41. Rand Daily Mail, 1980.07.01; 1980.08.01

42. SAIRR Survey, 1981, p 260; Rand Daily Mail, 1981.08.07

43. Star, 1981.07.21

44. Star, 1980.02.25

45. Star, 1983.09.16

46. Star, 1982.04.29

47. Star, 1980.11.13

48. Rand Daily Mail, 1980.11.11

49. Rand Daily Mail, 1980.03.18

50. Sowetan, 1981.09.02

51. Star, 1984.12.06

52. Interview with Mike Beea, Alexandra Civic Association chairman, 1987.07.20

53. Sarakinsky, M: Alexandra: From Freehold to Model Township, Development Studies Group Dissertation Series No 5, University of the Witwatersrand, 1984; p 71

During the build up to the elections the Alexandra Peoples Action Committee accused the Save Alexandra Party of dirty tactics and intimidation. For example Beea and his colleague Trigger Moagi alleged there was a black car combing the township day and night in search of their blood. Even hired killers had been searching for them (Sowetan, 1981.08.10).

54. SAIRR Survey, 1981, p 260

55. Rand Daily Mail, 1981.08.07

56. Star, 1982.04.29; 1982.08.04

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58. Sunday Times, 1983.02.13

59. Financial Mail, 1983.04.29

60. Sowetan, 1982.04.05

61. Sowetan, 1982.04.05

62. Star, 1982.08.04

63. SAIRR Survey, 1982, p 311

64. City Press, 1983.02.13

65. Star, 04.03.1983

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87, Rand Daily Mail, 1983.09.20

88. Star, 1983.09.20

89. Rand Daily Mail, 1983.08.10; 1983.08.18

90. Rand Daily Mail, 1983.09.24

91. Sowetan, 1983.10.07

92. Citizen, 1984.10.03

93. Rand Daily Mail Extra, 1984.11.01

94. Alexandra Chronicle, April/May 1984; p 5

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96. Sowetan, 1984.02.02

97. Sowetan, 1984.02.02

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99. Citizen, 1984.03.31

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109. Information about ARA and Ditshwantsho tas Rona, unless indicated, is drawn from interviews with Jabu Radebe, Jabu Matiko, and informal discussions with Richard Harvey and Mike Sarakinsky in 1987.

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CHAPTER 4: FROM UNGOVERNABILITY TO PEOPLE'S POWER: 1985 - 1986 (1)

The July 1985 state of emergency seemed to fuel rather than crush popular resistance. The emergency initially covered only 36 districts but was later extended to the Western Cape. When it was lifted in March 1986 almost 8 000 people had been detained and over 22 000 charged mainly on public violence offences (2).

The African National Congress (ANC) named 1986 'The Year of Umkhonto we Sizwe' - its military wing. The time was ripe, so it seemed to the ANC, to embark on preparations for a military offensive to put the South African state on the defensive. It proposed incorporating self-organised youth fighters into its guerilla army and creating mass insurrectionary zones (3). But ANC gains, even after two states of emergency, remained primarily diplomatic. Internationally, the organisation was viewed as the legitimate voice of the black community. And numerous pilgrimages from South Africa to Lusaka confirmed a similar attitude inside the country (4).

Calls to make the townships ungovernable had to be translated into different forms of political activity under the emergency. One such response was the consumer boycott. It aimed to pressure white business to use its political influence to extract concessions from the state and weaken the state's support base (5). And it had some effect. By September 1985, prominent

businessmen from Anglo American Corporation, the Premier Group, de Beers Consolidated Mines and subsidiaries of transnational corporations such as General Motors, Coca-Cola and Volkswagen had signed a declaration committing themselves to 'equal opportunity, respect for the individual, freedom of enterprise and freedom of movement' and to playing 'our part in transforming the structures and systems of the country towards fair participation for all' (6).

State of emergency detentions removed experienced activists from the political arena and brought politically-uneducated, radical militants to the fore. Semi-clandestine organisation and hit-and-run forays with police, army and council personnel characterised the new mood (7) which in early 1986 found expression in Alexandra.

4.1 Introducing New Actors

The Alexandra Residents' Association (ARA) had led the struggle against the development programme and rent increases. Its emphases on class analysis as the precondition of political action; on the role of the activist as facilitator rather than line-giver or agitator; and careful, slow, house-by-house organisation made it an exception among most community organisations of the time.

The line between the 'charterists' and 'workerists' was clearly delineated in Alexandra. ARA, the 'workerist' grouping, was not shy to criticise the United Democratic Front (UDF) or its affiliates.

> 'We had no links with the UDF. At the time, we thought it was just a name, not engaged in practical politics as we were' (8).

And in its Bulletin, it publically criticised the Alexandra Youth Congress (AYCO) for being politically ignorant and so untrustworthy, for following meaningless meeting procedure without understanding the principles of democracy (9).

