

## **BANKING ON DEVELOPMENT: THE DEVELOPMENT BANK OF SOUTHERN AFRICA**

by

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### Introduction

State responses to the enduring organic crisis of the post-Soweto era have been comprehensively documented in recent studies. (Saul and Gelb, 1981; Wolpe, 1983; Moss, 1980; Davies and O'Meara, 1985.) Specifically, this work has served to describe state attempts to restructure fundamentally the existing social formation and class relations in such a way as to restore political stability and, ultimately, to safeguard capitalism in South Africa. The approach, encapsulated in the notion of a "Total Strategy", at its most basic level, envisaged a diffusion of mass struggles and an incorporation of specific strata of the oppressed masses into a new "historical bloc", through a limited restructuring of political and ideological policies. (Davies et al, 1984: 37)

The "Total Strategy" reforms, however, proved incapable either of containing escalating internal resistance or of placating mounting international criticism of apartheid. A deepening economic recession and the inability of legislation based on the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions to relieve the virtual siege of metropolitan centres have necessitated new initiatives to restore the balance of power in favour of the ruling class. The most recent state offensive, thus, has been couched in terms of a regional strategy which, as Cobbett et al describe, is "based on an abandonment of the political and territorial premises of apartheid, though not necessarily of race or ethnicity, and envisages the eventual reincorporation of the bantustans into a single national South African state". (Cobbett et al, 1986: 138)

This, as yet inchoate, policy entails, in addition to a merging and cross-cutting of geographical boundaries, an extensive programme of decentralization (both administrative and economic), constitutional restructuring, and the privatization of functions hitherto performed by the public sector. As Cobbett et al point out, however, since the approach is in an embryonic state, it is still subject to official contestation and debate, and hence to reformulation. Nevertheless, elements of the strategy are evident in the restructuring of local government (cf the Regional Service Councils), the reordering of labour movement and settlement, industrial deconcentration programmes, and, most notably for the purposes of this paper, through the activities of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA).

This paper will seek to outline the origins and changing functions of the DBSA and its role in advancing recent reform initiatives. In that regard, discussion will focus on several issues: the current holding operation of the Bank in the transition to new constitutional forms; the gradualistic "reintegration" of the bantustans into the South African political economy; the functional role of the DBSA in reorientating the ideological discourse of the ruling class and the promotion of a more depoliticized and technocratic social order.

### The Origins of the DBSA

The establishment of a development bank for Southern Africa was officially mooted at the "Carlton Conference" in November 1979. At that juncture, the proposed bank was projected as a key element in the "Total Strategy" programme. In particular, it

was viewed as a focal point for the mobilization of the resources of the state and capital in resisting the "total onslaught" on capitalism. In this role, it would facilitate a programme of accelerated economic development in the region and would act as an important institutional mechanism in the establishment of a "Constellation of Southern African States".

The creation of a constellation of states was intended to fulfil a number of objectives. In addition to forging an alliance of "moderate states" (most notably Zimbabwe, Malawi, and the BLS countries) to forestall the spread of "Marxism" in the region, the constellation was intended to strengthen economic links (and hence dependency) between South Africa and its neighbours. This was to be achieved through co-operation in joint infrastructural projects and by means of financial aid to be channelled through a Southern African Development Bank (Davies and O'Meara, 1985: 190-97). As members, the Constellation would serve also to legitimate the bantustans internationally by drawing them into an association with independent black states.

The Bank's role in the Constellation of States was not to materialize, however. The constellation initiative collapsed, first with the defeat of Muzorewa (an assumed adherent of the concept) in the Zimbabwean independence elections, and subsequently with the formation of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADDC) in April 1980. SADDC, in particular, defined its principal objective as a reduction of dependence on South Africa. To that end, a multilateral development programme was formulated to finance much of the infrastructural development that had been envisaged for Bank funding. (Davies and O'Meara, 1985)

The failure to realize the Constellation of States not only slowed the momentum to establish the Bank formally (it only became operational four years after the Carlton Conference) but also necessitated a shift in its area of influence. Thus, while the articles of agreement of the DBSA allow that membership will "be open to other independent states in Southern Africa" (DBSA, 1985, Article 2b), the area of operation has been retracted to the so-called Southern African Development Area (SADA), constituting South Africa and the ten "dependent" and "independent" bantustans. The Nkomati accord and the coup in Lesotho have, in the interim, rekindled the hope of international involvement, but nevertheless it "remains the policy not to press the extension of the Bank's activities to such states prematurely ... while waiting for more opportune circumstances in which more active co-operation can be pursued (Brand, 1985: 6).

