

Within 24 hours the seething unrest had spread throughout Soweto and Prime Minister Vorster announced in Parliament that police had been instructed to maintain law and order at all costs. (29)

During the following week, the violence spread throughout the townships of the Reef and Pretoria, Nelspruit, Klerksdorp, Bothaville (OFS), Kimberly, Langa and Nyanga in the Cape, as well as the campuses of Turfloop and Ngoye. July witnessed a resurgence in the struggle as it was carried forward to the remainder of the Transvaal, Natal, Kwazulu, the OFS and the Eastern Cape under the aegis of SASM who threw all their efforts into realising the country-wide nature of the crisis.

In August the revolt assumed new dimensions as the Cape "coloured" students came out in support of the African school rebellion. What had started as a peaceful protest march against the enforced usage of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction had turned into a full-blooded rebellion in which the police shot to kill.

The Black Parents' Association (BPA) was formed shortly after the killings took place, and their main contribution was in the field of legal, medical and financial arrangements in addition to the organisation of burials. With regards to the latter, the BPA was especially active, but these were often banned by J Kruger the Minister of Police. Funerals became symbolic occasions of black solidarity and protest, and as time went by they also became the site of police violence to the extent that mourners and innocent bystanders became the victims of police gunfire and tearsmoke. It is difficult to assess the role of the ANC during the uprising which seems to have been caught unawares and as such had not clearly judged the militant mood of the students. Nevertheless, by infiltrating its cadres into SASM, and becoming progressively more actively involved despite the snubbings they received from the SSRC leadership as the revolt developed, the ANC once again emerged as the dynamic force behind revolutionary change in South Africa.

Both Tsietsi Machinini, the President of the SSRC during the first wave of unrest, and his successor Khotso Seatlholo, were and are avowedly anti-ANC and conducted much of the organisation of resistance despite the clandestine action of the banned organisation.

The state reacted in early July and in an attempt to mollify the students, withdrew Afrikaans as the medium of instruction, and announced that schools would reopen on July 22. Mashinini called for a return to class, probably in an attempt to organise the students which would be impossible if they were scattered in the streets. Although his call proved to be a failure, on August 1 he got a chance to address students at a BPA meeting held at Regina Mundi Church where he called for each school to send two delegates to a SSRC meeting, and reaffirmed his return to class motion. The police responded by raiding schools and detaining students, a move which led to the calling of a stay-away by students for August 4, constituting the first in a number of attempts to forge a worker-student alliance. A march organised by the SSRC on the city centre was disrupted by police gunfire leaving three students dead. A fresh wave of student violence ensued, and the rebellion spread beyond Soweto to the Eastern and Western Cape where "Coloured" students of the University of the Western Cape burned down their Administration building on August 5. In mid-August the US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, visited South Africa and was greeted by slogans that received world-wide publicity:

" Kissinger, your visit to Azania is bullshit. Even animals are hungry."

The solidarity shown by "coloured" students in the Western Cape was an important landmark in the struggle. Until 1963, Coloured Schools on the whole had been in the hands of state-aided missions, but had subsequently come under the control of the Department of Coloured Affairs. Discrepancies were blatant, and whereas R453 was spent on every white child, R125 was spent on every coloured child. Recommendations made by the Theron report tabled in parliament on June 15, 1976 calling for the removal of most of the barriers to coloured advancement, were rejected by the government. The divisive tactics of the apartheid regime which enforced separation between blacks and coloureds failed when in August 1976 the "coloured" firmly identified themselves as part of the oppressed black majority, so that events in Cape Town came to embrace both African and Coloured townships. At the beginning of September, first blacks and then coloureds streamed into the Cape Town city centre and staged demonstration marches. On the second day when coloureds marched into the city centre it was sealed off by the police who responded ferociously with tear smoke and baton charges to the dismay of horrified white onlookers.

The Eastern Cape also responded to the forces of revolt, and in early August, students were gunned down in New Brighton (Port Elizabeth) and Mdantsane (East London) while the unrest spread to other nearby areas including the Transkei and Ciskei.

As we have observed, early August saw the first of a number of attempts to initiate a student-worker alliance, and the stay-away call was heeded by approximately 50-60 percent of the Johannesburg workforce. The second stay-away was called for between August 23 and 25 in a leaflet produced by the ANC, signifying a certain degree of co-operation between the ANC and SSRC and reproducing the strategy of the fifties. The leaflet read:

"The racists in our last demonstration - called by the cynics a riot - lost millions of rand as a result of people not going to work. They thought of immediately breaking the student worker alliance. They immediately called on workers to carry knobkerries and swords ... parent workers... we want to avoid further shooting - and this can be done by you keeping at home without being stopped". (30)

On the whole the call was heeded, and a 70 percent absenteeism was reported in Johannesburg. (31) The leaflet itself was prophetic, however, as Mzinhlophe migrant hostel dwellers went on the rampage with reported police backing, attacking students, parents and property. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi flew in from Kwazulu to calm the situation, although it has been claimed that the students themselves effected a reconciliation with hostel dwellers. Certainly, only a few of the Mzinhlophe men are in fact Zulu. Migrant workers themselves were active supporters of the third stay-away called for between September 13-15, where the police attempted to coerce workers back to work by conducting house to house raids in parts of Soweto and Alexandra. The fourth "Azikhwelwa" ("We shall not ride") call of November 1-5 was a relative failure partly attributable to the harsh role that employers began to adopt by threatening workers with dismissal. Nevertheless, the SSRC's call to workers to boycott liquor, Christmas shopping and celebrations was on the whole a success and Johannesburg businessmen reported a general slump in sales for December 1976, a year that was dubbed the year of student government of Soweto.

The problem faced by SSRC leaders in 1977 was whether or not to sit for the examinations which had been deferred to February 1977.

While in Cape Town, Langa and Nyanga students damaged six schools, the SSRC elected to return to school. This decision proved disastrous as students on returning to class were confronted by the same old problem of Bantu Education and by mid-February frustration led to renewed unrest and an attempted boycott in Soweto. Students who chose to write their exams were molested, but a fairly large number did ultimately write. In Cape Town, the majority of children wrote their examinations having been warned that failure to do so would mean permanent exclusion.

The greatest victories won by the SSRC, however, were those relating to the proposed rent increases and the abolition of the Urban Bantu Councils (UBC). WRAB announced that from May, site rentals were to be raised by 84 percent and on April 27 students demonstrated and were given permission to march to the Council Chamber. The march ended in stone throwing, teargas and shooting, but a victory was won when the UBC resigned and the rent increases were withdrawn. The Government responded by deciding to replace UBCs by Community Councils dummy institutions which were rejected while Soweto formed its own Committee of Ten under the chairmanship of Dr N Motlana.

The first commemoration of June 16 triggered off a new wave of violence throughout the country particularly in Uitenhage and the Eastern Cape. In Johannesburg, police foiled an attempted march on John Vorster Square and another 140 students who had slipped into town earlier were arrested outside the police station. In August, unrest was reported in Soweto, Venda, Port Elizabeth, King Williamstown, Cradock, Grahamstown, Pietersburg, Atteridgeville and Turfloop. Eventually the government reacted by banning 17 African organisations, most of which owed allegiance to the BCM and Christian Institute. 1978 was marketed by a slow trickle of students back to class with the outlawed SSRC being replaced by the Soweto Students League (SSL) which itself was later to be banned. The phase of student revolt initiated by the events of June 16, 1976, had gradually come to an end.

TOWARDS THE '80s - TOTAL STRATEGY

The rapid development of monopoly capital in the seventies has drastically altered the balance of forces in the South African formation.

The intensification in the development of concentration and centralisation, concomitant with an accelerated growth in the organic composition of capital has produced far-reaching effects on the labour process and the division of labour as monopoly has come to dominate all sectors and branches of production. Whereas in the past the demand and supply of labour rested on the pivot of a cheap black migrant labour force, monopoly capitalist production is dependent upon a stable workforce of semi-skilled operatives. Furthermore, the sophisticated technology incorporated in the highly capital intensive process of production generated by monopoly has the effect of increasing the size of the industrial reserve army of labour, so that the seventies in South Africa have been characterised by a significant increase in the rate of unemployment.