Of course the 'charterists' who belonged to AYCO or the Alexandra Civic Association (ACA) criticised the 'workerists' equally freely. ARA consisted of intellectuals, more concerned with talking than doing; armchair strugglers who criticised from afar. 'Workerists', it was argued, misunderstood the racial nature of South African capitalism and the importance of national as well as class liberation. Without correct political direction localised community struggles led only to reformism.

The Alexandra Action Committee, chaired by Mike Beea, had decided against contesting the 1981 council elections, believing this would now lend credibility to government structures (10). It changed its name to the Alexandra Civic Association.

Beea, a production manager, minister and general secretary of the Ethiopian Church, sees himself as having been the sole driving force behind the civic. Other members of his executive included several teachers, a shebeen queen and king who belonged to the Alexandra Trade Association, a businessman, taxi driver, and 'induna'. Many were disaffected Save Alexandra Party members. They ranged in age from their late 40s to 60s.

ACA appears to have played an important role in a bus boycott in January 1984. But it remained organisationally weak.

> 'House meetings took too long so we relied on distribution of pamphlets and press statements to publicise our campaigns' (11).

Beea alleged the civic had investigated a redevelopment plan of its own, along the lines of the Committee of Ten's blueprint for Soweto. He maintained that long before street committees of 1986 (see below, section 4.3), ACA had devised a plan to divide the township into blocks, streets and yards.

> 'Each street committee would have its own chairman, secretary, and treasurer. These would each have their own committee for township co-ordination. Every family would contribute R2/month, bringing a total of R100 000/month. We would use this to build Alex on our own. We sent feelers out into the community and the reaction was favourable' (12).

This 'preplanning' took eighteen months and was interrupted by the bus boycott and never resumed.

The power behind ACA was the Alexandra Youth Congress established in 1983. The Congress of South African Student's Alexandra branch initiated formation of a youth group, the Alexandra Progressive Youth Organisation. It saw itself as a politically non-affiliated discussion group. Shortly before drafting its constitution, it expelled members who refused to accept an official charterist orientation and renamed itself the Alexandra Youth Congress (13).

ARA and AYCO (possibly with hindsight) were fairly critical of ACA for being 'a name without an organisation'. But AYCO too had its teething problems, and tended to emphasise nationally co-ordinated political campaigns and underplay local grievances (14).

4.2 AYCO rethinks its strategy

AYCO seems to have made a concerted effort from early 1985 to organise and educate its youth constituency. The death of ANC guerilla, Vincent Tshabalala, also spurred some youths to take an interest in politics (15). It held weekly discussions on the

education crisis, township social problems, apartheid and capitalism. The group discussed the role of youth in the struggle and in Alexandra:

> 'We decided that we each had to go back to our street and organise the youth in each street' (16).

A youth activist, or comrade, also had an important role to play conscientising his/her parents:

> 'Many parents are illiterate so we had to explain the situation to them. We had to tell them about exploitation, to join unions and fight for rights at work, how our township had been created by apartheid and how their wages went to white areas' (17).

The entire AYCO executive was arrested in the detention clampdown following the state of emergency in 1985. But the discussion group and preliminary organisation paid off. In August that year, it launched an Anti-Crime campaign. The high crime rate was a long-standing source of rancour among residents. The state of emergency heightened their resentment:

> 'When they declared the state of emergency, the police no longer showed any interest in solving crime. They were only interested in detaining activists. They told people who tried to lay charges at the police station to "Go tell the comrades". But even before the state of emergency they did little about crime, and people did not trust them' (18).

The success of the Anti-Crime Campaign and its widespread popular support is corroborated by a state witness who gave evidence at the Mayekiso treason trial (see chapter 5). The unidentified person said that Alexandra residents thought they had a higher crime rate than any other township and in 1984 and 1985 police often did nothing about crimes reported to them. The Anti-Crime Campaign, he said, had made Alexandra a safer place than before and the community looked on its youth with pride (19).

The campaign's popularity can also be attributed to strict discipline among comrades. They discussed at length how to approach a resident or shebeen owner, explain the campaign, search people and confiscate weapons.

> 'All people agreed to be searched. We confiscated weapons. No-one was fined or punished' (20).

Drinking was also seen as a problem among youth.

> 'We would not allow the youth to drink. They had to understand that they should join the people. They were not forced to join' (21).

Shebeens were asked to close at 9 pm every night.

Further detentions removed remaining practiced activists from the township. By December 1985 an unruly element had begun to take over. These so-called 'com-tsotsis' were new to political activity and relatively uninitiated in principles of political

organisation and disciplined political behavior. If their conduct was roughshod, it was often for the 'right' motives - hence the appellation 'comrade-tsotsi'.

But comrades were still highly critical of heavy-handed behavior in a political campaign. Such behavior, they felt, would not endear them to older, conservative township inhabitants and played into the hands of security forces and hostile media:

> 'These new comrades had no manners and only wanted to do what they wanted. They were working with the system' (22).

When experienced activists were released in December, they immediately tried to reassert control:

> 'We kicked them [undisciplined youths] out of the campaign and by January the campaign was popular again' (23).