#### Reformulation of Reform

The failure to implement "Total Strategy" reforms as initially conceived necessitated a number of programmatic adjustments in State policy. Most obviously, it became apparent that existing administrative measures to contain Black opposition were proving inadequate and alternative formative action was required. During the early 1980s, therefore, a number of major policy shifts were initiated under the "adapt or die" slogan. These included the new constitutional dispensation and the formulations of the Good Hope Conference of November 1981.

The Good Hope Conference marked the formalization of a regional development strategy for South Africa, first proposed in the National Physical Development Plan of 1975. More importantly, it signified a rethink of state policy vis-a-vis the bantustans. The inability of the independent bantustans to achieve anything approaching self-sustaining growth had become increasingly apparent in the five years since the Transkei had attained its independence. In addition, the changing nature of the South African labour market (towards greater automation) placed increasing strains on the bantustans, which proved incapable of absorbing either new or retrenched workers. This, in turn, was proving financially (in terms of aid) and politically (in terms of growing urban unemployment) costly to the state.

The recognition that the bantustans could function neither solely as labour reserves nor as self-contained states marked a departure from earlier apartheid thinking. The division of South Africa into eight National Development

Areas (NDAs) spanning regional and homeland boundaries was thus, in effect, a tacit acknowledgement that the concept of independent bantustans was unworkable. It is of significance, moreover, that the notion of a "confederation of states", tabled at the Conference, in actuality opened the possibility of a future progression towards a federal, or even a unitary, state. Speaking at a summit meeting of bantustan leaders some four months later, P W Botha was to state that confederal agreements "need not be restricted to economic matters, but could be applied to every matter of mutual interest. The essence is co-operation through consensus" (RSA, 1985: 212).

The Good Hope proposals envisaged a key role for the DBSA in the advancement of regional development. This objective was subsequently enshrined in the Bank's articles of agreement (DBSA, 1985 a: 1, ii) and it is continually reaffirmed that the DBSA "has the responsibility of promoting and supporting projects that will have an optimal impact on balanced regional development" (DBSA, 1985 b: 12). However, while the Bank is principally portrayed as the financial vehicle of decentralization, it nevertheless serves to perform a number of other unofficial functions. Most prominently, it acts to legitimate still existing apartheid policies by seeming to distance the state financially and politically from the bantustans. This, as will be seen subsequently, entails a number of contradictory objectives.

#### Towards a Technocratic Order

Whilst the South African social formation could not be construed to be late capitalistic in nature, it is noteworthy that state responses to mass opposition increasingly reflect many of the strategies of crisis legitimation documented by Habermas (1973) and others in advanced capitalist countries. The maintenance of apartheid in the '60s and '70s, for example, necessitated increasing levels of state intervention in the social and economic order, which in turn necessitated the expansion of bureaucratic structures to fulfil its increasingly diversified roles. Not only did this process place considerable strain on the state budget but it effectively politicized most spheres of daily life. This, in turn, stimulated ever greater demands on the state for popular participation, the provision of services, etc, in that "the 'hand of the state' is more visible and intelligible than the 'invisible hand' of the market". (Held, 1983: 103)

The state response to this "legitimation crisis" has been twofold. In the first instance, it has sought to mystify the processes of control by fostering a technocratic justification of the social order; practical issues are thus defined as technical problems and state policies are depicted as technically rational strategies, devoid of substantive political or ideological doctrine. In the second, it has promoted a return to a "laissez faire" economy, a move which "logically entails a diminution of the state; its withdrawal from certain activities, and their exposure to the just and more efficient regimen of the market" (Mann, 1986: 78). Both approaches seek to depoliticize what has come to seem as the "development domain" (the socio-economic development of Africans), and both are most clearly reflected in the policies and practices of the DBSA.

