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TECHNICAL AND ACADEMIC COLLABORATION

BETWEEN BRITAIN AND SOUTH AFRICA

8th NUS/AAM SOUTHERN AFRICA CONFERENCE

Warwick University

6th-8th July 1979



### Introduction

In August 1978, the faculty at the School of Development Studies at the University of East Anglia received a memorandum concerning a proposed visit to the School by a Professor Bekker from the University of Zululand. The visit was part of a tour of British universities planned by Prof. Bekker and arranged and apparently funded by the British Council. (1)

The University of Zululand is a 'tribal' university in South Africa, established when 'white' universities were closed by black students. It is directly under the control of the South African government and the KwaZulu government has no authority over it. Prof Bekker is the Director of the Institute for Professional Training there, an institute, one of whose main functions is to give short training courses to civil servants from the KwaZulu Bantustan. He himself is a constitutional lawyer and before his present job he was president of a Bantu Appeal court, dealing with 'crimes' such as pass and influx control law infringements. This was part of his work in the Department of Bantu Administration. (2)

The visit was clearly perceived by members of the faculty at UEA as a means of providing links between an agent of apartheid and British universities. As a result the faculty, as well as members of other institutions which Prof. Bekker was planning to visit, cancelled their invitations to him. The British Council then changed his itinerary and an alternative, smaller tour was arranged and carried out.

Prof. Bekker's visit is significant in that in the course of the campaign of opposition to it, it became apparent that it was one of many visits between South African and British universities in both directions. The object of this report is to document what little we know so far of such exchanges, to assess their significance and to offer an interpretation of government policy with regard to them. We hope thereby to draw the attention of people working in academic institutions to this issue, so that this kind of co-operation can become more widely known, and thus more effectively and systematically opposed.

### The Administration of Academic Exchanges

According to a reply by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to questions on this subject, there have been 'so far this year (October 1978) .... about 67 visits in both directions'. These visits are handled by the British Council 'on our behalf' and their operations in South Africa are entirely consistent with our policy! (3)



The British Council co-operates closely with the Ministry of Overseas Development in its overseas work, and regards the 'exchanges of persons with South Africa ..... on exactly the same basis as work with other countries in which the Council operates'. (4) The ambiguous position of South Africa though, with regard to some British official organisations, has had the effect of increasing the activities of the British Council in relation to South Africa in recent years. The Association of Commonwealth Universities withdrew its services from South Africa in 1973, (5) which meant in practice that travel grants were no longer available under the Commonwealth University Interchange Scheme administered by the Association of Commonwealth Universities. (6) Such travel grants are now made available instead through the British Council, with provisions almost identical to those of the Commonwealth University Interchange Scheme (7). Indeed, the close co-operation between the British Council and the Association of Commonwealth Universities, as evidenced by their joint administration of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship plan (8), suggests that such organisations are merely administrative devices for the cultural and educational aspects of British foreign policy. South Africa's expulsion from the Commonwealth has made no difference even to the schemes which operated under the rubric of Commonwealth co-operation.

#### Government Policy and Academic and Technical Co-operation

The government defends the activities of the British Council in terms of its commitment 'to promoting rapid, peaceful and fundamental change in South Africa. For the purpose we use what links we have including educational exchanges in both directions'. These links have hitherto, according to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, been confined to the activities of the British Council since 'there is at the moment no technical co-operation in the usually accepted sense of the phrase (ie developmental funds supplied by the Ministry of Overseas Development), between Britain and South Africa'. There is also no formal cultural agreement with South Africa. (8)

This report is confined to questions of academic-technical exchanges between Britain and South Africa since other forms of technical and trade co-operation are well known eg. investment and transfer of technology through private and state owned companies, and other supports such as export credit guarantees etc. Thus to imply that the activities of the British Council are a substitute for technical co-operation through the Ministry of Overseas Development, is to evade entirely the question of the massive degree of technical co-operation between Britain and South Africa and to neglect the specific place of formal educational interchange within this.



