

Allies or collaborators? Dladla, Buthelezi and the KwaZulu regime, 1972-75

How do nationalist leaders respond to an independent movement of workers? In constructing a mass base of support leaders of nationalist movements work to command the undivided and uncritical support of the rural and urban colonial poor. A workers movement acting spontaneously in pursuit of their economic and political class interests poses a deep challenge to this command. It is argued that a mass movement of workers, particularly a spontaneous strike wave, tests the leadership of all those who claim to represent workers as part their base in among undifferentiated black poor. This paper presents new evidence in examining the response of the leadership of Inkatha and the ANC to the strike movement in Durban in 1973. It details the reasons for Barney Dladla's assignment to labour issues, his engagement, rising tensions and the road leading to the final rupture between Buthelezi and Dladla. How did these contradictions arise and what engagement did Buthelezi and Inkatha and the ANC seek with the rising unions? The strikes in Durban challenged the leaders of the KwaZulu regime which was accepted by big business and, also, laid claim to leading Zulu and all black people. Equally they challenged the African National Congress. Would nationalist leaders support the demands, claim this movement or use this insurgency to strengthen their claim to power? Although apparently having fundamental differences, Inkatha and the ANC both worked as a "broad church" to bring the rising trade union movement under their control rather than acknowledge and accept the autonomy of independent working class organization. This paper focuses on the Inkatha side of the equation.

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