



## 1. Introduction

White anti-apartheid extra-parliamentary organisation has experienced significant developments in recent years. Gone are the days when it could be cast aside as the domain of a lunatic fringe and its fellow travellers.

Three key developments have occurred in this field which are the subject of this paper.

The first is that the political environment in South Africa, generally, has shifted in such a way as to boost the prominence and impact of these groups. The look of the field has changed as new organisations and interest-groups have joined it.

Secondly, there have been a range of new strategic steps taken by the extra-parliamentary groups in an attempt to relocate them centrally within the body of South African politics. There is a lesser emphasis on fringe politics.

The third, and final, development, flows out of the first two. It is that the extra-parliamentary groups are beginning to assume a key strategic place between the liberal parliamentary opposition and the mass extra-parliamentary movements. This positioning suggests significant strategic possibilities for white extra-parliamentary organisation, although it remains a highly debated issue.

It is not possible for this paper to provide a complete review of the white extra-parliamentary field. Rather it will consider the three key observations made above. Before looking in detail at the trends, the paper will briefly describe the white extra-parliamentary field.

## 2. A Brief Description

The white extra-parliamentary terrain is very diverse with many points of commonality between groups, but also points of difference. The one thing that all of the groups have in common is that they all devote their primary political energies to working outside of the confines of parliament. Almost without exception they seek to be a white anti-apartheid voice and aim to educate and mobilise other whites against apartheid. They provide a political home for many and a link to the black townships and its politics. Points of difference can be seen by looking at the political views of the organisations, their areas of interest and constituency, and the style of their politics:

t Political Views: The basic divide is between those organisations directly affiliated to the UDF, eg. Cape Democrats, UDF, Nusas, and those who aren't, e.g. the Black Sash, Consultative Business Movement. In addition to this basic divide are differences of long-term vision and the means whereby change will come about.

t Areas of Interest: Many organisations are devoted to specific constituencies, e.g. the Black Sash for women, Nusas for students, etc. Others like the Five Freedoms Forum, Jodac and the Cape Democrats see the entire white community as a potential target of their work. Still others, like ECC, have a single issue focus.

# Style: The style and approach of organisations varies from the militance of Nusas to the sober establishment style of the CBH,

The areas of difference are important as they show that not all white extra-parliamentary organisations are of a kind. It is a diverse field and is at times at odds with itself. Despite this, there are generally good relationships between all organisations in this field. A pattern of close cooperation has developed between the groups.

## 2. National Conflict and the White Political Community

The 1980s have seen a major resurgence of popular resistance to the Nationalist government. As a result the mass democratic movement regained its place as the leading force opposed to apartheid after years of rebuilding in the wake of the sixties crackdown. This development has had a significant effect on the white political community, raising the profile of white extra-parliamentary organisations, numbers have increased and more organisations have emerged. Key developments have included:

t UDF Profile: The rise to prominence of the UDF has brought with it a raised profile for white UDF affiliates. The white extra-parliamentary organisations linked to the UDF have become significant as representatives of the mass democratic movement in the white community. They have served to illustrate, in practice, the non-racial character of the movement. These organisations, like Jodac and the Cape Democrats, despite being small in membership, have an impact and significance far beyond the base they represent in white society. They derive their significance and power not so much from their limited membership base, but rather as the representative of the mass democratic movement in the white community. Despite the gains made by these organisations it has become increasingly difficult to bring the leadership of the mass

democratic movement into direct contact with whites. This has mainly been due to the ravaging effect of the State of Emergency on free political activity.

The white UDF organisations have a valuable role to play. There have been factors that have stood in the way of this however. These include the inaccessible and, at times, dogmatic style adopted by them; as well as internal conflict and factionalism which has fortunately become a thing of the past. These organisations have also been severely constrained by repression, leading to a loss of confidence at points.

# White Polarisation: Extra-parliamentary organisation has grown with the increased polarisation of the white community. Resistance and the increasing inability of traditional white institutions, like parliament, to provide solutions has led to the disillusionment of many. The mass democratic movement has come to the fore as a leading force for democracy determining much of the South African political agenda. Many whites have placed an increasing emphasis on the extra-parliamentary field. Perhaps the most dramatic and public instance of this was the departure from parliament of van Zyl Slabbert. His move proved to be a catalyst for many other whites waiting in the wings to follow a similar course of action.

Although confined to a small group of people, such moves represent a significant break with the past. In particular, many whites have distanced themselves from traditional whites-only institutions in order to identify more closely with the black community and its political organisations. This move represents a major break with the pattern of the past where white and black political worlds moved in different spheres. The white extra-parliamentary organisations provide a transitional environment for those whites who no longer wish to operate in the splendid political isolation of whites only politics.