Despite indications that current state thinking includes the possibility of full or partial reintegration of the bantustans, the glacial momentum (Cobbett et al, 1986) of existing apartheid policy is such that it is not easily checked or redirected. The DBSA thus finds itself in a contradictory position: not only must it pave the way for future constitutional changes (via an accelerated programme of regional development) but it must also perform a holding operation, legitimating the status quo until such time as more extensive reforms can be effectuated. It does so in several ways, by reinforcing the notion of independent bantustans, by diminution of the role of the state in the development process, and by projecting its own image as an international development bank.

The rituals of sovereignty and multilateralism have been played out since the inception of the Bank, and reference is continually to "consensus" and "co-operation" in describing policy directives. The Bank, moreover, is at pains to stress that its role is an advisory one "vis-a-vis the governments and official development agencies which have the primary responsibility for initiating and

implementing development projects" and that it "does not assume the role of these entities" (DBSA, 1984: 7). The Bank, which is modelled "on the same lines as the World Bank" (RSA, 1985: 211), thus endeavours to pursue its undertakings "with due attention to considerations of economy, efficiency and the stimulation of domestic production and without regard to political or other non-economic influences or considerations" (DBSA, 1985a: 9e).

Despite claims that the "DBSA is not involved in politics or policy-making, but in the practical aspects of development" (Van der Kooy, 1984: 4), it is, needless to say, in every respect a political creation. Most obviously, it has taken over a major portion of the liabilities and responsibilities of the government Corporation for Economic Development (CED), which was hitherto responsible (in conjunction with corporations in the homelands) for stimulating and financing development in the bantustans. Perhaps more importantly, however, it has taken over the funding responsibilities of the Department of Foreign Affairs, initiating a shift from budget aid to project aid in the form of loans. The significance of this shift is that the state is now in a position to claim that the independent bantustans are no more dependent than, for example, the BLS countries, since they acquire their revenue primarily from Customs Union Compensations and from loan capital raised from an autonomous financial institution.

#### The Privatization of Development

A major thrust of the present reform programme, as intimated, has been a move towards increased privatization of public sector activities. The appeals of both the Carlton and Good Hope conferences were, in particular, for increasing private-sector involvement in the development of the bantustans. Hitherto, in addition to locational disadvantages, commercial and industrial investment in these regions had been constrained, first, by the "border industry" programmes and, subsequently, by the rigid controls of the agency system. Development and the funding of development, inasmuch as they existed at all, were the sole prerogative of the state. The new initiative represents an attempt to shift responsibility and, in effect, holds the promise that the state could be removed entirely from the "scene of the crime". The DBSA is seen as instrumental in this process, not only in supporting private-sector ventures but also in legitimating the policy as a "natural" redress of the shortcomings of previous development models:

Until recently the development of less-developed areas in the region tended to be approached in terms of a model which made it primarily a government function, in contrast to the significant role accorded to private initiative in the advanced sectors of the Southern African economy. One of the main tasks the DBSA has set itself is the mobilization of private sector participation in the development process. It strives to achieve this through the creation of the necessary development infrastructure, by abstaining from providing finance if in its opinion such finance is available from private sources on terms which are reasonable for the recipient ... and by identifying opportunities in the less-developed areas for specific involvement of private interests. (DBSA, 1985b: 17)

Not only has the DBSA assumed responsibility for the funding of previously concluded loan agreements of the CED and the Department of Foreign Affairs, it is increasingly becoming the sole point of financial contact between the bantustans and Pretoria. The economic growth of these regions is thus increasingly moderated and controlled by technical criteria and ultimately by considerations of whether projects "can be regarded as 'bankable' ... in terms of DBSA policy guidelines" (DBSA, 1984: 12).