Accompanied by the escalation in class struggle, these trends have posed a decisive challenge to the state, which has attempted to face the crisis through evolving the concept of total strategy. Total strategy is a comprehensive plan aimed at the achievement of the national aims of the ruling class through the resolute utilisation of the totality of the ensemble of state structure. These initiatives have been marked by a rise to prominence of the military who have assumed a central role in the planning and execution of total strategy although military leaders have stressed the necessity for an accompanying thorough national action at all levels of society. Thus P.W Botha has stated that:

"The process of ensuring and maintaining the sovereignty of a state's authority in a conflict situation has, through the evolution of warfare, shifted from a purely military to an integrated national action...The resolution of a conflict in the times in which we now live demands interdependent and co-ordinated action in all fields - military, psychological, economic, political, sociological, technological, diplomatic, ideological, cultural etc...We are today involved in a war.... The striving for specific aims...must be co-ordinated with all the means available to the state". (32)

Within the military, this has entailed the development of the concept of "civil action" with its emphasis on "counter-insurgency", help and support given to the local population of areas where freedom fighters are active, and given to other departments to facilitate "good government", as well as the co-ordinated employment of all available resources in the national interest.

In so far as education is concerned, this has involved the systematic attempts to make use of national servicemen with educational qualifications who are directed to schools in all the "homelands" as fully-fledged teachers. Similar attempts at utilising such teachers in urban areas have been met with great hostility by urban blacks, but in certain areas the army has managed to force its hand. Here, the liberal white serviceman is caught in a contradictory situation, for while establishing a favourable rapport with its students, he becomes a functionary of total strategy. This is illustrated by the following extract taken from a South African Defence Force handbook:

"The Civic Action teacher ... offers a contribution of un-estimated value. Relations between the Civic Action NSM (teacher) and the black scholars are so outstandingly good that the scholars provide the teachers with information concerning the movements of the enemy."

The formulation of this total "onslaught" took place against a background of rising confidence amongst the exploited and oppressed black majority. While 1978/79 saw a period of relative calm in black South African educational institutions, labour unrest was widespread and the proletariat staged struggles throughout the country. These ranged from Isithebe in Kwazulu to the Nels Dairy strikes in Johannesburg: the Elandsrand Gold Mine near Carltonville, the Fattis and Monis strike in Cape Town and the Eveready and Ford Motor strikes in Port Elizabeth. Occuring against a background of mounting unemployment and inflation, the Government offered a series of new labour dispensations following the Wiehahn and Riekert reports. While the former has amounted to an assault on unregistered unions, Riekert attempted to create divisions within the proletariat

through the creation of some kind of a settled urban labour aristocracy. These reports should be seen as integral components of the co-ordinated total strategy, one of whose major aims is the creation of further divisions amongst the ranks of the oppressed through the propagation of a "black middle class".

The period since 1976 has also seen the dramatic resurgence of the underground resistance movements. ANC cadres in particular, along with PAC militants, often armed, have infiltrated the country in large numbers, and some have been arrested. In mid-August 1976 three armed ANC cadres opened fire in the centre of Johannesburg when apprehended by police, and two whites were killed. Solomon Mahlangu was later executed for his role in the killings. Political trials involving alleged ANC members have become commonplace, and another militant, James Mange, has recently been reprieved after having been sentenced to death in a Pietermaritzburg treason trial.

1980 - THE YEAR OF TOTAL CLASS STRUGGLE

In February 1980, the Cillie Commission, instituted in 1976 to investigate the causes of the June uprising, tabled its report. Despite the severe limitations of its findings, a clear relationship between education and the form of capitalism peculiar to South Africa emerges. The immediate cause of the rebellion was held to be the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, but a number of other contributing factors were cited. These included influx control laws, particularly the breaking up of families under Section 10 of the Bantu Urban Areas Consolidation Act, the Group Areas Act, especially the resettlement clause and the effects it had on "coloured" people in the Cape; the Homelands system and the citizenship applied to urban blacks. The commission found that organisations such as the ANC, SACP, PAC and SASO played an active role in the uprisings. Damage suffered by the Administration Boards totalled over R29 million, and the part played by the Minister of Bantu Education, M.C. Botha and his deputy, Andries Treurnicht, came under fire.

The Commission's comments on the role of Bantu education on the rebellion, indicated somewhat ironically its connection with the specific demands of the labour market, as well as how these articulated with the dominant ideology of the South African formation:

"When in the course of the riots, Bantu Education had virtually suspended Afrikaans as the reason for the rioters' dissatisfaction there were many who described the object of this system as a deliberate attempt to train the black pupils in such a way that he would be subservient to the white man, or put more strongly, that he would remain the oppressor's slave." (33)

These findings find their echo in the words of Seatlholo, Mashinini's successor:

"We shall reject the whole system of Bantu Education whose aim is to reduce us, mentally and physically, into 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'." (34)

It was at the politico-economic level, however, where the fundamental causes of the rebellion were to be sought:

"Discrimination which has always been considered unjust has engendered not only dissatisfaction but also a great hatred in many. This dissatisfaction and hatred were some of the main factors that created the milieu and spirits of revolt." (35)

In 1980, "Coloured" students in the Cape left the events of '76 behind as their slogans penetrated well beyond mere educational demands, and attacked their very foundations: apartheid and its role in the development of capitalism in South Africa. April 16 signified the beginnings of a boycott against racist education in the Cape and which spread rapidly throughout the country incorporating both Indians and Africans. At the end of the month, Mamelodi blacks joined the boycott in its second week and 1 500 students from four schools were sent home while nine students were detained. Amidst reports that 1980 could turn into another "Soweto", Cape students called for the resignation of the then minister of Coloured and Indian Affairs, Marais Steyn. Prime Minister Botha and his minister of Police Le Grange warned that they would deal harshly with disasters, and baton charges and tearsmoke once again became commonplace. On April 30, Brigadier Swanepoel ordered the arrest of approximately 860 Coloured school children after armed police descended on a mass protest meeting held at a Bosmont High School in Johannesburg. They were charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act while hundreds of anxious parents waited outside the court until 4am the following day, during which time the students appeared one by one before the local magistrate. The charges were later dropped, but detention became a routine and hundreds of students were interrogated.

The Boycott spread to all black university campuses, while in Natal striking black school children from KwaMashu township were urged by Gatsha Buthelezi to return to class amidst widespread arrests in the township and the Indian area of Chatsworth. By openly castigating African High School students for their show of solidarity, the myth of Inkatha as constituting the spearhead of a South African Black Alliance was finally exploded. In the meantime, the Prime Minister called for a probe into all South African education as students in more than 200 overseas universities decided to take part in an International Day of Solidarity with South African students. Black parents played a prominent role too amidst growing calls for a worker-student alliance. A convenor of a gathering called by parents who decided to boycott a Parow (in the Cape) business for two days said:

"It will not cripple the merchants economically, but it will make the people aware." (36)

Despite a mid-May call by the Committee of 81, formed by coloured students at the beginning of the boycott, to suspend the strike until the authorities had been given an opportunity to implement promised reforms, coloured students renewed the boycott in solidarity with protesting African school children in Langa, Nyanga and Guguletu.

In the meantime other aspects of working class struggle intensified. A massive boycott of red meat was embarked on in support of striking meat workers. Along with a bus boycott against proposed fare increases, these events proved to be a rallying point for township dwellers who began to set up 'parents-students' and 'street' committees.

The development of grass-roots organisation dismayed the state. Towards the end of May a mass demonstration led to two students being shot by police in Elsie's River. Hundreds of police reinforcements began pouring into the Cape as the shootings aggravated rather than deterred student protest. June saw a further resurgence of labour unrest, and violence flared up at the Stilfontein Gold Mine in the Western Transvaal - 4 000 black miners came out on strike and were fired on from the air with tearsmoke by police helicopters. Roadblocks were manned throughout the country resulting in thousands of arrests on an assortment of charges. Before June 16, police announced a blanket ban on meetings in certain parts of the country, and when members of the Soweto community attempted to assemble at Regina Mundi for a commemoration service, they were baton charged by riot police. Violence ensued and spread to the nearby "Coloured" township of Noordgezicht. It was in the Cape, however, where action reached a highpoint: at least 30 protesting students were killed when police opened fire. While the June 16 stay away in Johannesburg was a virtual failure, about 70 percent of the Cape Town workforce was reported absent for two days. In a desperate reaction, the state declared certain areas in the township "operational zones" and a ban was placed on the press to prevent them from entering these areas.

Mid-June signified the resurgence of class struggle in East London where workers' struggles and student protest were linked in an all-out onslaught on the state. On June 16, 3 500 workers at the Volkswagen multinational plant at Uitenhage went on strike which resulted in a wage increase of nearly 40 percent. A series of strikes followed in quick succession hitting most major suppliers of parts for the motor industry. Teargas, dogs and sneezemachines were used to disperse workers during a strike at Goodyear involving 1 200 workers. By July, the unrest had come to embrace the Eastern Cape, the Cape Peninsula, Kwa Mashu, Soweto, the Ciskei, the Free State and the Northern Transvaal. The re-opening of schools on July 7 had little effect and students continued their boycott of classes. While the "Coloured" school boycott ended in confusion with the Committee of 81 pressing for their short-term demands, the schools in the African townships of Cape Town proceeded with their stay away.