Ironically, a further key factor associated with this development has been a raised awareness in the extra-parliamentary community of the significance of the white House of Assembly. Many of those who have entered the extra-parliamentary field in recent years have brought with them a wealth of experience and knowledge of parliament. Individuals have stressed the need to not distance themselves from the white political parties operating within the House of Assembly. This, together with other factors, has forced extra-parliamentary organisations to place relationships with parliamentary parties on their agendas.

t New Organisations: New interest groups have come to be represented in the extra-parliamentary field, e.g. the business community and increasing numbers of Afrikaners. At the turn of the decade the field consisted of little more than the Black Sash and Nusas. Following the establishment of the UDF came the formation of Jodac and Cape Democrats. A number of organisations have now joined the Sash as extra-parliamentary white organisations outside of the mass democratic movement's fold. The Consultative Business Movement and Idasa are key examples. Others include the Five Freedoms Forum and the Cape Town Open City Campaign. They have added to the texture of the field, breaking its limited ideological constraints. Consequently the white extra-parliamentary terrain can no longer be seen as the domain of the left alone, but extends well beyond it into sectors of the South African establishment.

A range of professional interest-related organisations have also emerged in the eighties, e.g. the Organisation for Appropriate Social Services in South Africa (OASSA), Concerned Social Workers, the National Medical and Dental association (NAMDA). While the membership of these organisations is racially mixed, they involve many whites. In some cases they were established by whites. For purposes of the present paper their significance lies in their providing a political home for those whites who feel more comfortable in them than the official professional bodies, e.g. MASA.

Until very recently the major focus of organisation among Afrikaners has been among students at the Universities of Stellenbosch and Pretoria, and the Rand Afrikaans University. Debate among Afrikaners who identify with the Mass Democratic Movement is ongoing, especially as regards the most appropriate form of organisation to constitute. It appears likely that organisation for this group is soon to be established.

### 3. New Strategies and Approaches

As well as a changing environment for the white extra-parliamentary organisations, there have also been new developments with regard to strategies and approaches to politics. The following are among the key developments.

t Focussing on the White Community: Historically, a key role played by many of the white extra-parliamentary groups has been their close working relationship with black popular organisations. The participation of whites in this way has helped to promote the non-racial idea in the struggle for change. Until about five years ago there was little emphasis placed by white extra-parliamentary organisations, with the exception of Nusas, on trying to work amongst other whites. A significant trend in recent

years has seen considerable energy being applied by the white organisations to political work within the white community. Many lessons have been learned in the process, not least the immense difficulties of making progress in this constituency.

Progress ultimately depends on appropriate strategies being applied. Some of the strategic lessons and developments will now be considered.

t The Limits of Protest: While not departing from it entirely, there has been a gradual move away from protest politics by the white extra-parliamentary groups. In years past protest had been a stock in trade of groups such as the Black Sash, Nusas and other white affiliates of the UDF. A pattern emerged where politics for these organisations often became a succession of government excess followed by an indignant response of protest.

Protest politics of this kind came to be associated with a peripheral group of white radical organisations isolated from the mainstream of white society. Organisations pursuing it came to see it as of limited importance. While providing an important challenge to government, it was a limited one. There were few long-term benefits accruing from this kind of action. It did little to build a base of support beyond a small group of committed supporters. While recognising the need to continue with it, a reassessment of strategies has led to a lesser emphasis on protest. The focus has shifted in the main onto campaigning around single issues and into attempting to forge and consolidate an alliance of all anti-apartheid groups within the white community.

h Single Issue Campaigning: A significant trend has been the emergence of single-issue campaigns, a notable example, extensively considered in this paper, being the now restricted End Conscription Campaign. Campaigns of this nature have served to introduce two key new elements into the politics of the white extra-parliamentary field: the first is the attempt to win Change of a limited nature; and the second is the shift of extra-parliamentary politics beyond the confines of a few left-wing organisations. In the past the idea of winning single Changes was deemed by many in the extra-parliamentary field to be reformist and therefore not worthy of their energy. The adoption of the end conscription call was a departure from this. For the first time ongoing work was being conducted around a single issue. It was soon learned that there were a range of advantages to work of this kind in respect of winning ground among whites, and in terms of building unity among a diversity of white political organisations.

The ECC initiated this approach. Besides Nusas focussing on student concerns, ECC was the first extra-parliamentary group which concertedly took up an issue of direct material concern to the white community. viz., conscription. Focusing on the detrimental effects of apartheid on the black community and presenting the demands of the black majority was previously the main content of politics in this arena. The shift to focussing on a "white issue" was therefore significant.

