaners, is another desperate attempt to buy support.

While the Nats are worried about the long-term political war of attrition that the CP is waging - they are in no immediate threat of losing central government power. The CP has only 22 seats out of 161 in parliament. But if the parliamentary parties to the left of the government consolidate and increase their current number of seats from about 22 to over 30, the Nats might find themselves in a minority parliamentary position within the next two general elections.

Highly unlikely as this is, it highlights why these municipal elections are being taken so seriously by the Nats. Not only are their efforts to contain popular resistance at stake, but their position of dominance in white politics is at some risk.

It must however be remembered that PW Botha and his party have in place every device needed to rule by decree, including the power to declare martial law and suspend the constitution.

THE PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY - TRYING TO KEEP UP

The PFP has allowed each of its regions to decide whether to put up candidates or not. Both the Eastern and Western Cape branches of the PFP are not contesting the elections but are instead supporting candidates who support PFP principles.

For the PFP, these elections are an attempt to pull their support together after their last election disaster, as well as a dress rehearsal for any future general election.

Zac de Beer, newly elected leader of the PFP, argues "I have no doubt that in a body such as the Johannesburg City Council there are useful things to be done. By having a liberal or forward-looking majority in that council - which is not beyond the bounds of possibility - one can make life better for many people in and around Johannesburg."

The PFP is one of the only parties to be contesting elections in coloured and Indian areas as well, in line with their 1987 decision to participate in all three houses of Parlia-



The right wing is growing rapidly in many white areas, capitalising on white fears and on years of entrenched racism.

ment. They will also be looking in future for African membership putting them in direct competition with popular, but restricted organisations in the townships.

De Beer says: "It would be presumptuous of me to pretend that I can decide whether our brown or black fellow countrymen should take part in the elections. I would tend to think that in general it is better to 'take what you can get and use it to get what you can take'.

THE INDEPENDENT PARTY - SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN

The IP is contesting seats in Pretoria, Cape Town, Somerset West, Durban, Dubanville, Pietermaritzburg, East London, Port Elizabeth and Benoni. They are viewing these elections purely in the context of the next general elections, and are building party machinery and profile.

THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT - KEEPING THEIR IMAGE CLEAN

The NDM are not contesting any ward in these elections because they cannot afford to present a "bad image" now, wanting to be part of the left opposition which they argue will win over 40 seats in the next general elections. (They currently have two).

FIVE FREEDOMS FORUM - CONDITIONAL SUPPORT

The FFF Johannesburg Branch have launched a campaign under the slogan "One City, Open City". The basis of this campaign is to set up alliances with those who support the FFF manifesto. They have called for white people to vote for any candidates that publicly endorse their manifesto.

Spokesperson Mike Olivier said "Our decision to call on our supporters to vote does not imply an approval of the structures of local level government... Despite the inadequacy of these structures, we do not believe that any purpose will be served by calling on whites to boycott the elections."

Their manifesto condemns JMCs and the Group Areas and calls for the complete desegregation of the city.

NUSAS - ALIGNED TO THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

The National Union of South African Students sees its role during the elections as exposing state repression and reform as a strategy to maintain apartheid. Through this they hope to provide white students with an understanding of the responses of the majority of black South Africans to these elections.

They argue that white students should decide for themselves whether or not to vote, and that those who vote should consider "the nature of the candidates, their ability to influence the outcome of the elections and the power of the white city councils to effect change in their cities".

In a statement Nusas argues that "far from presenting a solution to the crisis apartheid has created, these elections are in fact dangerous for the future of South Africans black and white. The National Party will have to shoulder the blame should October see an outbreak of political violence".

Nusas finds the elections "politically unacceptable" and are to campaign around the principle that "any meaningful political solution must take place at a national level, and that it must be based on the equal participation of all South Africans".

OTHER UDF AFFILIATES WORKING IN THE WHITE AREAS

There are a number of other groupings affiliated to the UDF that work in the white areas. These groupings have adopted a critical stance on the elections and, like Nusas, are leaving it up to individuals to decide whether to vote. Their specific campaigns differ from region to region.