The boycotts took on an increasingly violent tone, with police vehicles becoming subject to stonings and certain school headmasters being assaulted.

In Bloemfontein a policeman was attacked, while the home of a Cape Town security policeman was burnt down. Violence broke out in Grahamstown when a middle-aged woman was shot by police when attempting to disperse chanting students. A week later three people were killed including Mr F. Tsili the son of the middle-aged woman victim of the previous week. While the regional director of the Department of Education and Training (DET) in the Cape, D.H. Owens claimed pupils and parents were ignorant of his department's aims in attempting to improve black education, Minister of Police, Louis le Grange, told parliament that more policemen than students had been injured in the course of the boycott.

In the meantime Dr Ferdie Hartzenberg, Minister of Education and Training, began to clamp down on militant students and ordered the closure of Morris-Isaacson high school in Soweto. This was followed by the indefinite closure of schools in the Cape Peninsula, the Eastern Cape and the Orange Free State. By early October, it was reported that more than 60 000 black pupils were idle in the wake of the government's indefinite closure of 80 schools country-wide (37). The proletariat were not inactive during this period either.

The Johannesburg Municipal Workers strike involved about 10 000 workers which was brought to an abrupt end when the state in collusion with the Johannesburg City Council began transporting dissident workers back to the homelands where new workers were recruited. In Soweto and neighbouring townships, as well as in Durban, rent increases have proved to be a rallying point for the struggle. Dr Piet Koornhof was greeted by thousands of placard carrying demonstrators on his visit to the Community Council Chambers in Soweto, and a women's memorandum rejected the imposition of the community councils, along with the puppet David Thebehali, on the people of Soweto, and also opposed the rent increases. A bus boycott in Seshego in the Northern Transvaal continued for a long period and workers' struggles in the Eastern Cape escalated to include a strike at the Collondale Pineapple Canning Factory following the sacking of workers. The strike, spearheaded by the African Food and Canning Workers' Union, has enjoyed international support, and indicates a clear and growing rejection of management created liaison committees in favour of recognition for workers' representatives on their own terms.

BLACK EDUCATION, CLASS STRUGGLE AND CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

What has been remarkable about the student struggle in the 'eighties is the level of awareness and sophistication displayed in the students' manifestos and slogans.

The historical antecedents of these developments can be traced as far back as the Programme of Action launched at the end of the 1940's, which saw the beginnings of a shift in the scale of political demands. Compared with preceding humble petitions by Africans which asked for no more than an increase of rights within the existing framework, the issues were now cast within a framework of demands for a South Africa which would be ruled by the majority. These struggles, in time with developments elsewhere in Africa had, however, heavily emphasised the national character of the struggle.

The fundamental principles of the programme of action of the African National Congress were inspired by the idea of achieving national freedom.

The leadership of the ANC and succeeding black political movements have as we have noted, been recruited primarily from amongst the ranks of graduates of the educational system and has constituted an emerging, albeit viciously suppressed, petty-bourgeoisie. Divisions emerged not so much over the form and content of the struggle, but largely over the acceptability of whites, particularly communists, within the political movements. Thus it was that the PAC broke away from the ANC, developing the concepts of Africanism which had been formulated by Anton Lambede during his CYL days. In the wake of the bannings of the ANC and PAC, it was these concepts that influenced the nature of the ideologues of the BCM, the ideology that pervaded the '76/'77 uprising.

The formation of the BCM was largely an affirmation of the idea that insofar as the struggle was concerned, the black man was on his own: white liberals would prove useless in the battle for what remained ideally a non-racial society. The immediate step in the struggle was for the black man to overcome the psychological deprivations of apartheid:

"The first step, therefore, is to make the black man see himself, to pump life into his empty shell, to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth."(38)

This involved a return to the roots to discover one's blackness, the feeling of nationhood; a danger pointed out, ironically, by a writer on whom the BCM has extensively drawn, Franz Fanon:

"In their speeches, the political leaders give a name to the nation. In this way the native's demands are given shape... This is, however, no definite subject-matter and no political or social programme. There is a vague outline or skeleton, which is nevertheless national in form.. The politicians who make speeches and who write in the nationalist newspapers make the people dream dreams. They avoid the actual overthrowing of the state, but in fact they intrude into their readers' or hearers' consciousness the terrible ferment of subversion." (39)

The proponents of Black Consciousness claimed to be opponents of both capitalism and socialism which were viewed as foreign, imperialistic and oppressive. Instead, black consciousness itself was seen as being capable of formulating political, social and economic institutions formed in the heritage of "black culture" that would ensure the adaption of a new order. The failure to base analysis on the prevailing material conditions of South African society meant that the BCM alienated itself from the mass of exploited South Africans: the black working class. It is highly unlikely that the latter felt the "emptiness" described above, nor the necessity to realise their blackness, a problem which BC ideologues themselves became aware:

"... it is only the elite that are plagued by the problem of identity. Not the mass of the black people. The common black have no reason to worry about blackness. They never in the first place found themselves outside or above their context of being black." (40)

Thus the '76 Soweto students found themselves in a position where their guiding ideology was severely limiting in their attempts to address themselves to the wide demands of their situation as the revolt progressed. Their attempts at an alliance with workers were undermined by their belief that they themselves would lead the alliance as well as by the tactic of the stay-away strategy which was summed up by those opposed to the South African government at the time of Sharpeville:

"Firstly, the people of the townships cannot stay at home indefinitely. To do so is to starve. Even if food is stored in advance, the families cannot hold out for long because of the presence of children, the sick and the aged. The townships can be sealed off and starved out only too effectively by small detachments of the army and police secondly by staying in the townships, the workers surrenders all initiative. He cuts himself off from his fellow workers in other townships. He divides himself from his allies in the rural areas, and he surrenders the entire economic centre to his enemies." (41)

The students of 1980 have addressed themselves to these kinds of problems, considering for example, the form of a worker-student alliance would take, and it is precisely these conditions which pose a fundamental challenge at the present time. The events of the late seventies have left the BCM behind, despite the important role it played in filling a vacuum in the late sixties and the seventies. Attempts by BC members to regroup in exile have proved disastrous, and in the wake of '76, it is clearly the ANC that has once again emerged as a dynamic force in the struggle for change in South Africa, enjoying widespread support throughout the country. Solomon Mahlangu and James Mange are viewed as martyrs and heroes in the townships of South Africa, and the successful attack at SASOL in 1980 has provided a tremendous boost for the banned organisation.

It is the struggles emanating from the black educational structures of South African society that have brought home the countrywide basis of the South African liberation struggle, and the progressive quality displayed by the Cape students in particular, must somehow be translated into action. Aware of their own limitations, and themselves unable to effect a worker-student alliance, the students are reaching out for a group that will show the black workers how, through their own action, they are capable of bringing their exploitation to an end. In accounting for the defeat of the Cape "coloured" student boycott, a student has said:

"... organisation was uneven. Throughout the boycott some areas were well organised and others were not. This was mainly due to uneven political education and experience. This is always a problem of organisation and can never be completely resolved.." (42)

It is this challenge which the 1980 black students revolt has issued to South Africa under the aegis of the ANC.

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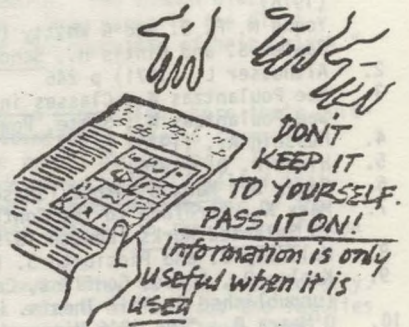


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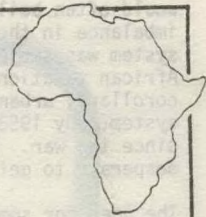
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The Parents' School Boycott: Eastern Cape and East Rand Townships, 1955



Tom Lodge

In 1955, the South African government assumed control over black education. The Bantu Education Act (1953) transferred administrative responsibility for black education from the provincial authorities to a Government Department. The content of the syllabus, the employment of teachers, the admission of pupils - all previously matters over which schools themselves had a degree of autonomy in decision-making - were now subject to central authority.