AYCO was now aware of the need to channel the groundswell of radical discontent in a positive direction. So activists set about forming youth groups for each of the four sections into which they had divided Alexandra. The groups would boost morale and 'help youth to see they could organise themselves without an exec' (24).

Decentralised organisation would better withstand repression and help bring militant youth under control.

4.3 From Mobilisation to Organisation

The first intimations of further unrest occurred on 12 January 1986, during the state of emergency. A policeman was seriously burnt and three rioters wounded in a series of incidents following a funeral for a riot victim. A mob stoned a casspir, a development board vehicle and petrol bombed a police vehicle. The funeral was attended by over 3 000 people and police bans on processions and speeches were ignored (25).

A group of activists, disillusioned with ACA's lack of political activity and recognising that non-politicised youth had to be controlled, decided to introduce street committees in Alexandra. These committees were a way around the ban on indoor and outdoor meetings and a means, so activists believed, to consolidate politicisation that occurred at funerals.

A series of meetings, one almost every night in every street, began on 2 February 1986 and continued for about a month (26). Youth would sing in the street and go from yard to yard summoning people to a meeting (27).

At one meeting activists explained the rationale behind street committees:

'The purpose of introducing street ... committees in Alex is to Unite the people of Alexandra and to look at peoples problems in order that they be solved. The struggle in Alex is backward, & therfore the street Co. is a step towards conscientising & building unity amongst residents, to fight their problems. Further it is to encourage discipline in our society conscientising people of the struggle. To ensure mass control of the struggle and proper democracy' (28).

Issues such as high rent, the housing shortage, overcrowding, and lack of township development were discussed as local and national problems.

'We started with problems in the yard: only one line for washing, no drains, the bucket system, night soil spilling in the yard and kids getting sick. People tended to blame themselves or their neighbours instead of seeing it as the state's problem. People had to unite and direct their grievances at apartheid' (29).

The basic unit was the yard committee which dealt with residents' daily problems in a politically educative manner. Two representatives from each yard committee constituted the block committee. Four representatives from each block committees sat on a street committee. It was planned that each street committee would elect two representatives to the Alexandra Action Committee (AAC) which would be launched formally in August 1986 (30).

The discussions and attempts at organisation allowed residents to air common frustrations, resentment and anger at the authorities. But the spark that set fire to the township was the funeral of Michael Dirading on 15 February 1986, attended by over 11 000 people.

Dirading was a 19 year old, unemployed youth who had not been involved in political activity. (Only one report stated he was a member of the Alexandra High School Students' Representative Council). He was fatally shot by a security guard in Jazz Stores, Wynberg.

Police used teargas to disperse a handwashing ceremony at the deceased's home and in retaliation, youth took to the streets armed with petrol bombs and dustbin lids. A policeman was burnt. A mob tried to set Buti's house alight. A WRAB beerhall was destroyed. Youths attacked a police vehicle stuck in a roadside trench and were repelled by gunfire. Rumours announced between 12 and 27 dead and 200 wounded (31).

Over the following few days, civil war raged within the township. Youths pitted themselves against the SADF, SAP and township collaborators. Police reported they were fired at by armed residents (32). A woman suspected of being a 'witch' was

burnt on 16 February (33). The houses of police and development board workers were fired at, supermarkets petrolbombed (34), delivery vehicles were warned not to enter the township.

A Sunday Times reporter described Alexandra as resembling

> 'a battle zone as police casspirs nosed through barricades of burning tyres and cars turned over by the rioters' (35).

The police eventually prohibited the press from entering the township.

Frequent targets of popular anger were councillors, West Rand Development Board employees, municipal police and black policemen. Councillor Mashile was shot outside his shop on 17 February (36). The same day, councillors, council and development board employees and police fled the township. About 30 'refugees' were housed in a church with their families (37). Others took refuge in tents in the Alexandra police station yard (38).

On 18 February, residents stayed away from work claiming they had been prevented by youths from leaving the township (39). AYCO called a meeting. Over 30 000 residents packed the local stadium to discuss the past three days' violence. Rumours were rife that 80 people had been killed and 300 wounded. In parliament, Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok, would admit to only 19 dead and 37 wounded (40). The meeting demanded immediate

withdrawal of security forces, release of all people detained and arrested in the past few days, and instant lifting of the state of emergency.

A delegation of church leaders, including Dr Beyers Naude, Bishop Desmond Tutu, Dr Allan Boesak and Bishop Manas Buthelezi, negotiated with police after they were refused entry into the township. That afternoon Tutu and Buthelezi were permitted to enter the township and report back to the stadium crowd.

Police allegedly agreed to maintain a lower profile, stop house searches, and allow residents to visit the mortuary to identify their dead. Tutu promised his delegation would take Alexandra's grievances to the highest authorities. In return he appealed to the crowd to return home peacefully:

> 'We all want freedom, but we must get it in a disciplined manner' (41).