With the establishment of a development bank, it was hoped that the interests of the state and capital would coalesce. This was especially so in view of the fact that fractions of capital had long been agitating for reforms and, in

particular, an economically more realistic policy with respect to the bantustans. It was logical that, in the attempts to forge an alliance with capital, leading figures in finance, mining and industry should be appointed to the DBSA board of directors. The Council of Governors, the ultimate controlling body, not surprisingly remains dominated by present and former ministers of state. At the same time, while the initial share capital of the Bank was provided by the state and to a lesser extent by the bantustan governments (themselves largely funded by Pretoria), it was always the intention that funding would be sought from local and foreign capital markets. While it is perhaps too soon to evaluate overtures in that direction, it is evident that the Bank is still operating almost exclusively (73%) on share capital provided by the South African government.

At the operational level, the central role of the private sector has always been implicit in the Bank's philosophy:

The private sector should really be the vehicle for development and a government should create a climate in which the private sector can operate (Van der Kooy, 1985: 53)

Thus far, the major orientation of the privatization initiative in the bantustans has been towards industrial decentralization. In this, the Bank has merely followed development patterns set in motion by the border industries programme and bolstered by the declarations of the Good Hope conference. The implementation of the industrial decentralization policy has hinged on the disbursement of a costly range of incentives to investors, including tax holidays, preferential transport tariffs, subsidized energy bills, etc. While the state, through the bantustan governments, has assumed responsibility for payment of these incentives, the DBSA has become increasingly involved in the funding of supportive infrastructure. (DBSA, 1985: 31-33).

The shortcomings of the industrial decentralization programme have been extensively documented elsewhere (Dewar et al, 1985) and indicate that its impact on the development of the bantustans (and in particular its role in job creation) has been minimal. For example, the political misgivings of would-be industrialists aside, it has proven extremely difficult to overcome their prejudices with regard to relocation in economically peripheral regions. As a consequence, of those enterprises that have relocated in the bantustans, many have done so for short-term gain and profit solely from the exploitation of available incentives. In possible recognition of this fact, the Bank is displaying an increasing interest in the promotion of small business development in the bantustans.

Notwithstanding this partial redirection, however, the policy of privatization has, to date, proved largely unsuccessful, and the annual report of the DBSA for 1984/85 was to lament

As far as the private sector involvement is concerned, it became apparent that in addition to advising participating governments on steps to encourage and facilitate private sector involvement, there is also a clearly apparent need to change a persistent perception on the part of the private sector that development in the TBVC countries and the self governing national states is essentially a public sector responsibility. (DBSA, 1985: 5)

#### Control and Redirection

The role of the DBSA, according to its terms of reference, is principally (financially) supportive and (technically) advisory. Despite these claims, it is nevertheless certain that the Bank is performing an increasingly regulatory function in its dealings with the bantustans. The reasons for this are several: as a creation of the state, it "must pursue objectives derived from those of participating governments" (Brand, 1984 b: 85), that is, it must operate within the

overall framework of existing government policy. At the same time, since it is purportedly an autonomous funding agency, it is optimally situated to oversee the implementation of development programmes which cohere with that policy. In that regard the present regionalization strategy would seem to dictate that the bantustans should become economically more viable, at least in their capacity to absorb existing and future work-seekers. This would appear to imply a greater commitment on the part of the state to promote development in these regions. Linked to this, and perhaps of greater importance, however, has been an enduring fiscal crisis which has placed considerable pressure (via opposition parties) on the state, to ensure that funds allocated to the bantustans are expended judiciously and that the extravagances of earlier prestige projects are averted.

