

~~FROM VERG~~

FROM VERULAM TO X - AN OVERVIEW OF JOHANNESBURG ECC '85 TO '87

Joburg hurtled into 1986 on the wave of Forces' Favourites (the record), 3 newly fledged subgroups\* and an increasingly receptive public. We were well established as a non-student organisation, and began to lose our front nature as the subgroups expanded. We increased our momentum of constant public exposure - media tables herethereeverywhere, peace ribbon painting in shopping centres, weekly poster blitzes. The Working For a Just Peace campaign culminated in a city hall meeting of over 1000 (and Philip's arrest). There was an internal hype as well, with well attended weekly GB's.

Heady days. Our plans for a July call-up campaign were advanced by June 12.

STATE OF EMERGENCY

The priority was to keep the organisation together, and this we did well. We may have lost potential members, but we lost very few active members. We soon launched an internal education programme (starting with a history of resistance to apartheid) which ran for months, well attended. Soon we were centrally involved in the Right To Know campaign with other white organisations (building on the Concerned Citizens of '85 and heading towards the 5 Freedoms Forum of '87) We proceeded with the Yellow Ribbon campaign, putting ourselves back on the map. With new confidence we started the diary and headed for the Cape Town festival.

The effects of the December raid and detentions cannot be underestimated: we began '87 cautiously and with a search for new methods of work which would withstand waves of repression. We were hoping pleez that the POW exhibition just wouldn't be banned, and were overwhelmed by the turnout of 800 people at the opening, totally unprepared for follow up.

The idea of a Membership Drive was developed by the new Contact group: we would accommodate our thousands of supporters as associate members, thus establishing our support formally and giving our supporters a feeling of being part of ECC. Contact with associates would be maintained with newsletters housemeetings and peace-projects aimed at people who would consider involvement on an ad-hoc basis rather than day to day subgroup activities. We would continue with our public work as best we could, but at least this method would be ongoing when others werent viable. We employed a part time worker to take care of the bureaucracy.

\*Churches, education and media-culture (which bifurcated ~~xxxx~~ later in the year)

2/ together with the membership drive (which started as a suburbs pamphlet blitz) we began WINSKAJP (sp?); as the vagueness of the latter became clear, we turned the rest of the campaign into the membership drive.

Because of the reluctance to 'risk' GB's, 87 was marked by each sub group operating as an entity on its own, rather than being part of one cohesive ECC. Mid-year restructuring (to adapt to the new style of work) did little to alleviate this problem, and the Contact group (and the membership drive) lost impetus.

However we had several successes with old style activities during the last months of 87. We maintained our reputation in cultural circles with concert, book launch, Namibia Day photo exhibition and the fair. And a Star front page colour pic of the peace project. The Angola and Ivan meetings were poorly attended. Bad advertising?

STRUCTURES End of 86 we started a coordinators group (reps from each subgroup and exec liason) to deal with the nitty gritty coordination, relieving the exec of this task. By mid 87 it was clear that this group was more an events advertising forum, with little cohesive forward planning or conceptual discussion. This group was reintegrated into a larger exec at restructuring.

EDUCATION Are we meeting the education needs of our organisation? Perhaps the nature of ECC's work lends itself more to creativity than analysis. How do we make sure that our activists develop a creative analysis of our work? Half our members have joined since the SoE and have not had that face to face public contact which has been glaringly obvious in the few house meetings we have run. We are not in touch with our constituency. We have had education forums (JMC's, the conscript Angola) and skills workshops geared towards the needs of the sub groups (house meetings roleplay, media skills)

86/87 has seen an almost total turnover in leadership.

RECRUITMENT Not consistent, not built into campaigns thoroughly enough, interested people often not contacted. A task for the contact group. A revival of the membership drive planned and the possibility of opening an office being investigated.

THE CONSCRIPT Much enthusiasm for the new focus after a couple of workshops. We identified the broadness of our '87 message as too vague, and so we're keen to "Peace right off" and focus more tightly on conscription itself. A group of conscript members produced the Know your Rights booklet (legal loopholes still need work) and could be the beginnings of a conscripts group in ECC, working with a broad non-ECC conscripts group. A church service for the callup was indicative of the potential there. One thing about Jhb and CO: we have very poor links with the local CO's.

PS: Highlight of '87 - the Dancing Person steps right off the T-shirt into the crowds with a catchy message ( and will be rapping his way through conference)

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**END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)**

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