BLACK AREAS THE CENTRAL ISSUE

Regardless of how the whites vote in this election, the key issue will be the polls in the black areas. Botha's strategy of 'reform' and repression is targeted at these areas - it is

the Black Local Authorities that are the building blocks of his reformist plans. It seems to be clear where the majority of black people think of these elections, even if their leaders and their organisations are silenced.

CONCLUSION

DOOMED FROM THE OUTSET

The coming municipal elections, like their predecessors, seem doomed before they even start. As long as government persists with its short-cut solutions to problems rooted in the very system of Apartheid, they will not succeed in bluffing South Africans struggling for democracy. The link between political oppression and economic impoverishment has been made in people's minds - political manoeuvring will not eliminate it.

The formal political legitimacy of the reimposed local municipalities, is therefore, not their sole purpose. Instead of political conjuring acts and an attempt to win legitimacy through the local government ballot boxes alone, there is also now an attempt to co-opt by meeting some of the material requirements of township residents. This, the government hopes, will destroy their militancy while enabling local authorities to take the credit for the delivery of the goods.

At the same time, the NP is holding thumbs that local government will develop into a foundation block on which to build its national political institutions and solutions.

After the October municipal elections, the government wants to establish new regional and national forums. Town councils will have to nominate councillors to the regional bodies, from where they will be sent to the national council to "negotiate" with the government on behalf of all africans.

Botha's "Great Indaba" will be no better than the old Native Advisory councils rejected outright by the people so many years ago. It will only have advisory powers and will include "homeland" leaders and some cabinet ministers.

From the BLA's the proposed Statutory Council, black South Africans are denied any real power, or any meaningful political rights. Real power is vested in the structures which are not elected. Even white South Africans are losing some of the controls over government that they enjoyed in the past.

But as we have seen, even the government's co-optive strategies, based as they are on the repressive pre-requisite of smashing democratic opposition organisations, are destined to fail in their objectives. To attack the economic factors contributing to "unrest and

instability" without addressing the question of fundamental political rights for all, is worse than short-sighted - it is a recipe for ever-increasing conflict.

The reimposition of the BLA's in October 1988, in the wake of the systematic destruction of the representative organisations of the people, once again represents the denial rather than the extension of political rights.

Ultimately, very little has changed in the past five and a half years since the BLA's were introduced.

THE ROAD TO CHANGE

There can be no meaningful or peaceful change through the government's attempts to substitute toothless institutions and unrepresentative leaders for meaningful and popular ones. Indeed, there can be no peaceful and meaningful elections when the country's population has to live under the siege of a State of Emergency.

The alternatives are quite simple and yet have been ignored as often as they have been stated. But the prerequisites for a process towards peaceful change remain:

- The release of credible black leaders from detention and imprisonment;
- The unbanning of the ANC and other exiled political organisations;
- The lifting of the state of emergency;
- The commitment to universal franchise in a single unitary state.

The people of South Africa have made it clear what their demands are. These demands are incorporated in the Freedom Charter drawn up through the consultation of the people 33 years ago. It is only when these demands are met that our country will be spared conflict and turmoil.

FREEDOM CHARTER

The People Shall Govern

All Shall Enjoy Human Rights!

**All National Groups Shall
Have Equal Rights!**

**There Shall Be Work And
Security!**

**The People Shall Share In
The Country's Wealth!**

**The Doors Of Learning And
Culture Shall Be Opened!**

**The Land Shall Be Shared
Among Those Who Work It!**

**There Shall Be Houses,
Security And Comfort!**

**All Shall Be Equal Before
The Law!**

**There Shall Be Peace And
Friendship!**

Let all who love their people and their country now say, as we say here:

**THESE FREEDOMS WE WILL FIGHT FOR, SIDE BY SIDE,
THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES UNTIL WE HAVE WON OUR LIBERTY.**