While having a principle of opposing apartheid, the ECC did not impose on its member organisations a strategic straight-jacket. It allowed for a wide range of organisations with a diversity of anti-apartheid strategies, including parliamentary ones, to be part of it. The only conditions that member organisations had to satisfy was that they were in principle opposed to apartheid and conscription, and that they agreed to forge common strategies for ending conscription. Consequently the ECC developed a close relationship with the PFP, especially its youth wing. This approach broke the mould of much previous extra-parliamentary strategy. Previously many extra-parliamentary organisations had made a point of isolating the liberal opposition in parliament. One of the few notable exceptions was the Black Sash.

Interest groups, such as professional organisations, also became involved in politics for the first time in the single issue alliance.

The adoption of this strategy came after a lengthy debate which led to one or two organisations leaving the alliance. Opposing the institution of parliament and those who participated in it was of greater significance to these organisations than to be part of an alliance against conscription.

In addition to a strategy of building a broad alliance, ECC also discovered that by campaigning around a single issue it was able to come out of the shadows on the periphery of white society. By focussing on an issue of widespread concern to the white community, extra-parliamentary organisations were able to break the fetter of limited support from that community.

h Alliance Building: With the ground broken by ECC, White groups linked to the UDF have increasingly cohe te see the value of co-operating with parliamentary organisations. This has coincided with a new pattern of politics in the mass democratic movement in which the broadest p0551ble unity against the system of apartheid is being sought. Previous taboos have become matters of debate and even

action. Key in this respect is the relationship to the liberal parliamentary opposition.

There is a threefold rationale behind this strategic re-orientation:

(8) to build the broadest possible base of opposition to the Nationalist government;

(b) to have access to a broader constituency than limited forums of the converted;

(c) to encourage greater contact between the mass democratic movement and the white community.

A further advantage of such alliances has been that they are building bridges between groups traditionally divided in South Africa. As well as creating separate race groups, the pattern of South African history has caste distinct political institutions and traditions. Alliances that provide linkages across these divides are to the long term benefit of the country.

A key lesson learnt by the UDF organisations through their involvement in alliances such as Concerned Citizens, Five Freedoms Forum and the Cape Town Open City campaign has been that the Democratic Party and its forerunners have an extensive knowledge of, and real roots in the white community. They are committed to transforming the white racial consciousness and have a key role to play in change. There has been a growing acknowledgement among the white UDF affiliates that the House of Assembly is an institution which, in a real way, is representative of the white community. While it is rejected as racially based and contributing to the system of apartheid, there is the realisation that it cannot simply be written off as unrepresentative in the same way as the House of Delegates and the House of Representatives is. To take work in the white community seriously, it has been learned that the traditions and the institutions of whites have also to be taken seriously. On this basis it has been logical to extend ties to anti-apartheid forces in the white parliament.

There has also been a willingness to work with the business community. Reservations about the role of capitalism in South Africa held by many in the white left has been tempered by the immediate imperative of ending apartheid. This has allowed for a more realistic acceptance of the role of business in society, and its role in change. The business community has been encouraged, consequently, to become part of extra-parliamentary initiatives for change.



With the extension of extra-parliamentary politics into new constituencies, has come a reorientation in the style of the politics. Greater concern has been taken to ensure that the style is appropriate to the audience concerned. A hallmark of the ECG was the resonance it had with many in the white youth constituency. While this was crucially due to its campaigning around a central concern of young people, it was also due to the way it went about it. It adopted an approach which was immersed in white youth culture, 9.3. it incorporated youth clothing, music, events, etc as a central tactic in its work. This came about as much as a result of tactical thinking, as of the fact that it was the organic result of members of the white youth culture getting involved with the organisation and having an effect on it. It should be noted that the attempts at bridge-building have not been trouble free. Despite a growing commitment to co-operation on all sides, significant differences remain between organisations. These include differences regarding economic policy, sanctions, participation in constitutional structures, etc. A focus on issues of common concern, however, allows for joint work to take place.

t Resource and Support Work: A major area of activity for whites in the extra-parliamentary field is that of resource and support work. With increased conflict has come the need for increased support for unrest hit communities. Organisations such as the Black Sash, the various detainees' support groups, as well as groups providing educational and technical assistance have played a vital role in day to day, as well as crisis assistance to the black community. Unrest and detainee support inevitably focusses the attention of participants onto the major targets of repression, notably the mass democratic movement. In many cases such work has had a profoundly politicising effect on those whites who have got involved in it. While not a new area of activity, resource and support work has introduced many whites to extra-parliamentary politics in a very direct and immediate way.