The Bantu Education Act was vigorously opposed in the South African press, various public forums and by some white and many black opposition politicians. The opposition was ineffective in altering government policy and in many areas did not succeed in arousing much popular participation. This paper will be looking at those instances in which opposition to Bantu education did transform itself into a popular movement. This was particularly the case in the East Rand townships as well as, to a lesser extent, the Eastern Cape urban centres and black rural communities. In tracing the local antecedents and history of this movement it is hoped the paper will provide some understanding of broader traditions of popular resistance in these places, as well as an appreciation of why these were stronger in some centres rather than in others. So, first of all, this paper is an essay on local history, with an especial concern for documenting some of the popular movements of the East Rand, a region hitherto unexplored by most researchers. Secondly, the intention is to situate education and popular desire to participate in it and have some control over it, as one of a range of issues which in the post-war period in South Africa struck a particular resonance with poor people; an issue, which together with such concerns as the cost of transport, the price of food, the availability of housing, and freedom of movement, lay at the heart of mass political responses in those years.

Before 1955 most African schooling was run by missionary societies. Schools could qualify for state financial aid if they registered with the Provincial Education Department. Registration required conforming to syllabuses laid down by the Department but the day-to-day administration of the school was in the hands of a superintendent employed by the province and advised by an elected parents' school committee. School syllabuses varied between provinces but were all specially written for African primary school children though secondary school pupils followed the same curriculum as their white peers (1).

Though the system included some justly prestigious schools, it had serious shortcomings. Being atrociously paid, teaching was not an attractive profession and many teachers were under-qualified. Mission control could be heavyhanded and paternalistic and resentment of it (especially at rural boarding institutions)

would often boil over in fierce and destructive riots. (2) There was a vast imbalance in the number of primary and secondary schools. Until 1945 the system was seriously underfinanced as expenditure depended on the level of African taxation revenues. Finally, wartime industrialisation and its corollary, urbanisation, had contributed to fresh pressures on the educational system. By 1953 African school enrollment had risen by 300,000 or 50 per cent since the war. Classrooms were crowded, teachers overworked, and parents desperate to get their children into schools filled beyond capacity.

The need for some form of public intervention was beyond dispute. The African National Congress's (ANC) "African claims" in 1943 had called for free compulsory education provided by the state (3), and in the Transvaal by 1949, 800 of the 2,000 mission schools, in response to the feelings of African parents, had been placed under direct departmental control. (4) Black communities themselves were willing to make considerable sacrifices raising the money for extra teachers' salaries, classroom buildings and equipment, as well as establishing their own independent schools. "Shanty" secondary schools existed in 1948 in Orlando, Western Native Township, Brakpan and Atteridgeville. (5) In Alexandra, an independent primary school, Haile Selassie School, founded in 1950, was to play a significant role in the 1955 boycott. (6)

The Nationalist Government accepted the need for intervention, though its first concern was not so much with meeting African educational needs, but rather in attempting to control the social consequences of educational expansion. Consequently its concern was to restructure rather than reform the system. Increasing numbers of literate job-seekers with basic clerical skills were being thrown into an employment market increasingly reluctant to absorb them. Crude sociological considerations were foremost in the minds of the policymakers. In the words of Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs:

... good racial relations are spoilt when the correct education is not given. Above all, good racial relations cannot exist when the education is given under the control of people who create wrong expectations on the part of the Native himself, if such people believe in a policy of equality, if, let me say, for example, a communist gives this training to Natives. (7)

It is doubtful that many missionaries had quite such egalitarian beliefs as Verwoerd was to attribute to them and certainly few were communists and the government was to considerably underestimate the difficulties of instilling an ideology of subordination. Official thinking on African education was tendentious, naive, and brutally simple. In 1949 the Eiselen Commission was set up to produce a blueprint for "Education for Natives as a Separate Race". Its report was published in 1951. Its "guiding principles" included the reconstruction and adaption to modern requirements of "Bantu Culture", the centralisation of control, the harmony of schools and "Bantu Social Institutions", increased use of African languages and personnel, increased community involvement in education through parents' committees, efficient use of funds, and an increased expenditure on mass education. Black social expectations were to be orientated to the reserves ("there is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour") (8). Community participation in partly elected committees and boards would serve to legitimise the system as well as giving neo-traditional "Bantu Authorities" tighter control. Central dictation of syllabuses would ensure the production of skills appropriate to a subordinate role in the economy :

A beginning (at the end of Standard 2) should be made with the teaching of at least one official language on a purely utilitarian basis, i.e. as a medium of oral expression of thought to be used in contracts with the European sector of the population. Manipulative skills should be developed and where possible an

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interest in the soil and in the observation of natural phenomena stimulated. (9)

Cost per pupil would be lowered and expansion facilitated by the use of shorter double daily sessions, the employment of underqualified female assistants, and the pegging of the state financial contribution (the balance to be drawn from African taxation). As much as possible, post-primary schools were to be sited "away from an urban environment" in the reserves.

In 1953 the Bantu Education Act was passed transferring direct control of education from the provinces to the Native Affairs Department. All schools had to be registered, all state-aided schools had to be staffed by government-trained teachers, and all would have to use official syllabuses. Mission schools from 1957 could continue only if they registered - they would receive no subsidy. Syllabuses for primary schools outlined in 1954, though in operation only from 1956, stressed obedience, communal loyalty, ethnic and national diversity, the acceptance of allocated social roles, piety, and identification with rural culture. (10)

Superficially, the new order had some features which may have appeared attractive to some African parents. Access to education was to become a little easier and school boards and communities provided an illusion of local accountability. But to parents whose children were already at school (as opposed to those whose children were not) Bantu Education promised obvious disadvantages. These included the linguistic problem produced by the official insistence on primary school children learning the fundamentals of both official languages (making it less easy to acquire proficiency in one, English, which was a minimum requirement for most white-collar employment); and two issues which effectively made life more difficult for working mothers - the shortening of primary school hours and the closing down of many nursery schools. School boards and committees were at best only partially elected - nominated members were likely to be unpopular, and in rural areas were often compliant servants of the local authorities. Fierce competition for elected places on such committees (11) testifies probably more to parental anxiety than approval of the system.

The rural and "tribal" bias of the proposed syllabuses would have been especially objectionable to parents in long-established urban communities. The linking of education with "development" ensured its unpopularity with societies resisting government land "rehabilitation" and "stabilisation" schemes.

Less apparent at the scheme's inception was the fact that the system was going to impose increasing financial obligations on African communities. For example, a two shilling monthly education levy was implemented on urban households (12), teacher:pupil ratios would increase (13), per capita expenditure would decrease (14), school meals services would be shut down and the abolition of caretakers' posts would make pupils responsible for school cleaning. (15) For an underprivileged society in which access to education provided the most common means of social mobility for one's children these were serious blows.

Popular involvement in educational issues considerably predates opposition to Bantu Education. In its most positive form there was the establishment of local African initiatives of schools entirely independent of external administration or finance. The shanty school movement of the Reef townships mentioned above is an example of this. Popular concern could take the form of resistance: for example in 1944 the Amalgamated Mission School in Brakpan was boycotted by the parents of some of its 900 African pupils. Mothers picketed the school's entrance and persuaded children to return home in protest against the dismissal by the Education Department of a politically active school teacher (see below)(16).

This was not a unique incident. In 1952 a parents' protest committee organised a boycott of Orlando High School after three teachers, who had publically opposed the Eiselen recommendations, were sacked (see below). The parents established a "people's school" for boycotters. The protest committee was headed by the Chairman of the local ANC branch, I M Maseko, and apparently gained wide local support. Less than a third of the pupils attended school in the two month boycott. Parental indignation in this case was intensified by the venality of the local superintendent (17). Political groups sometimes attempted to enhance their following through sharing popular educational concerns. The South African Communist Party's night school programme was a good example of this. Less well known was the ANC Youth League's establishment of a "shanty school" in Newclare to cater for children who had been refused admission at local schools through lack of accommodation (18) or the League's projected 1949 night school and literacy campaign (19). There is evidence that in urban African communities at least, education was an issue evoking common interest and, at times, anxiety.

Not surprisingly, the earliest concerted resistance to Bantu Education proposals came from that group most directly affected and most sensitive to their implications - the teachers. Bantu Education, because of the "Africanisation" of lower reaches of the inspectorate and the expansion of schools, did offer to teachers a slight improvement in promotion possibilities. However, in many other respects the profession was to be degraded. Teachers would have to work a double session day with larger classes, employment qualifications would be lowered, salaries (it was made quite clear) would remain at their existing (and inadequate) levels, and teachers would be reduced to the level of state employees (20). They would also be directly subordinated to the sometimes uneducated members of school boards which had the power to recommend their dismissal (21). Verwoerd made little effort to conceal official hostility to the profession :

The Bantu teacher must be integrated as an active agent in the process of the development of the Bantu community. He must learn not to feel above his community, with a consequent desire to become integrated into the life of the European community. He becomes frustrated and rebellious when this does take place, and he tries to make his community dissatisfied because of such misdirected ambitions which are alien to his people. (22)

Teachers' opposition to Bantu Education came mainly from two sources : the Cape and Transvaal African Teachers' Associations (CATA and TATA) (23). Let us examine developments in the Cape first.