That a meeting could be called so quickly, and be so well attended, indicates widespread anger at police and army intervention and a degree of organisation. (A funeral a month before had drawn only 3 000 people). Yet outside intervention was necessary for negotiation. This suggests that local leaders did not want to expose themselves publically and risk immediate arrest, until ACA organisation was well established. They may

have also believed that leaders with a national and international profile could intercede with police more successfully and end the bloodshed.

By 22 February, the township appeared to have quietened down - the 'Seven Day War' was over.

The proximity of Alexandra to white residential areas fueled white paranoia - they could see and hear the unrest on their doorstep. From mid-February to mid-March, 51 cars travelling near the township were hijacked by youths and later abandoned in the township (42). By mid-April, another 112 cars had been hijacked (43).

A nearby white secondary school was closed at the height of the 'war' due to fears for children's safety (44). Newspapers reported that women and children had been sent out of the area to live with friends and relatives (45).

Factories bordering Alexandra were petrolbombed and on 17 February, workers were were sent home before midday (46).

State reaction was prompt, if contradictory. On the evening of 16 February, the second day of the 'war', SADF troops carrying R-1 semi-automatic rifles and gas masks lined the perimeter roads of Alexandra, creating a barrier between the township and white suburbs (47). Security forces searched the township house by

house to hunt down activists. When fighting subsided, police seized medical records from the Alexandra clinic. These contained details of people treated for gunshot wounds during the riots. The clinic director said he knew of children who were cutting out bullets themselves, rather than coming to the clinic and facing arrest (48).

Police stepped up patrols along the neighbouring roads to counter the hijackings (49) and warned whites not to enter the industrial area near the township unless absolutely necessary (50). Residents were urged to take an interest in combatting crime in the vicinity by joining police reservists (51).

At the same time, the church delegation met Vlok on 21 February and later that day reported back to the township (52). Residents complained that police refused to accept laying of charges and instructed residents to 'go tell the comrades'. At the report back activists called on residents to lay charges at people's courts (53).

A week later government officials also met with a delegation of Alexandra council officials. The council was prompted to offer its condolences to bereaved families and in the next breath stated:

> 'We also sympathise with those who have lost their property in this black epoch of our history' (54).

ANC and South African Communist Party regalia were in full display at a funeral for 17 'war' victims on 5 March and the crowd chants of 'Viva! Oliver Tambo/ Nelson Mandela/ Joe Slovo! Viva!' made their sympathies clear. Even politically conservative journalists commented on the thorough organisation of the funeral (55): marshalls, priests and adult activists controlled the crowd, and young comrades.

Two messages emerged from funeral speeches. Firstly, speaker after speaker repeated that, though comrades were freedom fighters, they had to be disciplined. Calls were made to form yard and street committees (56). The street committees would prepare residents

> 'to forget about our past differences and to prepare ourselves for the future' (57).

Activists believed that street committees would allow residents to overcome ethnic rivalries - machinations of the system - and personal frictions which arose from living in such crowded conditions. Street committees were embryonic forms of future democratic mass government.

Secondly, in public opinion, battle lines had been drawn. Explained one speaker:

> 'An army is supposed to fight a foreign enemy. The South African army is killing our children inside our country. Remember this: it cannot be a people's army that kills the children of the people' (58).

But the overriding message was an urgent desire for self-government and willingness to sacrifice even life to achieve it:

> 'Our people want FREEDOM now. They want to govern themselves and determine the destiny of their country TODAY not TOMORROW. ..They have therefore SHED ALL FEAR OF DEATH because the word TO LIVE has acquired the same meaning as the words TO BE FREE' (59).

A succession of funerals followed and residents became increasingly angry. And for good reasor. Another funeral was planned for 14 dead in the government mortuary of which only five had been identified (60). The funeral had to be postponed after the corpses went missing (61). Twenty-five families had still not found their missing relatives by mid-March (62).

4.3.1 Transformations in local politics

In just one year, the face of popular politics had transformed itself. ARA had rejected councillors and the town council as legitimate community representatives. But it had still been willing to negotiate with the Alexandra Town Council.

This new wave of radical protest, led by youth who aligned themselves with the UDF, superceded ARA in aims and organisation. The days of bargaining with councillors were over:

'The youth are no longer begging. They are tired of trying to negotiate and never being accepted by councillors' (63).

Local government had no credibility and councillors were urged to resign. Across the country, councillors' shops and homes were stoned and petrolbombed. Councillors and municipal police were pariahs in the township.

AYCO and AAC could draw huge crowds to meetings. Perhaps some people were coerced, or attended out of fear, as newspapers and the SABC insisted. But security force brutality generated an upsurge of anger among residents of all ages. In popular opinion the police had crossed the moral boundaries of law and order.

ARA had explained its demands for lower rents and its criticism of the redevelopment of Alexandra in terms of working class interests. It had also maintained that building democratic grassroots organisation was a slow and lengthy process.

The heat of February's battle and widespread support evident at public meetings, led comrades to believe residents were 'ready' for new forms of organisation. Activists intended street committees to play an educative and political role. Discussion would root local grievances in a broad analysis of apartheid and

capitalism, providing the foundation for informed political intervention. Street committees were also a training ground for democratic government.