t Inter-racial Encounters: An often repeated and successful strategy has been specially organised encounters between whites and blacks. The well documented Hamelodi Encounters organised by Koinonia, and the events arranged by Idasa stand out in this respect. They have allowed whites to come into contact with blacks with significant political effect. In the mid-eighties the attendance of whites at township unrest funerals served a similar purpose.

t Defiance: With the increased militance of popular politics, so there has been an increase in militancy among certain elements of the white extra-parliamentary community. Therefore, at the same time as there have been

new strategic approaches adopted, acts of defiance and civil disobedience have also come to the fore. Anti-conscription campaigning has seen a considerable amount of this, e.g. the various conscientious objectors who have been imprisoned, the stand taken by 143 conscripts in declaring their refusal to serve in the SADF, and the protest of women against conscription leading to their jailing in 1988. This form of activity has been carried out by a relatively small number of people, but has made an important statement of protest and opposition to government. Actions such as these have received widespread support in the black community and have encouraged the notion of non-racialism as a result.

#### 4. Bridging the Divide

Perhaps the most significant trend to emerge has been the unique place that the white extra-parliamentary groups have found themselves in with respect to the other major anti-apartheid forces, i.e., the Mass Democratic Movement and the Democratic Party.

The nature of the white extra-parliamentary groups is such that they find themselves as a link between these two major actors. They have significant linkages into both the parliamentary and the extra-parliamentary terrains so that they genuinely straddle the divide. This can be seen by looking at relationships to the DP and the MDH separately: Relationship to the Democratic Party: White extra-parliamentary groups have links to the Democratic Party at a number of levels. Non-UDF organisations have historically had links through members also being members of the party and its predecessors. In addition there have been close working relationships between these organisations and the party. Working relationships have also developed between the remaining white extra-parliamentary groups and the liberal opposition parties in recent years. This has been through formal and informal channels of communication. As a result, the dividing line between parliamentary and white extra-parliamentary organisation has in recent years become somewhat blurred. This can be seen in the DP involving itself in joint activities with the extra-parliamentary groups; while the extra-parliamentary organisations have sought out a closer working relationship with the DP and its public representatives.

The divide between the two groups at this stage can be seen to be around the issue of electoral politics, with the extraparliamentary bodies traditionally distancing themselves from this form of activity. The experience of the white municipal election in Johannesburg in 1988 was very significant in this respect, however, in that it marked a key policy shift. During the election campaign the Five Freedoms Forum called on white voters to vote for those

candidates who opposed racial legislation and supported the call for an open city. In effect this was an endorsement of the candidacy of PEP candidates. In addition members of the Forum assisted in canvassing support for the candidates. But at this stage there remains debate about this strategy. There is definitely no possibility of the Extra-parliamentary organisations entering the electoral field.

#### # Relationship to the Mass Democratic Movement:

Many of the white organisations are directly linked to the mass democratic movement as component parts of it, e.g. Jodac, Cape Democrats, Nusas, etc. They involve themselves directly in its activities and campaigns. In addition other organisations, such as the Black Sash, have close working relationships with the MDM.

It is important to note that the state of emergency has reduced the contact between white and black members of the mass democratic movement. Many outside the MDH have argued that the white UDF affiliates are incapable of "delivering" the MDH to other whites. This is a cause of great concern to these white affiliates.

From the above it is clear that the white extra-parliamentary organisations have clear and direct links to both of the key groups. The direct relationship between the DP and the MDM is ongoing, but of a more tenuous nature. The white extra-parliamentary bodies therefore have a key role to play as "middle men". They are clearly well placed to do so.

That they are well placed is one thing. Achieving a catalytic effect is another. Of crucial importance will be to recognise that the extra- and intra-parliamentary groups while having certain things in common, do still have key differences. It would be folly to ignore these.

A task confronting both the HDM and the DP is to seek possibilities for COeOperation. The white extra-parliamentary groups can take on much of the work of encouraging and facilitating this.

#### 5. Conclusion

Organisations such as Jodac, Idasa, CBM, Cape Democrats, the Black Sash, etc., despite holding diverse views amongst themselves, should be seen to be breaking the mould of South African politics. They are departing from the traditions established in colonial times whereby white politics was confined to the formal institutions of power, most notably parliament. They have endorsed the reality of South African politics in which the major locus of political conflict lies on a field removed from the hallowed halls of parliament. At the same time they recognise that the House of Assembly

is a key representative institution for whites and as such needs to be taken seriously. It can not be discarded as irrelevant. As the only organisations straddling this major divide they have a crucial role to play in bringing together those forces in South African society opposed to apartheid and committed to a democratic transformation.