Of all the different teachers' organisations CATA was the earliest to become politicised. In the Cape the Non-European Unity Movement, founded in 1943 and drawn principally from "coloured" teachers, from its inception took an interest in educational issues. It and a sister organisation, the Teachers' League of South Africa, were both affiliated to the All African Convention (AAC), an organisation which had been transformed in the early 1940s by the departure from it of the ANC and the infusion into its leadership of a number of Marxist intellectuals. The AAC had originally been founded as a response to the Herzogite 1936 franchise and land legislation and Marxists within its leadership differed from the more orthodox South African Communists in their preoccupation with agrarian issues. The AAC consequently attempted to build a following among peasants in the Transkei and Ciskei (areas then rather neglected by other national organisations) through its immediate constituency, the teachers in the dense network of mission schools long established in the region. CATA affiliated to the AAC in 1948 and helped organise peasant resistance to the rehabilitation scheme (24). The Transkeian teachers' faction of the AAC (W M Tsotsi, L H Sihlali, A K Manglu, M Mbalu, Z Mzimba, L Mkentane, N Honono et al) were later to break away from their more theoretically purist Cape Town colleagues because they favoured redistribution of land on an individual private basis to the peasantry (25).

The first serious instance of conflict between CATA and educational authorities was in 1950 when CATA, together with the AAC, attacked new provincial regulations aimed at easing over-crowding by imposing a quota system on schools effectively excluding 30 000 pupils in the Eastern Cape (26). In 1952 CATA's annual conference condemned the Eiselen regulations, calling on its members to "organise the people and explain to them the recommendations of the report", and the following year, in defiance of warnings from the authorities, 200 teachers met at Queenstown to discuss ways of resisting Bantu Education. This had been preceded by a well attended public meeting in Langa, Cape Town, called jointly by CATA and the Vigilance Association to protest against the proposed legislation (27). CATA's attempts to mobilise public opinion were unusual for an African professional body. They were obviously influential; the authorities' alarm at the teachers' agitation against land rehabilitation led to the closure of a school near East London in December, 1953 (28). The following year, spurred by the introduction of double sessions in the Cape, CATA's annual conference called upon "teachers and parents to do everything in their power to oppose the Herrenvolk schemes for their enslavement" (without being very explicit as to what exactly should be done).

The State responded to this opposition by withdrawing recognition from CATA and bestowing it on the newly established and supportive Cape African Teachers' Union (a similar process took place in the Transvaal) and having isolated the militants, ensuring their dismissal through the rural school boards (29) (which were largely composed of Bantu Authorities personnel and their supporters) as well as redundancy through especially strict application of higher teacher/pupil ratios (30).

The militant stance of Cape teachers and the severity of departmental response should be understood in the context of the much wider struggle against land rehabilitation and the reorganisation of local government under Bantu authorities, which took an exceptionally intense form in the Transkei and Ciskei (31). Interestingly, teachers were not the only people to link Bantu Education with Bantu Authorities and rural "development" programmes. At Cildara, in the Ciskei, the local Masizakite (acceptance) Association arranged a school competition to popularise Bantu Authorities and promote the substitution of academic with manual subjects (32).

It should be noted that teachers in rural communities during the 1950s were potentially natural leaders of opposition to authority. First of all they were educated men in societies which placed a high premium on education (33). Secondly, they were men with no formal power who were being badly paid; there was little to set them apart from the rest of the community. Thirdly, the Bantu Authority and School Board systems with their elevation to greater power of traditionalist (and hence often illiterate) leaders confronted teachers with a direct threat to their security and status. When teachers were politically motivated, they could be a very important element in rural opposition movements and it is no coincidence that the Bantu Education boycott movement (see below) had its most significant rural impact in the Eastern Cape and adjoining reserves.

The Transvaal African Teachers' Association (TATA) in contrast to CATA was a principally urban-based organisation. African teachers on the Witwatersrand had been especially sharply affected by wartime price rises (TATA's journal, The Good Shepherd, complained in 1942 that Johannesburg domestic servants could earn more than a female teacher) and in 1944 teachers had demonstrated for higher salaries in the streets of Johannesburg (34). Through its partly successful salaries campaign, TATA became a dominant, and in some cases a politicising, force among Transvaal African teachers.

By the end of the decade some of TATA's leaders were tending to identify with the militant assertion taking place in African politics at the time. A 1949 Good Shepherd editorial, taking its cue from Z K Matthews, called for the

formation of an "African Association" "for the purpose of keeping our heroes remembered" (35). One year later TATA's Rand District Conference was addressed by G M Pitje of the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) who informed his audience that :

God placed Africans in Africa, Europeans in Europe, Asiatics
in Asia. (36)

Pitje was in 1954 to become editor of The Good Shepherd. However, the ANCYL's Africanism was only one of several influences affecting the political outlook of Transvaal teachers, Eskia Mphahlele attributes to the AAC considerably more appeal at that time. Young intellectuals and junior teachers in the Orlando branch of TATA also tried to persuade their branch to take some stand in respect of the May Day strike the ANC and the Communist Party were organising in protest against the Suppression of Communism Act (37).

However, unlike its sister organisation in the Cape, TATA was never to link educational issues with broader concerns and was to resist calls by some of its members for a similar political affiliation to that of CATA (38). It was, however, forthright in its condemnation of Bantu Education, its journal summing up the purpose of the scheme quite succinctly :

It (the Government commission) wants to find out how it can give the African the training necessary to make him an efficient worker, without giving him any real education, for the simple reason that it would be dangerous if the oppressed sector of the population were sufficiently advanced to fight for their freedom. (39)

A group of Orlando teachers, who were elected in 1951 to leading positions on the TATA Executive, began to campaign quite effectively along the Reef, organising meetings of teachers and parents to explain and condemn the findings of the Eiselen Commission. Matters came to a head when the Transvaal Chief Inspector of Education was heckled at a prize giving ceremony. The principal reported the teachers he suspected of organising the students to the Department and they were later sacked. The success of the following boycott (mentioned above) is testimony to their effectiveness in arousing parental concern at the threatened changes (40). From 1952 TATA began organising anti-Bantu Education teachers' conferences in Johannesburg and the East Rand and attempted to set up or revitalise Parent Teachers' Associations, so as to lend some popular weight to resistance to Bantu Education. However, progress was slow - by late 1954 these had been formed only in Johannesburg South West Townships, Lady Selbourn and the East Rand (41). At least one of the Parent/Teacher Associations demonstrated the trend of local feeling when, in February 1954, 500 people at a Moroka-Jabavu PTA meeting called for a boycott of schools in the near future (42).

Compared to Cape teachers, the opposition to the Act demonstrated by Transvaal teachers was less widespread. Relatively few Transvaal teachers suffered dismissal from their jobs as the consequence of criticism of the authorities. Unlike their Cape colleagues, Transvaal teachers were subjected from 1950 to a strict provincial prohibition on political activity. Nor did the ANC (unlike the Cape-based organisation) interest itself in the preoccupations of teachers in the early 1950s (43). Nevertheless in the links they did establish with parents through the Associations in Johannesburg and the East Rand, their activity forms an important part of the backdrop to the communal boycott of schools that took place in those areas and to which we now turn.

The conception and preparation of the ANC's campaign to resist Bantu Education has been the subject of one monograph as well as receiving a detailed treatment in Karis and Carter's documentary collection (44). The ANC's approach to the issue was to be characterised by uncertainty and disagreement between different sectors of the leadership and between leaders and rank and file. The decision

to oppose Bantu Education was taken shortly after the passage of the Act, when the ANC in May 1954 announced the launching of a "Resist Apartheid Campaign" which included the Bantu Education Act amongst its six issues (45). Concrete plans for resistance only emerged at the ANC annual conference held in December 1954 at Durban. Here the National Executive recommended the withdrawal of children from schools for a week. At the same time, the Executive noted in its report that "progress on Bantu Education was very slow in all provinces" (46). However, the conference itself over-ruled the Executive, resolving in favour of an indefinite boycott, timed to begin on April 1st (the date of the administrative transfer of schools). It was decided that local organisation for the boycott should be in the hands of the Women's and Youth Leagues.