That there is a specific place for such activity within the British Government's overall policy towards South Africa can be seen clearly in a new strategy described by the Times as 'an overall reappraisal of Britain's relations with South Africa's 20 million blacks, coloureds and Asians in the wake of the Soweto unrest of 1976'. The plan, which is 'being given active consideration' by the government, is 'to give aid directly to the black population of South Africa.....with funds being allocated for black development educational and social projects in South Africa'. The Times report adds that 'Dr Owen is known to be anxious that everything should be done to cultivate black opinion in South Africa'. Other parts of his plan are a British reading room in Soweto (the United States already has one), visits by British diplomats to detainees, and such like, including increased educational visits to Britain. (10)

### South Africa's Interests in Academic and Technical Co-operation

The 'Muldergate' scandal has revealed that secret funds from the Department of Information were not only used for grandiose projects like the financing of newspapers, but that money has also been used to fund academic research useful to South African propaganda purposes. While Department of Information funds explicitly directed to this purpose may have been small, the propaganda effect; of any academic co-operation, de facto, giving legitimacy to the existing state structures within South Africa, is clear enough. This is especially the case where, (as in the purpose of Prof. Bekker's visit, which was concerned with the training of administrators for Bantustans, these structures are an intrinsic part of the content of the exchanges programme. (The School of Development Studies at UEA, had a similar visit to that proposed for Prof. Bekker, this time not publicised until after it had taken place, of the head of Adult Studies Department of the University of Salisbury, Rhodesia, to discuss adult education in Central Africa). (11)

More obviously, academic co-operation can be in fields of immediate and direct military and economic significance to the South African regime. This has been recognised in the AUT resolution passed at the AUT Council in December 1978, concerning academic co-operation. It states: 'Particular attention should be given to the areas of technology and science where British 'know how' may be used to further research in South African universities leading to the development of South Africa's military and nuclear weapon capacity' (12) This has become particularly significant in the context of the UN arms embargo.

### Action to oppose academic and technical exchanges

There are 2 levels at which academic and technical co-operation can be combatted. The first is by the active opposition of members of institutions to any individual links between



their institutions and South African ones. Here co-ordination between several institutions involved in the same project is extremely important, but effective opposition obviously depends on the availability of information about specific projects, exchanges etc.

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The second level of the more general one on which the principles behind such exchanges are challenged and in which the academic institutions as organisations refuse to co-operate with them. It is for this reason that the AUT has taken up the issue, though at present its position is very weak, calling only for AUT members who intend to undertake academic co-operation 'to discuss the matter with the AUT Head Office'. (13) Similarly the Council of the African Studies Association has sent a note of protest to the Director General of the British Council about the nature of the visitors they have been bringing from South Africa. (14)

Opposition at both these levels is still woefully inadequate. This report has been written in the hope of developing a campaign to publicise and oppose the academic links between Britain and South Africa. The Anti-Apartheid Movement passed a resolution at its last Conference calling on the government to end such exchanges as well as its assistance in the recruitment of academic, educational and scientific personnel for both South Africa and Rhodesia. Any British government is extremely unlikely to implement such a policy and will certainly only do so under considerable pressure. Thus active involvement by academics, students, non-academic staff working in universities and related institutions in a campaign to oppose academic interchanges will have the related benefits of stopping and exposing individual interchanges as well as creating a general situation in which they are regarded as unacceptable.

We would be grateful for any information that anyone may have about academic co-operation of any kind between their institution and the South African government or South African academic institutions. Any reports of campaigns against such co-operation would also be useful. We shall then be able to produce a detailed report of academic and technical co-operation between this country and South Africa which will facilitate the building of a more effective campaign of opposition to it.



NOTES

1. British Council Visitors Proposal Form re J Bekker
2. Some notes on the University of Zululand' IDAF Research
3. Letter from Parliamentary Under Secretary of State,  
foreign and Commonwealth Office to MP 12 October 1978
4. Letter from Controller, Home Division, British Council  
12 Sept, 1978
5. Resolutions of A.C.U. General Meeting held during the  
A.C.U. Conference of Executive Heads of Commonwealth  
Universities in Exeter 26/8/73
6. British Council circular to Vice Chancellors of Britis  
-h Universities 24/8/78
7. Ditto,&: University circulars explaining the inter-  
change schemes circulated in Sept. 1978 at Univ. of  
East Anglia and Southampton Univ.
8. 'The British Council', World of Learning, 1976-77  
Vol. II, p. 1298
9. See no. 3.
10. Times 28/10/78
11. Almanac Dev./O.D.G., U.E.A.
12. Resolution adopted at A.U.T. Council Meeting 16/12/77
13. Ditto.

