

MA Dissertation: Research ProposalTITLE

Liberals and Resistance Politics after Sharpeville: the "African Resistance Movement" as a problem in Political Subjectivity.

INTRODUCTION:

The National Committee for Liberation, or, as it came to be more widely known, the African Resistance Movement, was an organisation consisting mostly of Liberals who, in 1961, abandoned peaceful, non-violent methods of struggle and went over to sabotage. This development, and the manner of the organisation's demise constituted a trauma for the South African Liberal community. Many see its career as a betrayal of liberal principles; but its members, paradoxically, saw themselves as acting out Liberal ideals. Yet until today there has been no serious academic attempt to understand the NCL/ARM's career, or to draw out its political meaning for the South African struggle. The purpose of my dissertation is to try and attempt this by narrating the career of this ill-fated organisation and attempting to explain why it took the path it did.

AREAS OF STUDY:

In order to explain the career of the NCL/ARM, I shall have to deal with the following areas:

- (1) The economic, social and political setting;
- (2) The main outlines of Liberal discourse as it existed in the sixties;
- (3) The foundation, career, and demise of the NCL/ARM;
- (4) An explanation of the process by which the members NCL/ARM became radicalised, and why they followed the path they did.

The latter part will constitute the centre of my project, and it is here that my most important methodological problems develop.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to come to terms with the NCL/ARM's career I shall have to rethink the complex process by which men and women take it upon themselves to act in history. My first methodological imperative will therefore be to rethink vague terms like mobilisation and radicalisation in ways which permit us describe the specific logic by which these occur.

In order to do this, I will make extensive use of the sophisticated and powerful theories of subjectivity developed in recent years by post-structuralist thinkers. These theories allow us to trace in great detail the complexities of the process by which people abandon one political "subject-position" and take up another. The thought of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault will form an important backdrop here, but I will focus most sharply on the contributions of Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser and Michel Pêcheux, and their subsequent development by thinkers such as Stephen Heath and Colin MacCabe. These theoretical tools, felicitously, can be used in conjunction with interviewing strategies developed by American qualitative sociology to formulate powerful and penetrating accounts of political subjectivity.

## SOURCES

The nature of the literature used would be more or less determined by the various projects engaged in.

- (1) For my description of the economic social and political background of the fifties and sixties. For this, I shall rely on secondary material will be relied on.
- (2) I shall have to provide an account of Liberal discourse during those years; here the writings of liberal intellectuals in South Africa (e.g. Hoernle, Duncan, Ballinger, Paton, Huddleston, Brookes, Meltano, etc.) will be used.

BEWARE = AVOID LEE PLAGUE - HE NEEDS YOUR INFORMATION FOR AUTHORITY, BUT WILL USE IT TO PLOT HIS OWN PLANS. AFTER HIS PUBLICATIONS IT WOULD BE TOO LATE TO

(3) For my account of the NCL/ARM itself trial records, newspaper reports and personal interviews will be relied on. Of these, personal interviews with erstwhile members of the ARM will be centrally important, not only because they will provide most information on the career of the ARM, but also because they are essential for the reconstruction of ARM members as political subjects or agents.

WRITE "BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT I SAID OR MEANT"