The principal mechanism by which the DBSA is able to influence the course of development is by its insistence on strict adherence to a project cycle system as a prerequisite to the funding of any project. Through this process, an application for funding is appraised according to its suitability and, subsequently, its priority in terms of the development strategy of a particular region. If funding is approved, implementation is closely monitored and "in certain instances DBSA approval must be obtained" (DBSA, 1984: 13) before implementing agencies may proceed. Thus, whereas in the past recourse was always to Pretoria to finance the development needs of the bantustans, under the existing system projects which fail to comply with the stipulations of the project cycle are simply not funded:

(T)he capacity of participating states to identify, prepare and implement projects, and the initial lack of familiarity with the Bank's requirements and procedures, turned out to be significant constraints in many instances. (DBSA, 1985 B: 5)

As a consequence of this, there is considerable pressure on bantustan administrations to adhere closely to the procedures of the Bank, and in particular to its prioritization of development needs:

The Bank must always keep in mind that it was established not simply to dish out money but to help ensure that the best possible use is made of the available resources. For example, it should occur that a specific client submits a project for development of industrial infrastructure on a scale which outstrips the need for such facilities in that specific area. The Bank's approach must be to give advice to that effect, but also to suggest more realistic alternatives - either more modest industrial facilities that would have a better chance of being fully utilized, or even a project in some other sector, such as agriculture, that might meet the same objectives in terms of employment and income generation. (Van der Kooy, 1985: 78)

An added inducement to comply, moreover, is the fact that individual bantustans must compete against each other for the financial support of the Bank - the most compliant being those most likely to receive ready funding. At the same time, while it is indisputable that many of the "constraints" to the funding of the projects in the bantustans relate to administrative inability, it is also evident that the Bank's assistance in redressing these shortcomings will be directed towards the moulding of these administrations into more amenable forms, as is apparent from the following statement from a Bank report:

It is therefore clear that the Bank will have to assist participating states more actively in developing the capacity of their development agencies to handle the project cycle activities efficiently and effectively. (DBSA, 1985 b: 5)

At a macro level, the DBSA would appear to be poised to perform a central role in the implementation of a regional development strategy. Not only does it have observer status on the Regional Development Advisory Committees (RDACs), but it is also instrumental in efforts to plan development according to "rational" rather than political boundaries:

Previously, economic planning was done according to economically unrealistic political borders. According to the new policy, planning would be carried out according to functional economic regions based on considerations of the economic structure within specific regions of Southern Africa. (Van der Kooy, 1985: 52)

Instances of this approach are evident in the proposed Queenstown/Ezibeleni/Ilinge structure plan - which traverses the Transkei/South Africa border - the Lebowa/Groblersdal joint water scheme, and the Lower Fish River Irrigation Project. Whilst it is still too soon to predict the outcome of this approach, it will inevitably facilitate a move towards confederation at the least. The piecemeal nature of this process, it would appear, is intended to avoid a direct challenge to the "sovereignty" of the independent bantustans (in particular) and, further, will avoid the prospect of alienating the support of their rulers. The marketing of reform, under the rubric of "development", is thus emerging as an important sphere of the Bank's activities.

#### Reorientation of the Ideological Discourse

Since the onset of the "Total Strategy" offensive in the late 1970s, the state has embarked on an extensive programme of legitimation, in its attempts to justify the restructuring of apartheid. In this endeavour, its efforts have been directed towards a reorientation of the ideological discourse of both the dominant class and the incipient Black bourgeoisie (the bantustan elite and the so-called "Black middle class"). This attempt to restore confidence amongst its adherents would seem to stem from the fact that, although the state and dominant class (or alliance of classes) share a broad interest in maintaining dominance over subordinate classes, the state has had (in response to crisis) to enforce concessions to subordinate class demands, at the apparent expense of the dominant class. The maintenance of cohesion amongst the ranks of the dominant classes in such a circumstance could, as Skocpol has pointed out, be construed as being of paramount importance to the survival of any state:

(W)hat matters most is always the support or acquiescence not of the popular majority of society, but of the politically powerful and mobilised groups, invariably including the regimes own cadres. Loss of legitimacy, especially among these crucial groups, tends to ensue with a vengeance if and when ... the state fails consistently to cope with existing tasks, or proves unable to cope with new tasks suddenly thrust upon it by crisis circumstances. (Skocpol, 1979: 32)

Attempts to redefine the ideological discourse of the ruling class have taken various forms, but mostly have striven to redirect cognitive orientations away from the avowed racism of "classical apartheid" towards a conception of co-existence, co-operation and a common destiny. In this process, the issue of Black (and especially African) economic development has assumed increasing importance.