Preparations in the Transvaal began quite buoyantly with the Youth League organising a meeting in early January in Sophiatown, which called for 1 000 volunteer teachers to provide alternative educational facilities. At the same time the Transvaal Youth League established a number of local "anti-Bantu Education committees" (47). However, by February initial caution of national leaders was beginning to reassert itself. A National Executive Committee meeting held in Durban on March 5th at Chief Lutuli and Z K Matthews' instigation, agreed to postpone the boycott to an unspecified later date. Those who favoured this course were influenced by reports of the intimidation of teachers by the authorities, the announcement that the new syllabus would not be implemented until 1956 and the fact that April 1st was in any case during the Easter recess. They also felt preparations to be inadequate (48). Such apprehensions were not limited to the more conservative leaders; the left wing pro-Congress journal Fighting Talk pointed out in March: "to imagine that the ANC has yet the power to bring about such a boycott in a few months would be totally unreal". Instead of beginning the school boycott in April, the National Executive decided that the ANC should take on the more modest task of mounting a boycott of school boards and committee elections.

This decision prompted open dissension. A special conference held again in Sophiatown the following week reaffirmed the December decision. The Transvaal Youth League enjoyed the support of the Johannesburg based members of the National Executive committee (including Oliver Tambo) and to prevent a serious breach from taking place yet another conference was arranged. This was held in Port Elizabeth on 9th and 10th April, the week-end before schools were due to open (49).

The 700 delegates from all four organisations of the Congress Alliance, as well as two delegates from the Liberal Party, eventually decided on a compromise. In principal, it was agreed government schools should be boycotted indefinitely. The date for the initiation of this boycott should be left to the National Executive to decide. If any area had completed its preparations (including the provision of alternative facilities) before that date then with the permission of the National Executive, it could begin its local boycott. Meanwhile the ANC was to discourage participation in school committees and boards. The National Executive would establish a National Educational Council which would make provision for a network of cultural clubs providing informal education (50). The mood of a majority of the delegates was in favour of immediate action; a proposal to limit the boycott for a trial period to the Port Elizabeth area was decisively rejected (51).

The underlying tensions within Congress reflected in these hesitations and compromises are not a major theme in this paper. In brief, they were caused by isolation of some sectors of the leadership from more activist branches as a result of bureaucratic inefficiency; the presence on the National Executive of men who belonged to an older and less militant generation of African politicians; provincial and ideological rivalries; class considerations; and well-founded apprehension concerning Congress' organisational vigour (52). They have been discussed extensively elsewhere. In this paper our concern is to examine the local response to the ANC's boycott appeal and the reasons for its peculiar

strength in certain areas. First, we will consider the area in which the boycott movement was to have its greatest impact: the townships along the Reef.

Reports of fairly energetic Youth League campaigning of the issue begin to occur several months before April, this being especially the case in the Western Areas (Sophiatown, Newclare, and Western Native Townships) which were threatened by a government removal scheme (53). Despite regular rallies and street corner meetings, local politicians appeared to be a little disappointed by public response. One spokesman pointed out at a Sophiatown meeting on January 2nd: "It is a pity that I see very little youth here, as they are the people directly affected (by Bantu Education)" (54). One month later there seems to have been little improvement: P Q Vundla, regional chairman, complained: "your organisation (the ANCYL) is very important indeed; but it should be much stronger in this area" (55). However lack of interest amongst many young people did not appear to dampen the confidence of the organisers in Western Native Township:

"From 1st April is the time we must sit down and work and have our own schools. We have got well educated people like Dr Matthews, Mr Robert Resha, Mr P Q Vundla and Dr Conco to draft the syllabuses for the children. (56)".

Outside the Western Areas, the most active centre appeared to be Benoni and here there was indication from early on that the movement would receive substantial popular support. For example, in February Bantu World reported "growing feeling in Benoni against the Bantu Education Act". A teacher who approved the boycott was threatened at women's prayer meeting and people were contributing generously to the Branch Chairman's fund raising appeal (57). Another encouraging sign was the apparent popular antipathy to the new school committees which were being established under the Act: in early March noisy parents' meetings considered these in Roodepoort, Moroka, Jabavu and Sophiatown (58). In Alexandra too there seemed to be plenty of enthusiasm, though here the branch was divided between those who accepted the need for alliance with non-African political groupings and the Africanists. The latter were led by the soon to be expelled branch chairman, the flamboyant, bearded Josias Madzunya, who used to address his audience as "fellow slaves of Africa". On Bantu Education the Africanist leader proclaimed "they want to teach them that white people originated in Africa" (59). Among Madzunya's opponents on the branch executive was J J Hadebe, a former teacher, who was going to play an important role in the boycott movement later on (see below).

With all this activity it is not surprising that the National Executive decision in early March to postpone the boycott aroused considerable local discontent. On March 13th speakers at a meeting in Orlando proposed there should be established two ANC branches at Orlando - one in opposition to that which obeyed leadership directives. The former squatter leader, Schreiner Baduza (not a Congress member), said: "if I was a member of the Youth League I would say the leaders of the ANC are sellouts, and otherwise I would say 'let us do away with Congress'". Another speaker concluded: "Congress here is nothing. I am sure that the ANC members will do nothing about Bantu Education" (60). In the case of Orlando he may have had a point - the branch was riddled by factional disputes and tended to be dominated by Africanists totally at odds with provincial and national leaders.

Elsewhere on the Rand branches ignored the National Executive's postponement decision. In Benoni the ANC resolved to boycott as had been originally decided though amending the date for the inception of the boycott to Tuesday April 12th, the first day of school after the Easter holidays (61). The meeting was addressed by both Robert Resha, national leader of the Youth League and its Transvaal president, H G Makgothi. A week later a well attended

gathering in Lady Selbourn pledged its support for the boycott (62). By the end of the month the Transvaal Youth League and even some of the older leaders were in open rebellion against the National Executive. A "Save our Children" conference in Orlando came out in favour of the boycott and several prominent individuals including P Q Vundla and Bob Ngwendu (Transvaal ANC executive member) promised to withdraw their own children from school (63).

As we have seen, this rank and file feeling forced the national leaders to reconsider and the Port Elizabeth conference gave a qualified assent to those areas which favoured an immediate withdrawal of school children, subject to National Executive approval in the case of each local movement. By this stage however, branches were acting autonomously of any higher authority. On Tuesday April 12th, children were withdrawn or stayed away from schools in Benoni, Germiston (and Katlehong), Brakpan and Alexandra. In Benoni Youth League volunteers and mothers visited the ten primary schools in the Old Location and ordered all children home (64). In Germiston, events were more dramatic with ANC Youth League volunteers marching through the location streets at 3.30 a.m., shouting slogans and calling on children not to go to school. All school children remained at home until the Congress branch announced that it had opened an "independent school", rounded up the children and took them there (65). In Katlehong, the new Germiston township, five miles away, 22 women were arrested after police stopped them from taking children out of school. There the local effectiveness of the boycott was to be enhanced as the result of the location's superintendent advising people to keep their children from school the following morning (66). In Alexandra, the ANC branch canvassed houses through the night of the 11th - half the township's school children stayed at home. In the case of Alexandra the provincial ANC president, E P Moretsele, attributed the main responsibility for the boycott to parents rather than the ANC (67). The ANC was apparently anxious to disassociate itself from some rough behaviour blaming intimidation of school children on "Tsotsis" (68).

In the days which followed the boycott movement was to widen considerably. By Wednesday 3 000 Brakpan children were out of school - the highest figure for any single location. Parents marched with children in a Germiston procession. All Benoni and Germiston schools were empty and in Katlehong Township only 70 out of 1 000 odd pupils at a community school attended (69). On Thursday the Minister of Native Affairs announced that any children not at school by April 25th would receive no further education. The same day a march by women and children in Benoni was broken up by police. By the following Monday the boycott movement had penetrated Johannesburg with six primary schools in Western Native Township and Newclare abandoned by their 3 500 pupils after visits from Youth League youths and women (70).

The marches and processions continued more or less daily in the effective locations and became increasingly violent in nature. By the end of the week two unsuccessful attempts at arson had been staged against school buildings in Benoni and near Katlehong. On Friday the total number of children out of school exceeded 10 000 and the boycott, still strong in the original centres, had spread to Moroka/Jabavu schools in Soweto and to Sophiatown (though here disaffected parents sent their children, with apparent ANC approval, to the newly established unregistered church school run by Anglican missionaries). Over the weekend, however, threats by authority were having effect: in Western Native Township 1 000 parents resolved to return their children before Verwoerd's deadline. P Q Vundla, the most prominent local ANC leader, supported their decision - an action which was to earn him a beating up by youth leaders and, later expulsion from the ANC.

Notwithstanding Verwoerd's ultimatum, as well as conservative criticism from African politicians and the Bantu World, the third week of the boycott began with nearly 7 000 school children absent and hence banned from further schooling.

