

WORKING PAPER ON STRATEGY re Southern Africa of
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A basic failing of previous action by U.S. student groups concerned with apartheid or with Southern Africa in general, has been the tendency to plan a grand campaign on the level of national groups, a campaign which rarely penetrates to more than a few isolated local situations. A number of things have happened at the local level from time to time; sometimes instigated by national groups, sometimes with no connection at all to such groups. There seems to be, however, little continuity of strategy or coordinated action.

The first priority, then, is some clear understanding of a viable local strategy, with the realization, of course, that what is appropriate will vary from one situation to another. After a discussion of this, one can move to the question of the role of national groups in stimulating, participating in, helping to coordinate, or providing aid to such local action.

The assumption from which we must start is the intractability of the Southern Africa situation, and the fact that U.S. policy is hardly likely to change easily either. The realistic political goal here has to be to prepare both climate and organization for the time when the pressure of events will force U.S. response to issues which now, with the weakness of the freedom movements in Southern Africa, it is able to avoid. This means a primary focus on the policy of the U.S. Government, as the body which will have to respond at that time. It may mean specific partial goals for changes in policy of that government. But even more it will be a long-term building up of opinion and pressure - which is unlikely to be effective until the involvement reaches much greater intensity - perhaps the intensity of that with Vietnam. Without drawing out the analogy too far, one might say that the basic strategy is to be prepared for the conflict in Southern Africa as we were not for that in Vietnam. This is not to say that the U.S. is likely to be so directly on one side of the conflict - it is much more likely to be confusedly in the middle, but deeply involved - "hunting for Tshombe's".

Given this sort of assumption, what are the priorities in the local context? The first is for education and recruitment of a core group, who will be able to carry out what strategy is planned. Such may involve lectures, day or weekend seminars, debates, study groups, etc. As long as other issues such as Vietnam are so much more visible and pressing, it is unlikely that these sorts of educational function will involve more than a minority, even of the activists. It is crucial, however, to recruit a core who are committed to and informed about this particular set of issues.

There are many tasks for such a core group. No one of us knows exactly how to do each of them, or has any formula for their interrelationship. But we do feel that each is essential, both at the beginning and on a continuing basis. The first is informing oneself about the issue - both Southern Africa and U.S. policy towards it. There is written material available, but vital also is direct contact with persons from the area and dialogue with them. If such resources are not locally available, attendance at conferences or other special attempts to meet with others informed and concerned, is vital, and in any case is useful for people in a local situation to communicate with others. The second is a process of probing the local context - to find out the extent of information and concern already existing, and its location, organizational and individual. This requires exploration of such places as area study centers and other academic programs, international students, action groups, religious groups, etc.; and it requires as well a willingness to listen, and find out where each group or individual is - a willingness to teach and to persuade, but not to dictate or attempt to overwhelm. The third is the process of organization - gathering a group which will meet in some regular fashion - the extent of formal organization must be flexible; and may involve the starting of a new group or the joining of old ones or a loose relationship. Basic is continued contact among people who are committed to work. The fourth process is one of sustaining - a very difficult one. How does one deal with defeat and frustration, with who plays what role, with sensitivity to the interaction of political concern and personal involvement, and with the relative importance of other issues for each person? These are the questions. The answers will have to emerge in each local context.

Such a group being given, a wider sort of publicity and involvement is needed. Various means are possible: leaflets, catchy pamphlets, posters, canvassing door to door. The teach-in is another form, but seems to be effective only after interest is aroused in some other way. The crucial significance of many action programs also, of course, lies precisely in their publicity and educational value. This is particularly true on such an issue as Southern Africa.

Such publicity is carried out most effectively in the context of broader action. And, as we said before, the basic focus of that action is the U.S. Government. One can do such things as write letters to members of Congress and of the administration, particularly at times when hearings are going on or policy decisions being made. One can also invite members of Congress to speak on U.S. policy towards Southern Africa at meetings on campus or in the community, thus forcing them to consider the question, regardless of their point of view. One can send delegations to talk with members of Congress.

We must recognize, however, that the issue tends to be a distant one. The chances for direct confrontation are few, and the tangible results usually nil. If one's target were a local government, or if the issue were one of burning concern to many people, as Rhodesia is in Britain, there would be more possibilities for direct political action. As it is, however, one needs more immediate targets, and the possibility of getting some minimal results, or a response, positive or negative. One must not forget, however, the broader goal in Southern Africa, or the intermediate one of changing U.S. policy. There are in most communities two such targets relating to Southern Africa. One is the raising of money for scholarships for refugees from Southern Africa, or for Defense and Aid

of political prisoners and their families, or for education inside Southern Africa. The other is a campaign for disengagement - with a particular target. The involvement of U.S. business in South Africa is so extensive, that it is likely in most communities that there will be some such target, even if it is only where the school itself invests its money. An indiscriminate attack against all such targets is not likely to be effective. The procedure should be to pick a target which is vulnerable in some way - such as a bank where students have accounts, or where the school has accounts, or a business prominent in the community. The expectations in most cases will not be that such a target will withdraw from South Africa, or change its discrimination policies there, although this will of course be the demand. Rather, the basic effect of the action will be in bringing the issue and its implications to the attention of the community; and groups within it (as well as perhaps getting conscience money for scholarships, etc.). Such a confrontation should be preceded by research and direct approach to the target, may be carried out by boycotts, withdrawals of funds, pickets, sit-ins, etc., and must be accompanied by a widespread publicity and educational campaign. (One model for such a campaign is the bank campaign in NYC last year, which was preceded by SDS' demonstration at Chase Manhattan, and is continuing this fall.)