4.4 From Ungovernability to People's Power

4.4.1 The council collapses

The Alexandra Town Council began crumble (64). In late March Rev Thomas Molepo, Albert Maphala and Darky Rametse resigned (65) followed by Reuben Mashile (66). In mid-April a flurry of resignations completed the council's demise. The Junior Council resigned on 15 April (67). Town clerk, Arthur Magerman resigned on 16 April (68). Rev Sam Buti, Lucas Koza, Harry Makubire and Pastor Patrick Peters finally admitted defeat on 22 April 1986 (69).

Most of the councillors said they had resigned under pressure from friends, family and church congregations. Only the Junior Council mayor alleged that his council members had been threatened by AYCO and the Alexandra Student Congress (ASCO), the successor to banned COSAS (70).

Some of the councillors publically refuted the black local authority system. Mashile now decried the system as unacceptable and said that by serving on the council he had created enemies for himself and his family (71).

Buti was more cagey: his resignation arose from his recognition of national rejection of the system, rather than ATC's own failings:

> 'It was rather a question of people making it difficult for development to take place' (72).

He promised the Save Alexandra Party would continue to liase between residents and the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning. Contrary to popular perceptions, Buti argued that he and his council had never been stooges of the government, but only servants of the people of Alexandra. He had used local authorities as a means to an end, there being no alternative, if Alexandra was to be redeveloped (73).

UDF claimed the council's collapse as 'a victory that belongs to the people of Alex' (74) and promised:

> 'If councillors choose to join the ranks of the democratic movements, the doors are wide open for them' (75).

Rametse maintains he joined the Civic.

A policeman also tendered his resignation from the SAP.

'The community asked me to resign and my parents told me to leave the police force. The job I had been doing for twelve years was hated by everybody. I now want to live with the people and struggle with the people' (76).

He said he had been isolated by friends and relatives and had feared for the lives of himself and his family following death and arson threats (77). He too offered to join ACA.

4.4.2 Rent and consumer boycotts launched

Consumer and rent boycotts were launched on 18 April as part of a programme to isolate all collaborators socially and effect the collapse of local administration. During the first few months of 1986, the UDF had convened meetings of civics where it was decided to use the boycott as a general weapon of protest (78). Compared to ARA's rent boycott demands, these were confrontationary: they were moulded by national political interests while still linked to local grievances arising from the township's redevelopment.

Pamphlets listed demands for affordable rent or the suspension of rent during the recession, an end to removals into undesirable houses, electrification of the township, recovery of missing corpses, dissolution of the council, resignation of police, withdrawal of troops and police from the township, release of Mandela and unbanning of ANC and COSAS. The 'entire apartheid regime' had to be dismantled and replaced by 'a democratic people's government' (79).

The consumer boycott started on 21 April. It focused on fourteen stores which either maltreated their staff, refused to contribute to funeral funds, were known to collaborate with the police and army or were owned by councillors (80). 'Reactionary' newspapers such as the Sowetan and the Citizen were also on the boycott hit list, as were Metal Box products in solidarity with striking workers dismissed from the company the year before.

The campaign also proposed to isolate collaborators socially: personal relationships had to be terminated, residents were to avoid boarding buses with police or councillors or accepting welfare services offered by any collaborator. Councillors who wished to avoid victimisation were invited to a public meeting to explain themselves (81).

Pamphlets were distributed announcing the boycotts and shoppers were monitored by gangs of youth and prevented from entering listed businesses (82). The boycott campaign seemed to provided a final prod for the town council's collapse.

4.4.3 The 'system' strikes back: vigilantes attack

Cordoning off the township, frequent searches and patrols had failed to cool down Alexandra. The state's new tactic was simpler: destroy the leaders and disclaim responsibility by alleging 'black on black violence' as cause and explanation.

On 22 April, vigilantes wearing balaclavas burnt the houses of seven AYCO, ACA and AAC activists and destroyed 13 cars. One ACA executive member was shot and burnt in his house, his girlfriend was beaten and threatened with being burnt (83). Beea and Mayekiso's homes were burnt (84).

Residents claimed that black policemen who had been driven out of their homes in earlier unrest were responsible. Witnesses described the vigilantes as wearing light-blue shirts and dark grey trousers similar to riot police uniforms and alleged that some of the white policemen had blackened their faces. Police vehicles escorted the attackers or did nothing to stop them. Some residents said that the attackers sometimes shouted political slogans and pretended they were comrades (85). SAP promised to investigate the allegations and denied involvement (86).

Decentralised street committee structures with their speedy communications network, now proved their value. The following day, 23 April, a crowd of 7 000 according to police reports and 45 000 according to residents, marched from the local stadium to the police

station to protest against vigilante attacks and police complicity (87). No council staff reported for work (88). A work and school stayaway completed the message of condemnation (89).

Newspapers also reported armed battles between police and youths. The police and army again cordoned off the township and following a house-to-house search, detained three AAC members (90).