Prior to the advent of the "Total Strategy" reforms, the generic term "development" did not, *per se*, exist in official state lexicons. Up until that time, the socio-economic advancement of African people had been defined in terms of "bantustan development", "separate development", "plural development", etc. Since then, however, there has been a concerted effort on the part of state ideologues, liberal

academics and others to generate an indigenous "development" discourse within South Africa (Tapscott and Haines, 1983). The DBSA, from its inception, has been instrumental in this process. As Dr S S Brand, chief executive of the Bank, affirms, "it is one of the responsibilities of the Bank to stimulate development research, and specifically applied development research relevant to Southern Africa". (Brand, 1984: 1)

The DBSA, having taken over the functions and much of the staff of the parastatal Bureau for Economic Research re Black Development (BENSO), hitherto virtually the sole source of official data on the bantustans, has become a focal point for the propagation of "development thinking". Indicative of this has been its logistical support of the Development Society of Southern Africa, which emerged shortly after the commencement of Bank activities. The DBSA's journal, Development Southern Africa, has, for example, become the society's official journal.

The Development Society, which has become perhaps the leading purveyor of "development thinking", is explicit in its intent to foster "understanding and co-operation" and to reorientate public opinion, as is evident in its constitutional objectives.

To encourage, facilitate and support the creation and maintenance at the local, regional, national and international level of a framework within which individuals and organisations can debate development in the Southern African region. To promote dialogue, understanding and co-operation between all individuals and organisations committed to the development of everyone in the direction of greater justice and well-being for all. To advance knowledge on the science, processes and art of development through educational means including the stimulation of research, publications and discussion and with full recognition of the multi-dimensionality of development. To stimulate an awareness of the challenge of development among the public at large and decision makers at all levels. (Development Society, 1985)

As in other dimensions of the Bank's activities, it would appear to be performing a dual function in promoting the development "debate". On the one hand, it is attempting, if not to justify, then at least to explain the apartheid policies that have preceded the present era of "development" and reform; on the other, it is attempting to prepare the ground for future policy changes. The present regionalization strategy is thus being presented as a corrective to the distortions arising from earlier programmes of economic growth, i.e. the modernization approach. Imbalances in the South African political economy are thus depicted as consequences of the dualism inherent in modernization. J A Lombard, at one time chief executive designate of the Bank, epitomizes this perspective:

(T)he 1980's will probably have to deviate very substantially from the growth scenario of the 1960's. I think it may be accepted as a working hypothesis that the economic dualism of the South African social structure is, by almost general consensus, being phased out as expeditiously as may be done - considering all the strong traditional and statutory barriers upholding this dualism means that South Africa is moving towards a situation in which all South Africans can participate more fully in its economic processes. (Lombard, 1983: 228)

The political and essentially technocratic nature of "development" is stressed throughout the DBSA's publications. It is evident, nevertheless, that this stance is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain: S S Brand, the Bank's chief executive, has, for example, on several occasions in recent months publicly

questioned the "representativeness and legitimacy of national states governments" (Brand, 1948b: 95). Such a viewpoint is unlikely to be received favourably by bantustan leaders, and it is probable that the Bank will need to step up its efforts to encourage this elite to forgo a greater measure of its autonomy (via regionalization) in the interests of its longer term survival. In this process, the need for structural change will continue to be presented as a functionally rational response to impersonal economic forces.

### Conclusion

The findings of this paper are of a preliminary nature and more extensive research is clearly indicated. Thus, for example, in locating the DBSA within the reform programme (and in particular as part of a regionalization strategy), it has not been the intention, heuristic imperatives aside, to project a purely functionalist image of the Bank, nor to suggest that its policies and actions are in every instance purposive or directed towards a concerted goal. The agenda of the DBSA, it is certain, is constantly mediated by a complex array of factors, including the changing political order, the state of the economy, and the contestation of Bank policy among constituent members and, not least, among members of the Bank's own staff.

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