(2)

(8)

(34)

(20)

(40)

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(16)

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**DRAFT**

BRITISH 'AID' FOR SA'S BLACKS

*ANC OFF  
London*

**A NEW POLICY ?**

A year ago the British Government revealed that it was rethinking its relations with South Africa's blacks in the wake of the Soweto uprising. There was a plan 'to give aid directly to the black population of South Africa... with funds being allocated for black development, educational and social projects'. The government let it be known that it foresaw two possible obstacles, the South African regime and anti-apartheid organizations. <sup>B36</sup>

It is clear now that the plan is fully in line with the regime's own policies and that the anti-apartheid movement needs to mount more effective opposition.

Far from a fundamental change, the new policy is an adjustment, brought about by the events of 1976, to the longstanding collaboration with apartheid. <sup>B2, R34</sup>

In the name of 'promoting rapid, peaceful and fundamental change', it is a policy of continued opposition to the liberation movement, whose experience led to the call for isolation of the apartheid regime and the ending of any relationship which serves to perpetuate the system, whatever its declared aims..

The aid plan was the main proposal produced by a committee set up by the British Ambassador in South Africa in 1978, according to a report in the Times, clearly emanating from the Embassy. After 1976 'it was felt that Britain's diplomatic and commercial relations had been almost exclusively white-oriented and that what little contact there was with blacks was largely with homeland leaders and other establishment figures'. Dr. Owen however was now 'anxious that everything should be done to cultivate black opinion... particularly in the urban areas.' <sup>B36</sup> Clearly, a change in British perceptions of who might wield power in the future demanded an adjustment in whose goodwill was to be cultivated in order to protect British interests in profitable SA.

When ministers are questioned about British Government activities in South Africa, they constantly refer to 'promoting peaceful change'. Similarly, Dr. Owen's political adviser was sent to South Africa and on a visit to



Soweto which, as a newspaper report put it 'coincided with proposals that British aid should be channeled to black people in South Africa... intended to lessen the prospect of racial violence.'<sup>B27</sup> In the South African context these phrases have only one real meaning - opposition to the liberation movement's armed struggle as the only way to destroy apartheid and liberate the

#### THE PLAN EMERGES

Elements of the plan have emerged in the past year. Relations with the bantustans have been preserved, and support for them, despite official government rejection of the bantustan policy. But the British Government has also been giving more attention to urban blacks. In doing so it has been following very similar paths to the regime itself and the big multinationals.

Apart from establishing a British reading room in Soweto - the United States Government already had one -, inviting more blacks to Britain through the Central Office of Information, and encouraging British companies operating in South Africa to give scholarships for blacks to study in Britain,<sup>R36</sup> the expansion in the aid programme has been implemented.

Speaking to the SA Institute of International Affairs in Johannesburg in May this year, the British Ambassador announced the expanded aid programme. He said that R750,000 had been allocated for the year 'to help black education in SA', mostly to be used for teaching English. He said the British Council had been involved in such work for some years, and had given bursaries and scholarships to black and white, and that 'the Council had helped blacks, particularly in the homelands, with teaching aids, English text books and in other ways'.<sup>B18</sup>

#### THE BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council plays a big part in the programme both in the field of language teaching and in education in general. Apart from activities in SA it organises interchange of people between South Africa and Britain, in both directions. There are also courses in Britain for South Africans involved



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in education, supported by British Council scholarships. In these ways the experience and skills in education, as well as knowledge in specific disciplines, are transferred to South Africa and help preserve the system.