4.4.4 Establishing people's power

On 23 April, residents were summoned to the stadium. Speakers called on about 45 000 residents to form 'self defence units to protect ourselves from the agents of the system' (91). AYCO and ASCO called for 'alternative democratic structures on civic matters' to run the township (92).

Newspapers reported that traps for casspirs and buffels were being dug in the dirt roads: 'It seems some kind of community project' (93) and was not just restricted to youths, noted the Sunday Times.

A week later AAC claimed that people's power had been established and that residents could now defend themselves against the police (94). 'We believe we can solve our problems by ourselves' (95).

But the optimism was shortlived. UDF general secretary, Popo Molefe's home was petrolbombed one morning early in May (96). And over 1 670 troops cordoned off the township and set up checkpoints at every exit on 10 May. The police and army now occupied the stadium to prevent further mass meetings (97).

Security forces carried out an unhindered house-to-house search, described as a normal crime prevention campaign. At roadblocks people were frisked and cars were searched. Police handed out pamphlets offering a confidential phone number for tip offs about activists' whereabouts. The pamphlet read:

> 'Are you tired of being harassed? The police need information concerning people who are preventing your children's education, about people who are keeping you from work, about people who stop you to buy where you like. Let us protect you.' (98)

Permission for the funeral of eight victims of vigilante violence was twice refused and then permitted on 18 May (99). Police in a hippo allegedly defaced the graves the following week (100).

Township organisation went underground. AAC was unanimously elected sole representative of Alexandra during a mass meeting of all organisations in the township. The majority of activists at the meeting agreed that ACA should dissolve itself and serve in AAC structures. AYCO and ASCO would continue to organise their

constituencies under the guidance of AAC. ARA activists did not attend the meeting, but ARA was unilaterally disbanded. AAC's slogan was 'One People - One Country; One Township - One Civic'.

Streets and schools were renamed in a symbolic display of popular control over the township. Youths daubed new names on boards and walls despite the intensive SADF patrols. Selbourne Road was baptised ANC street, and Bovet School christened Solomon Mahlangu Higher Primary School. Tambo, Mbeki, Sisulu, Moses Mabhida, Vincent Tshabalala, MK, Steve Biko, Soviet, Mandela, Lusaka, Kathrada, Slovo, Sobukwe, and Bazooka were new street, area, and school names (101).

People's government had its own problems (102). ARA criticised the way street committees had been introduced: politicisation was so low amongst youth that abuses were inevitable and no lasting structures would emerge.

Dissatisfaction also grew among older, apolitical residents who had initially supported the AAC. They began to complain about the power and arrogance of youths and resented being judged or punished by youngsters. They would willingly attend meetings, but disliked being ordered to do so:

> 'We want to run our own affairs, we don't want Buti. We have learnt from these children. It's because of them that we don't carry the dompas, but they cannot tell us what to do. They must fight the boere, not us' (103).

AAC and AYCO were aware of these problems. Domestic problems brought to people's courts were supposed to be dealt with by adult AAC members. It was disrespectful for youths to pass judgement on their elders.

AAC seems to have been particularly successful in preventing divisions among residents and hostel dwellers, the 'insiders' and the 'outsiders'. Comrades made a determined attempt to organise hostel dwellers into hostel committees and incorporate them into township politics. They wanted to avoid bloody clashes between hostel dwellers and township inhabitants that had occurred in 1976 and earlier in 1986 in other townships.

> 'In Alexandra we wanted to prevent divisions between residents and hostel dwellers. They were part of the township but had their own specific problems they could discuss: they could not bring their wives with them, the migrant labour system, high rent for very small rooms, a high rate of divorces. Some of them had children in the township - they could kill their own children if they turned on residents. They had to know to attack the system' (104).

Hostel inhabitants formed their own hostel section committees. They were encouraged to bring their wives and families into the township, and build shacks.

4.5 A Short-Lived Experiment

When the state of emergency was reimposed in June 1986, it marked the end of people's power in Alexandra. Gradually 'law and order' was restored to the township (see chapter 5).

People's power had challenged and facilitated the collapse of local government. Its insurrectionary rhetoric was seen as a direct threat to state security. But born in a violent and repressive political climate, it never had the opportunity to consolidate itself for the future by strengthening political education and building a democratic base.

A discussion paper circulated in the township at the time, portrayed organs of people's power as tools to move from ungovernability to dual power. Though government power had been expelled from Alexandra, an organisation was necessary to imprint the people's will on organising daily life. It defined people's power as

> 'the ability to assert and defend our class interest, against those of other opposing classes. This involves control over every aspect of our lives - at work; at school; where we live; over the structures of local and national government; over the army, police, courts and prisons; the media; the church; financial institutions and the economy as a whole' (105).

Organs of people's power had to take control of importing and distributing foodstuffs and medicines, provision of health care and first aid, organising funerals and mass meetings, organising defence, administration and services, building organisations for particular constituencies, and running people's courts (106).