In the course of such campaigns, fundraising or disengagement, it would be a mistake, and one easy to make to forget about the broader political focus and target. If not, it is easy to end the campaign, in complacency or in discouragement, without any understanding of how it fits into the issue as a whole, and consequently without any idea of how to move on to further action.

With such a conception of local strategy, what is the role of national groups? The following are some general suggestions, with particular examples that seem to be possible this next year.

The first is the provision of information - of the many various kinds needed. This includes the distribution of materials such as that put out by the ACOA, periodicals such as Crisis and Change and Anti-Apartheid News, news summaries such as that done by the UCM committee, research papers such as those of SDS, and reflections on strategy for the movement, as well as occasional material from other sources. In addition, more catchy Madison Avenue type material is needed to aid in local action, whether it be fundraising or direct action. Some of this is provided by WUS in relation to fundraising and by SDS in relation to direct action, but more is needed. WUS and SDS seem best equipped to develop more; but there are other possible sources - use of appropriate material from Anti-Apartheid in England, stimulation of articles by such periodicals as Ramparts; etc.

The second is communication, contact, and constituency building. This involves some simple efficiency mailing-list type questions, which WUS seems to offer a possibility of handling with the least amount of fuss, on the behalf of most of the rest of us. Special mailing lists would continue to be useful as well, of course. But more important than this is the building up of real contact with our constituencies, listening, stimulation, intercommunication, etc. Each movement has to deal with this question to a certain extent on its own, and the fate of the particular issue of Southern Africa is tied with each movement building its own real constituency and being responsive to it. But there

is a vital function as well for building up a specialized constituency on this particular issue drawn from a variety of organizations or none. One instrumentality may be the WUS campus travellers. We would hope in addition that the entire staff of each movement will be aware of this issue, and in their contacts with local situations, when finding interest or particular concern with Southern Africa, will put those dealing with the issue in particular in touch. This applies particularly, of course, to the field staff of those movements which have them. It would also be good to have field staff who would specialize in this particular concern - in regions where the concern exists. There are perhaps other instrumentalities, but most important of all is the awareness of all dealing with the issue of the priority of grass-roots constituency building, rather than a "coordination of national organizations - mailing list constituency" mentality.

The third is one means of carrying out points one and two. It must deal with both, not just providing information. That is the holding of conferences. It is our conviction that at the present such conferences should be primarily on the regional level, such as the WUS conference being held in Chapel Hill, or the one held in Providence, R.I. last year. The function of national groups would be to stimulate the holding of such conferences, perhaps helping in the planning and funding. The procedure might be to select a few regions as priorities, and then to ask what resources each movement had there, for the holding of such a conference - and its follow up as well as preceding work on the grass-roots level.

Fourth is the interrelationship of national organizations - on two levels. One among student groups - a reminding of each other of the importance of the issue, and a challenging each other to match our resolutions with provision of resources and attention to grass-roots action. The second between student groups and other groups such as the churches. This function is one of catalyst, or at least a thorn in the flesh, a reminder and an influence.

Fifth is the maintenance of communication with groups in Southern Africa primarily, and elsewhere around the world. This involves dialogue, perhaps joint action, perhaps financial aid, etc. Obviously these relationships will be different with such disparate groups as those actually in Southern Africa, the freedom movements in exile, international student groups, etc. But all of them are important, although priorities have to be set. The nature of these priorities should be the subject of future discussion in each movement, and the answer to that question may well be different for each one.

Sixth is direct national involvement in local action - through two kinds of possibilities, primarily: one through the support of field staff, the other involvement in the place where the national office happens to be located. The first we have discussed previously; by the second I mean to indicate the opportunities which the UCM committee has had to participate in the bank campaign, for example. I would hope that it would be possible for NSA to play a key role in local action in Washington, and for SDS to do the same in Chicago - I realize this means a confusion of roles - national and local - but think also that it may help to bring our national offices down to reality, as well as being a helpful catalyst in several key local situations.

This paper quite obviously does not answer all our questions about strategy. It does, however, set forth a concrete direction that can be discussed, modified, and acted upon. We hope that it is an improvement over past talk of "national campaigns" and isolated actions which ended up with little or no widespread local support. One of the premises is that really widespread support on the issue will not come until the "objective conditions" are ripe. But we can, and must, make the most effective use of the opportunities we do have now. We would hope that those who read this paper would at least take the demand for this sort of thinking seriously, whether they agree with the particular conclusions or not.

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