#### EXCHANGE

English language teaching is one of the main areas involved. Nine trainee teachers majoring in English at 'black training colleges' in SA came to a training course in English language teaching methods at Leeds University in January this year. All but one were from the bantustans, from Lebowa, Transkei and Kwazulu, and they were the third such group since 1977 going abroad on British Council scholarships <sup>B10</sup>.

'Development' is another major area of activity. One example of what this means is indicated by one British Council sponsored visitor whose trip was frustrated by anti-apartheid opposition. He was a professor at the bantustan University of Zululand and Director of the Institute for Professional Training There, one of whose main functions is to give short training courses to civil servants from the Kwazulu Bantustan. (The university has now set up a Department of Development Studies which is also trying to get involved in visits to Britain) <sup>B14</sup>.

There have been many other visitors from South Africa, and many British academics and educationalists visiting South Africa, some, though not all, sponsored by the British Council. Between them they are able to draw on a very wide range of experience and skills developed in Britain. Several SA psychiatrists came to the conference of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in London in July this year <sup>B34</sup>, only part of very extensive relations and interchange in the medical field - <sup>B65</sup>.

The Government has given a list of academics from Britain whose visits to SA were sponsored by the British Council during 1978/9 <sup>B37</sup> Medicine, education, banking and development economic, and 'race relations' were the fields involved in the most cases. The institutions whose members went include hospitals, universities, the Commission for Racial Equality, the National Institute



of Careers Education Counselling and the ILEA. The visits took the British experts all over South Africa, including the bantustans, to the segregated universities and teacher training colleges, to banks - and in several cases to the Anglo-American corporation. This might seem a strange place for a visit by experts in further and higher education and careers counselling in education.

#### URBAN AID AND THE MULTINATIONALS

The desire to contribute to education and 'community projects' in urban areas is shared by the British Government with both the regime and the big firms in SA. The regime itself has recently allocated central government funds - R10m - for the first time for schools in black townships in 'white areas'.<sup>B47</sup> At the same time it has given the go-ahead for overseas loans from 'friendly organizations' to be used for black education<sup>B42</sup>, and the big multinationals and owners of capital in SA are clearly eager to help the regime out. The Urban Foundation is offering to raise loans overseas in a bid to cut shortage of schools and other training facilities for blacks<sup>B50</sup>. Firms which have already made donations to 'black education' include many well known for the profits they reap through exploiting black workers.<sup>B50</sup> ICI for example has given R1/4m and so has Old Mutual Insurance.<sup>B48</sup> Kodak announced a donation of R130,000 at a shareholders meeting which refused to put an end to supply of Kodak products which could be used for oppressive purposes by the SA regime<sup>B41</sup>. And of course the Anglo-American Corporation<sup>B45</sup> is involved with various donations. It was also the moving force behind the setting up of the Urban Foundation in the wake of the 1976 uprising, with the aim of channelling resources from private firms into 'urban aid' in the hope of buying off further revolt. Amongst its varied work, the raising of private finance for black (that is separate) education is a major part.

#### CULTIVATING A BLACK ELITE

There are two reasons for this shift of emphasis by the regime and the big companies towards more educational provision for blacks in urban areas. One is the need for more trained people. As a recent newspaper article



reported, 'Economists now say that SA's prodigious growth can no longer be sustained without recruiting a high proportion of blacks into skilled occupations'.<sup>B51</sup> This reason is combined with a more political one in a statement by Oppenheimer, Anglo-American Chairman: 'The time has come to co-opt at least some black people into <sup>the national economy.</sup><sup>B51</sup>' (As a token of its good faith Anglo-American is setting up a scheme to train black managers. Anglo-American it seems might have its first black in a managerial position sometime between 1987 and 2000!)<sup>B54</sup>