Local government did appear to have collapsed and left a power vacuum. But this did not mean political terrain was ready for dual power. The central state, with its centralised power structure, still had its military forces firmly behind it and was able to repress township resistance with brute force.

Like the 1976 uprising, the 1986 revolt arose from urban crisis. The rent boycott in particular captured the grievances over housing, high rents, and local government's lack of political legitimacy and financial viability. Tom Boya, Deputy President of the Urban Councils' Association of South Africa, claimed that by April 1986, 32 community councils and three town councils had collapsed completely when rent boycotts made townships ungovernable (107).

The second state of emergency was declared on 12 June 1986 to preempt expected widespread insurrection on 16 June. It gave the state more sweeping powers than before and seemed to be more carefully planned. Security forces swept through townships, the night before the emergency was declared, detaining thousands of

people. Official figures maintained 14 400 had been detained, Detainees Parents Support Committee and South African Race Relations' estimates were closer to 20 000 (108).

The police net stretched from high profile leaders to local grassroots activists and comrades. The highest proportion of detainees were youth and children, constituting 79% of the total (109). In the first eight months of this emergency, security police detained as many people as the total under previous emergencies and security legislation for the past 26 years (110).

President Botha explained the government had decided to take security action to create a situation of

> 'relative normality so that every citizen can perform his daily task in peace, business communities can fulfil their role and the reform programme to which the government has committed itself can be continued' (111).

The following chapter examines the continuation of the reform process, though on terms different to those set out by the Riekert Commission. If in 1976, reform was seen as a precondition for security, by 1986 security was the vehicle of reform. Security and military establishments became central actors in managing the pace and character of reform after the declaration of the second emergency.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Some material for this chapter is drawn from state indictments at current treason trials. It must be emphasised that this information is still a matter of state allegation rather than fact.
2. Webster, D: 'Repression and the State of Emergency' in Southern African Research Service (ed): South African Review Four, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987; p 142
3. Lodge, T: 'The African National Congress after the Kabwe Conference' in Southern African Research Service (ed): South African Review Four, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987; p 6
4. Lodge, T: 'The African National Congress after the Kabwe Conference' in Southern African Research Service (ed): South African Review Four, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987

   Delegations which met with the ANC ranged from churchmen, businessmen to Afrikaans speaking students from Stellenbosch.
5. Obery, I & Jochelson, K: 'Industry and Government: Two Sides of the Same Bloody Coin', Work In Progress 39, October 1985; pp 9-30; Helliker, K; Roux, A; White, R: '"Asithengi" Recent Consumer Boycotts' in Southern African Research Service (ed): South African Review Four, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987; pp 33-52

6. Murray, M: South Africa: Time of Agony, Time of Destiny The Upsurge of Popular Protest, Verso, London, 1987, p 371

7. Ibid, p 373-376

8. Interview with Jabu Matiko, member of ARA, 1987.09.29

9. Alexandra Residents Association Bulletin No 2, February 1985, pp 4-5; Alexandra Residents Association Bulletin No 3, April 1985, p 3

10. Information about the Alexandra Civic Association is drawn from an interview with Mike Beea, chairman of ACA, 1987.07.20

11. Interview with Mike Beea, chairman of ACA, 1987.07.20

12. Interview with Mike Beea, chairman of ACA, 1987.07.20

13. Iswi lase Township, No 6, July/August 1983; pp 13-15

14. Johnson, S: Urban Government and Management in South Africa: The Case of Alexandra Township, A preliminary report for the monitoring unit for the Transvaal, September 1986, p 9

15. Interview with AYCO member, 1987.11.15

16. Interview with AYCO member, 1987.11.15

17. Interview with AYCO member, 1987.11.15

18. Interview with AYCO member, 1987.11.15

19. Star, 1987.11.12

20. Interview with AYCO member, 1987.11.15

21. Interview with AYCO member, 1987.11.15

22. Interview with AYCO member, 1987.11.15

23. Interview with AYCO member, 1987.11.15

24. Interview with AYCO member, 1987.11.15

25. Citizen, 1986.01.13

26. State versus Mayekiso and Four Others, Annexure B, p 17

27. Interview with AAC supporter, 1987.09.28

28. 'Minutes of the Alexandra Residents General Meeting held at Freedom Park 7th Avenue Alexandra 1986/02/05', State versus Mayekiso and Four Others, Annexure B2.2

29. Interview with AAC supporter, 1987.09.27

30. Pamphlet: 'ALEXANDRA MASSACRE: Mass Funeral of the Seventeen Victims in the Alexander Massacre', 1986.03.05

31. City Press, 1986.02.16; Sunday Times, 1986.02.16; Business Day, 1986.02.17; Star, 1986.02.17; Legal Education Centre of the Black Lawyers Association: Dark City: Report on Unrest in Alexandra, October 1986; p 4