The most resilient boycott centres were Johannesburg's Western Native Township and Brakpan, where loudspeaker vans successfully exhorted parents to keep their children at home and where a teacher's house was set alight (71). 1 300 children were expelled in Brakpan and 2 000 were reported to be still out of school by the beginning of June in the Western Areas (72). In several townships schools were closed down permanently and the 116 redundant teachers sacked (73).

The National Organisation's reaction to these events was somewhat sluggish. Transvaal based Working Committee congratulated the boycotters in a circular dated 23rd April and called for an intensification of the boycott for the next week (74). However, unanimity within the National Executive was achieved only a month later, on May 21st, when an ambitious three phase campaign was announced. The boycott could no longer depend on "haphazard and spasmodic efforts whose origin is unknown". Phase one would involve an educative campaign, phase two, withdrawal of children in areas of readiness where alternative facilities had been prepared, and finally total non-cooperation with all activities directly or indirectly connected with Bantu Education (75).

A serious effort was made to improve "alternative education" facilities with the establishment of the African Educational Movement at a meeting in Johannesburg on May 23rd attended by churches, ANC and Congress of Democrat representatives. The AEM however only began operating from the end of June (see below) (76) and meanwhile local Congress organisers ran illegal "independent schools" in some of the centres - two accommodating 300 children were broken up by police in Alexandra in June (77). Notwithstanding the courage and commitment of local activists, Congress branches were scarcely equipped to provide facilities for thousands of small children. Organisers would make brave promises about Congress running private schools (78) but some parents in other townships were beginning to consider other options. In some areas the position of anti-boycotters was strengthened by lack of solid support branches received from leadership. A Brakpan school committee member informed the press :

"When the boycott started we called on the ANC members to tell us what the position was. We asked them what alternative plans there were for the children. They said there were none and they had no instructions from Head Office about that yet. In the meantime nothing would be done (79).

In most of the affected locations local parent organisations tried to establish schools independently of ANC/AEM initiatives. In the Western areas by August 1955 the Matlehomola Private School had 950 children (almost half the children affected by the bans). ANC Officials had sounded out the school's secretary on possibility of their serving on the school's committee. They had been told that before they could stand for election "they must confess to their followers that they have changed and that they support the present system" (80). AEM records mention independent schools in Orlando and Sophiatown, apparently not antagonistic to the ANC (81). In Brakpan a school was opened in September 1955 by the Brakpan Civic Protection Society (a group which grew out of the Brakpan School Committee mentioned above). There was stiff opposition from the ANC. The school was attended by only 230 (in contrast to the local ANC Cultural Club which attracted about 800 boycotters). Unsubsidised private schools could be very expensive (the Sophiatown Christ the King School charged 10/- per month per pupil) (82) and many parents would have been unable to afford high fees. In Germiston there is no evidence of hostility between the ANC branch and any parents. Perhaps this was because here the ANC had succeeded in establishing, despite police interference, a proper school. The 380 children were taught by trained teachers who were Congress members and perhaps because of this the school decided to legalise its status by applying for registration. Registration was refused on the grounds of a technicality but it was suspected that the

Department regarded it as a "protest school". The school reopened as a cultural club - within the limits of the law so long as no formal education was provided (83). Similarly, there are no indications of a rift in Alexandra but here it was the dissident Africanists who were involved in a community school: the Haile Selassie School which had existed over the previous 5 years increased its enrollment by nearly 1 000 children. The AEM organiser (probably Hadebe) mentioned in a report difficulties between him and the school because of the involvement of an H S Madzunya (? Josias) "reluctant to work with a committee which has on it Europeans, Coloureds and Indians". The report also mentions a "dissatisfied element" amongst Haile Selassie's pupils and friction between parents and the school. This could not have been very large; the local cultural club formed partly from disenfranchised Haile Selassie children had only 200 members. Like the Germiston school, Haile Selassie failed in its bid for registration (84).

How genuinely popular was the boycott movement in its local centres? Were the Congress branches reflecting local feeling or trying to dictate parental response to Bantu Education? This is difficult to assess as the available evidence is thin and patchy. The press (uniformly hostile to the boycott from its inception) reported the progress of various deputations from the affected locations which pleaded with the Department for the admission of the expelled children (this was granted over the two year period). But such groups need not have been very representative of the whole community. Apart from the reports concerning tsotsis in Alexandra and an allegation from an obviously partisan Brakpan School committee member there were few accusations of intimidation of parents. The tension which appears to have developed in certain areas between the ANC and boycotters' parents might not have existed at the inception of the boycott: it was probably a result of worries over the quality of alternative educational options offered by the ANC as well as the increasing isolation of the movement. It seems a little unlikely that branches on their own initiative, with no encouragement from higher authority, would have imposed an unpopular policy on their own local constituency. Most telling of all, there are no signs of any apparent decline in ANC support in the East Rand. For example, in Natal spruit and Benoni, in the 1956 elections, the ANC won control of the location advisory boards (85). In Brakpan, the Civic Protection Society, the main local critic of the school boycott, showed its true colours when in March 1956 it opposed a well supported bus boycott led by the ANC and the Vigilance Committee. Obviously the society's leaders were well insulated from the concerns of the former inhabitants of the location (86).

The other area in which the boycott had a certain impact was in the Eastern Cape, like the East Rand - an area in which the urban locations and townships, Congress had a strong following. Here again the boycott movement appeared to suffer from lack of central direction (the Cape-based members of the National Executive were in any case unenthusiastic) and in general was much weaker than in the East Rand. Reports of preparations are sparse: a March meeting in Korsten (Port Elizabeth's oldest location) attended by 3 000 parents called for action on April 1st in conformity with the December ANC resolution (87) and no less than six electoral meetings were held in Grahamstown by the authorities, all of which failed to persuade parents to choose a school committee. Their unwillingness was attributed to Congress influence (88). In the event, despite local rank and file feeling in favour of the boycott (evident at the Port Elizabeth conference in April) children all attended school on April 12th. The next reported activity was in May when Port Elizabeth's New Brighton branch called for a regional boycott of schools from the 23rd. East London's ANC denied any knowledge of this decision. Apparently there had been leadership difficulties which left the local branch in total disarray (89). In any case in East London some ANC members had accepted positions on the new school committees (90).

The Port Elizabeth boycott only slowly gathered impetus from the 23rd. There was a significant police presence that day and many parents escorted their children to school. Parental fears were probably aroused by Verwoerd's threat of instant dismissal of any school children who participated which precluded an even symbolic limited withdrawal. Despite a house-to-house canvass the day before there were no pickets outside schools (91).

Despite this unpromising start the movement was to slowly gather strength, particularly in the small rural towns and villages around Port Elizabeth (92). The Evening Post reported a fairly effective primary school boycott in Kirkwood, the centre of a closely settled citrus farming area (93). ANC influence in this area may have been linked to the local strength of the Food and Canning Workers Union but more research needs to bear this out.

In Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage a second boycott attempt was made in July despite considerable opposition from sections of the location community. Clashes between police and some parents on the one hand and pickets of young men on the other occurred in both centres on the 18th, but despite these difficulties at the end of the first week in August Congress claimed that 1 700 children were staying away from Port Elizabeth schools (94). Altogether the Eastern Cape boycott was to involve, according to the AEM, over 2 500 children from Uitenhage, New Brighton, Korsten, Kirkwood, Missionvale, Kleinvee, Kleinskool and Walmer location (95).

It was a surprisingly light response when one remembers that the Eastern Cape was the storm centre of black politics in the 1950s and an area in which the ANC and the Trade Union movement were comparatively strong and links between the two well developed. Part of the explanation lies in the deep cleavages between grass roots membership and a very cautious leadership still much more than that which prevailed in the Transvaal. T E Tshunungwa, the ANC's 'national organiser' in a revealing letter to Oliver Tambo wrote :

"Well my duty here (in the Eastern Cape) is to toe the line in the best interests of the organisation and to strictly confine the disputes and the differences to the officials and the organisation only and that masses should never know it was a mistake to carry out the boycott" (96).

Joe Matthews of the Youth League, writing to Walter Sisulu, later that year, accused the Cape leaders of "passivity", complaining that he was "really fed up with the whole leadership" (97).