The 1976 uprising brought home to the rulers of SA that the mass of the people totally rejected apartheid. The response was a combination of increased repression and an attempt to appease and divide the ~~majority~~ oppressed. The Urban Foundation was one aspect of the response of the big companies that depend on the continuation of the system. The response of the regime has included a succession of commissions and new laws to control independent black unions, to tighten up the control of migrant labour and new education legislation. One theme in this increased repression of the majority is special provision for 'urban blacks'. Commenting on the regime's plans for training schemes and apprenticeship programmes for urban workers, Workers Unity summed them up as 'an attempt to create a division within the total black working population by fostering the development of a politically acquiescent section of the oppressed community, a black middle class that will identify with the racist regime rather than struggle for liberation from the entire structure of apartheid'.<sup>B39</sup> Confirmation of this came only weeks ago when Koornhof, Minister of Cooperation and Development called on employers to make a contribution to training more skilled workers. 'Half the skilled workers would have to be added each year by races other than white. Such artisans would be politically and socially more disciplined, more conservative and less radical in their outlook. From these would develop a new type of middle class, Dr. Koornhof said.'<sup>B66</sup>



Such are the hopes and aims of the regime in responding to the rising forces of resistance and liberation, aims shared by the powerful companies and multinationals with their desire to 'improve' education for black people in urban areas. By facilitating the transfer of expertise and experience to South Africa through South African educational institutions and organisations like Anglo-American, the British Government is using organisations like the British Council to contribute to these attempts to preserve the system ~~in~~ with as little change as possible in the face of the people's resistance.

#### RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The rural areas are not neglected in these moves. Although the British Government officially rejects the bantustan policy, aid given by the government finds its way to the bantustans and is used in ways which strengthen the apartheid structures and institutions set up there. This can be seen in the kinds of people sent to Britain for training, in the visits of British academics to bantustan universities, in the South Africans like the Professor from the Univ. of Zululand from the bantustan universities who come to Britain, and it is clear from the statement already cited, by the British Ambassador.

And here too Anglo-American is involved in many ways, including educational projects like the establishment of a technical college in KwaZulu due to be completed in 1981 <sup>B38</sup>.

#### COUNTER-INSURGENCY

The Urban Foundation, despite its aims, also is interested in rural areas. It recently organised a workshop in Durban on 'rural development'. One of the participants was the Officer Commanding of the Natal Command of the South African army <sup>B65B55,59,60</sup>. He stressed 'the need for socio-economic development and 'psychological action' in the border and rural areas to counter insurgency in the country....because of the vital role of the local population in countering insurgency'. He explained the importance of rural development in the regime's defence strategy, and said that ~~the~~ 'the Defence Force is



very much involved in social upliftment programmes in KwaZulu and elsewhere in the Republic and Namibia' - he said 58 SADF people were working in KwaZulu for instance as doctors, agricultural advisers, engineers, mechanics, university lecturers, dentists, vets, legal and financial advisers. The task, he said, involved securing the goodwill, loyalty and co-operation of the local population. 'Where this is not feasible we have to move them out of critical areas and settle them elsewhere

AN ALLIANCE TO PROTECT VESTED INTERESTS

These examples show, as clearly as can be, the extent to which there is a shared strategy between the regime and those controlling the wealth of the country for maintaining the system with minimum change, for 'reform from within' and changing the face of apartheid without changing the essentials.

This is the meaning, in the South African context of 'peaceful change', 'urban aid' and 'rural development'. People in Britain working in education should not let themselves be drawn into this work against the liberation movement, the desperate attempts to cultivate a black elite with a stake in the oppression of the majority of the people, to strengthen the economy and institutions of apartheid, to prevent the people in rural areas from giving their support to the freedom fighters.

#### BOYCOTT AND SOLIDARITY

Whatever their intentions, people who help transfer the experience and skills produced in Britain to the educational system in South Africa in the way that the British Government is using the British Council and other institutions to do, are aiding the forces of oppression and exploitation. At the very least they help legitimise apartheid and make it respectable. If people wish to make their educational and scientific knowledge and skills available to the people of South Africa, whether as individuals or institutions, the way to do is through the liberation movement, which alone has the right to determine the needs of the liberation struggle and how liberation is to be achieved. The liberation movements have their own educational programmes and great need for educational support. They should not be bypassed as the British Government does.

Those who work in the universities, colleges, research centres, educational institutions and government agencies involved, should do all they can in those



places and nationally in their unions and professional organisations, to end participation in links with apartheid South Africa.

*All references re to public records, newspapers etc.*