32. Citizen, 1986.02.18

33. Sowetan, 1986.02.17

34. Citizen, 1986.02.17

35. Sunday Times, 1986.02.16

36. Sowetan, 1986.02.18

37. Sapa, 1986.02.18

38. Star, 1986.04.04

39. Business Day, 1986.02.18

40. Sapa, 1986.02.18

41. Sapa, 1986.02.18

42. Citizen, 1986.03.14; Star, 1986.03.16

43. Citizen, 1986.04.18

44. Citizen, 1986.02.17

45. unnamed press clipping, 1986.02.18

46. Star, 1986.02.18

47. Sunday Star, 1986.02.17

48. Citizen, 1986.02.23

49. Citizen, 1986.03.14; Star, 1986.03.18

50. Star, 1986.03.18

51. Citizen, 1986.03.19

52. Star, 1986.02.21

53. State versus Ashwell Mxolisa Zwane and Seven Others

54. Sowetan, 1986.02.28

55. see, for example, Ken Owen in Sunday Times, 1986.03.09

56. Albert Sebcla, accused number 6 giving evidence in State versus Ashwell Mxolisa Zwane and 7 others (Star, 1987.11.17)

57. Pamphlet: 'ALEXANDRA MASSACRE: Mass Funeral of the Seventeen Victims in the Alexander Massacre', 1986.03.05

58. Sunday Times, 1986.03.09

59. Pamphlet: 'ALEXANDRA MASSACRE: Mass Funeral of the Seventeen Victims in the Alexander Massacre', 1986.03.05

60. Sowetan, 1986.03.10

61. City Press, 1986.03.23

62. City Press, 1986.03.23

63. Interview with Alexandra Crisis Committee member by Shaun Johnson, Weekly Mail journalist, 1986.05.11. The Alexandra Crisis Committee was formed following the February upheavals to liase between parents and youth.

64. Percy Williams and Leepile Taunyane had already resigned in 1985, the former following conviction under criminal

charges (Sowetan, 1986.04.01)

65. Sowetan, 1986.04.01

66. Star, 1986.03.27

67. Citizen, 1986.04.17

68. Star, 1986.04.16

69. Business Day, 1986.04.23

70. Citizen, 1986.04.17

71. Star, 1986.03.27

72. Business Day, 1986.04.23

73. Sunday Star, 1986.04.06

74. Citizen, 1986.04.23

75. Business Day, 1986.04.23

76. Star, 1986.04.04

77. City Press, 1986.04.06

78. Chaskalson, M; Jochelson, K; Seekings, J: 'Rent Boycotts and the Urban Political Economy' in Southern African Research Service (ed): South African Review Four, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987, p 58

79. Pamphlet: 'Demands of the Rent and Consumer Boycott (Short and Long Terms)', State versus Mayekiso and Four Others, Annexure B6.9, p 51-2

80. Pamphlet: 'Demands of the Rent and Consumer Boycott (Short and Long Terms)', State versus Mayekiso and Four Others, Annexure B6.9, p 51-2; 'Local Consumer Boycott' issued by Alex Consumer Boycott Committee

81. Pamphlet: 'Demands of the Rent and Consumer Boycott (Short and Long Terms)', State versus Mayekiso and Four Others,

Annexure B6.9, p 51-2; see also City Press, 1986.04.20; Sowetan, 1986.04.21; Star, 1986.04.21

82. Citizen, 1986.04.22; Star, 1986.04.22

83. Sunday Star, 1986.04.27

84. City Press, 1986.04.27; Sunday Star, 1986.04.27

85. Sunday Star, 1986.05.27; Weekly Mail, 1986.05.02

86. Star, 1986.04.24

87. Star, 1986.04.23

88. Sowetan, 1986.04.24

89. Star, 1986.04.23; Citizen, 1986.04.24

90. Business Day, 1986.04.23

91. Star, 1986.04.24

92. Sowetan, 1986.04.24

93. Sunday Times, 1986.04.27

94. Citizen, 1986.04.30; Sunday Times, 1986.05.04

95. Sunday Times, 1986.05.04

96. City Press, 1986.05.11

97. City Press, 1986.05.11

98. Sunday Times, 1986.05.11; see also Sunday Star, 1986.05.11; Star, 1986.05.13

99. Sunday Star, 1986.05.18; Sunday Times, 1986.05.18; City Press, 1986.05.18; Sunday Star, 1986.05.18; Star, 1986.05.19

100. City Press, 1986.05.25

101. Sowetan, 1986.05.26

102. see for example: Damoyi, P: 'Dispute in Alexandra: We must ensure houses for all', Work In Progress, 44,

September/October 1986, pp 12-14

103. Johnson, S: op cit, p 11

104. Interview with ACA supporter, 1987.09.27

105. 'Organising for Peoples Power', State versus Ashwell Mxolisa Zwane and Seven Others, Annexure C, p 54

106. 'Organising for Peoples Power', State versus Ashwell Mxolisa Zwane and Seven Others, Annexure C, p 63

107. Murray, M: op cit, p 402

108. Webster, D: op cit, p 149

109. Ibid, p 152

110. Ibid, p 142

111. Citizen, 1986.06.13