The most sustained local reaction to Bantu Education in this area were to be encountered in the reserves, already as we noted, the scene of some agitation by All African Convention affiliates. The AAC opposed the school boycott as "adventurist" (after all, had it been effective, many of the members would be without jobs) and confined its campaigning to opposing school committees and boards. Opposition to these institutions and to nominations to them are reported to have taken place in Tsolo and Butterworth in the Transkei in early 1955 and in the Ciskei villages at intervals between 1955 and 1958. The committees and boards were linked with the issue of increased taxation : at Butterworth officials were asked :

"Where are the monies to come from which the school committees are to handle ? Seeing that this is a government affair, why are the people going to be taxed". (98)

In Glen Gray, it was reported that at 11 out of 24 villages represented at a meeting in early 1955 between headmen and magistrates, school committees could not be established because of local opposition (99).

Besides widespread passive opposition and suspicion, there were a few instances of more active revolt. The Police Commissioner's report for 1955 mentions arson of school buildings in Peddie (100) and in September 1955, 50 men entered a school in Mgwalande, Peddie, dismissed the children, locked the building and removed the keys (101).

There are therefore indications of considerable anxiety and tension provoked by state intervention in Eastern Cape Schools which might have been more effectively exploited by determined political organisation. In rural areas more oppressive local government, increasing taxation and increasingly generalised economic hardship were powerful and explosive factors. Had rural and urban movements been more closely articulated, the challenge to authority might have been formidable. But to exploit such currents a revolutionary movement would have had to have been present and neither Congress nor the Convention was this in the mid 1950s.

By the end of the decade local Congress leaders themselves were participating in the new system, energetically contesting and winning school board elections despite official ANC disapproval. Boycotts often involve de facto concessions of power: the boards and committees had real if limited powers. Christopher Gell, reporting from Port Elizabeth in 1955, mentions African members of school boards influencing appointments in direction of relatives and friends (102). Men and women struggling to survive economically and provide a better world for their children are not necessarily revolutionaries. The pressures arising from every day life require inspired and powerful political leadership if they are to be disregarded.

What Congress did try and provide was some kind of alternative to Bantu Education and its efforts in this direction deserve consideration for their persistence alone. As we have seen in the wake of the boycott, affected branches tried to establish "independent schools". By June, the African Education Movement chaired by Trevor Huddleston and with energetic support from Johannesburg's Congress of Democrat activists, was beginning to assist these ventures. The formal aims of the AEM were three fold: the establishment of private schools; the assistance of cultural clubs for those boycotters whose parents could not afford private school fees, and a home education programme. In practice the cultural clubs became the AEM's main preoccupation. These, for legal reasons, were conducted on an informal basis. The children would be taught through a programme of songs, stories and games, the rudiments of mathematics, geography, history and general knowledge. Club leaders, supported financially by the modest fees that were charged, would be provided by the AEM with cyclostyled teaching material, encouragement, and a training programme.

Given the limitations of what could be achieved, the clubs were in some centres surprisingly well attended - Brakpan being the outstanding example where a year after the boycott began, the club still had over 700 members and leaders paid up to £16 a month from local resources (103). One of these was a fully qualified teacher, who had resigned his post to join the club, bringing his pupils with him (104). Problems mentioned in a memorandum by the AEM's full time organiser, J J Hadebe, included the full qualifications of club leaders - only a minority it seems were trained teachers (and in any case informal educational techniques require specialised expertise), shortage of leaders, insufficient money to pay them and a lack of facilities and equipment - clubs were often held in the open (105). The material provided by the AEM was well prepared and imaginative, emphasising a tactful and sensitive approach to certain areas:

The Freedom Charter - to be taught to the children as they understand it. Care to be taken not to offend parents, the Charter not to be imposed on the people. The importance is not the name but the ideas embodied in it. The Freedom Charter to be the basis for our education (106).

The AEM's approach involved a reversal of normal South African educational conventions; considerable demands were placed on future leaders :

Trust the children - let them take responsibility for themselves (107).

Even in terms of formal criteria, the clubs could be successful. Some of their members wrote and passed Standard VI examinations, and Benoni and Brakpan as late as 1956 were even winning recruits from government schools (108). The AEM and the cultural clubs were a brave experiment but their significance became increasingly symbolic as numbers dwindled and children were re-absorbed into government schools. Their interest lies in their being the first sustained effort by Congress members to attempt to flesh out in educational terms an alternative world view : something that had been called for often in political rhetoric but seldom attempted before.

Opposition to Bantu Education though widespread only developed into open political rebellion in a few areas. In fact most of the opposition movements of the 1950s were geographically isolated and sporadic : amongst a fearfully poor and politically rightless population a peculiar combination of factors had to be present before anger could be translated into active defiance. The remainder of this essay will concentrate on isolating those factors which help to explain why this happened in the East Rand townships.

The driving force of South Africa's industrial revolution was located in the East Rand townships. Gold mining operations began in the 1880s, and the presence in the Transvaal of large coal and iron deposits led to the establishment in Benoni of the first steel works in the Union. By the end of the First World War engineering was beginning to be the most important local industry and this trend was strengthened during the 1930s, with an influx of foreign firms, and in the 1940s when wartime import substitution policies gave rise to another spurt of industrialisation. By 1947 Benoni was the union's centre for heavy industry, it and its neighbouring town Boksburg, making up South Africa's most densely industrialised area. To the west, Germiston grew in importance, first as a mining centre, then as the main railway junction on the Reef and centre for lighter industries - 400 of which were established in the period 1917 to 1957 (109).

The relatively early establishment of secondary industry in this area had important social consequences. The towns became important employment centres for black workers and early centres of black urbanisation : with the exception of Nancefield (in what is today Soweto) Benoni's African location with its 9 600 inhabitants was by 1929 the biggest on the Rand (110). Secondary industry required a relatively skilled and permanent workforce - the men and women who lived in the locations of the East Rand were by the 1950s members of a long established proletariat. Nevertheless these were small towns and at a municipal level the major political force was not the industrialists and businessmen who predominated in the affairs of the nearby metropolis, Johannesburg, but rather white workers. Given their constituency, Labour and Nationalist town councils of the 1930s and the 1940s were reluctant to embark on ambitious programmes of public works and African locations on the East Rand were notoriously horrible. In some,

squalid living conditions were exacerbated by the uneven application of the provisions of the Urban Areas Act. Areas of municipal neglect tended to coincide with inefficient or negligible control. Benoni's location was to develop into a refuge for people driven out of other Reef towns by the enforcement of the Act (111). These places were always the object of public indignation : a Benoni inspector of Native labour reported in 1920 that "the conditions under which the Natives are living are vile" (112) and as recently as 1981 a Star report had this to say of Germiston's old location :

Fetid rivers of liquid filth run down the side of each dirt road, collecting in noxious pools of swirling scum. Peeling and rusting corrugated iron plastered walls form shelters for humiliated families (113).

Nor was the disgust limited to external observers. In Benoni, for example, an African Housing and Rates Board existed from 1945 and squatter movements were to unilaterally occupy buildings and land kept empty by the council (114).

The chances of escape from the poverty-stricken despair of the locations through individual enterprise and initiative were just that much more limited in the East Rand than in, for example, Johannesburg. The small towns did not supply the same degree of administrative or commercial white collar employment : local lack of demand for well educated blacks was reflected in the lack of a single secondary school in the area until the 1960s (115). Despite the frequent employment of women in the food and textile industries (for which the East Rand was an important centre), household incomes were well below Johannesburg's (116).

The 1950s were an important transitional phase for these communities. For in this decade the African population's of Germiston, Benoni and Brakpan were to be subjected to the full thrust of Afrikaner and Nationalist social engineering. Vast geometrically planned and tightly administered "model" townships were erected - in each case at a considerable distance from the city centre and slowly location inhabitants were screened and sorted and resettled according to the dictates of Verwoerdian dogma. Germiston, with its Katlehong township, and Benoni, with Daveyton, in 1949 and 1950 were among the first municipalities in the Union to comply with the Group Areas Act. In terms of living space, housing standards and sanitation, the new townships may have represented an improvement on the old locations - but to some groups within the community they would have appeared threatening (117) and the fashion in which these changes were implemented evoked widespread resentment (118). The removals tended to speed up a process of social differentiation within the local communities. The new townships being isolated from city centres provided improved business opportunities for African traders and with their own administrations created a certain amount of clerical employment. This and their geographical features tended to make it less easy for political leaders to evoke a united communal response to a particular issue. The strength of political movements of the 1950s in the old locations of the East Rand was no accident. With the onset of the removals (a process which lasted more than a decade) the old locations became even more neglected (119) and their inhabitants increasingly insecure about their future.

The socio-economic history of the East Rand is, for an important part, the history of African working class communities. The communities are characterised by the depth of their proletarian experience, and a measure of poverty unusual even among urban black South African people. Because of their relative smallness and the importance of industrial employment among their male and female members, there is a high degree of social solidarity. With these points in mind, it is easier to understand the political radicalism which took root in the East Rand locations

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