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HISTORY WORKSHOP

THE MAKING OF CLASS

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Thousands of young South Africans were detained, whipped, teargassed, and fired upon in 1985. Even larger numbers were mobilised at rallies, in organisations, and behind street barricades. There has been widespread recognition of the distinctive contribution made by the youth within a broader political struggle. As one commentator put it:

> They are very frustrated and very angry. In a critical moment of our history, these passionate, dedicated, immature, politically untutored students have taken over. Now they are getting their political education very quickly.

In a repressive political context, where other forms of mobilisation and organisation are proscribed or harassed, social institutions like schools become important recruiting grounds for the teenage "shock troops of a nation-wide political insurrection" (1). Consider the political career of B- in this respect. His school, although designed to inculcate respect for the regime, instead

> served as a way station on the road to revolutionary politics, the school's rigid discipline apparently provoking widespread defiance of authority. In the lower grades, student dissidence took innocuous forms... But by the time B- entered the upper grades ... student dissent had become more sophisticated. He became a member of a radical student group that organised discussion circles and circulated illegal literature ... <At this time> social unrest and open protest ... deepened and spread... at 16 B- was already a leading member of the student movement... The feverish disorders of that year drew B- and a generation of like-minded schoolboys into the arena of serious revolutionary politics... At seventeen, B- thus became ... a full-time activist.

The political education of school or college students is often spectacularly rapid. Initial involvement over local issues translates into activism that links up with broader, non-educational movements. Of particular importance in this shift are "alternative" educational activities, through which students not only become exposed to critical thought, but also challenge in their everday practice the most immediate hierarchies that confront them. A participant in such activities recalled:

> It was a period of permanent assemblies and sit-ins against repression. The claims were for a democratic student union and for general freedoms... These freedoms were established in the <schools> which became "liberated territories", and we had to defend them day by day. Support from the students quickly increased through the struggle. There was a fantastic life ... with plays, films, exhibitions, conferences and lectures, posters, wall magazines which were now openly anti-regime, denouncing repression and the dictatorship.

The observations in the preceding three paragraphs will seem thoroughly familiar to any who have observed popular resistance in South Africa since June 1976. As it happens, the quotations illustrating each paragraph are drawn, repectively, from the Indonesian anti-colonial revolution, from Tsarist Russia in 1905, and from student opposition in the twilight days of Franco's Spain. (2)

Such comparisons prompt certain questions. What general explanations for youth-based resistance are available? What explanatory force do they possess for the South African case? Are there instances that offer a structural, rather than superficial, basis for comparison? Some tentative answers to these queries are proposed in Section 1 below.

Section 2 attempts to provide a South African context for the Western Cape study. It characterises the structural crisis confronting the South African state, and suggests how the "crisis in the schools" is related to the wider phenomenon. It asks, in

other words, whether it is possible to isolate a "youth" component in popular resistance, analytically distinct from the broader struggle. It seeks to identify the specific material/demographic/social base on which school and youth resistance politics is constructed - and in doing so draws upon some of the theoretical and comparative data visited earlier.

In Section 3 the wide-angled lens is replaced by one focussed more narrowly, and in relative close-up. Its subject is the educational boycott and other youth-based political activities in greater Cape Town in 1985. It poses a number of local, specific, and fairly immediate questions: what were some of the key characteristics of youth politics in Cape Town during 1985? How did these resemble, and differ from, earlier moments of activism - especially the 1980 schools boycott? What strengths and weaknesses can be identified in Cape Town's youth-based politics? What forms and patterns of consciousness are discernible - and what relevance might they have for the future?

(1) SOME THEORETICAL AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

There are several theoretical explanations of radicalism in "youth politics". They stemmed initially from Mannheim's characterisation of generations in sociological rather than in merely biological or chronological terms; and were greatly stimulated by attempts to explain student revolt in advanced capitalist societies in the 1960s. The dense growth of these latter analyses was to some extent cross-fertilised with studies emphasising the salience of youth-based resistance in nationalist and anti-colonial movements (such as Turkey, China, Egypt, Indonesia, the Gold Coast, etc.) In the classic Marxist texts, there was exploration of the class identity and character of the intelligentsia; Lenin wrote suggestively about contradictory elements within student movements; and Gramsci's concern with the relationship between revolutionary politics, intellectuals and the state is central to his writings.

What follows is not a systematic review of this literature,

but a consideration of key themes and concepts which may sharpen and clarify analysis of recent South African youth/student resistance. While many accounts of post-Soweto popular struggles acknowledge the leading role played by youth militants, there is little theoretical or comparative commentary.

The best developed of the theoretical models of youth radicalism are various versions of generational conflict. All are intellectually descended from Mannheim's notion of a "social generation". Its members do not merely co-exist in time and space: they become a social generation when they "participate in the common destiny of that historical and social unit." (3) By grappling with a distinct set of social and historical problems they develop an awareness and common identity - a generational consciousness, analagous to class consciousness and national consciousness.

More recently, Abrams has revisited the "problem of generations", and in an illuminating passage argues that the speed and intensity with which such consciousness is created can vary greatly. The more complex, ambiguous and diversified are the "possibilities of adulthood", the more rapidly and forcefully are "new social generations forged out of the entry of youth into adult life." Societal turbulence lends an edge to generational consciousness: "structural differentiation makes for faster history." In particular, historical experience of "war, revolution, crisis or liberation" is singularly important for the configuration of society as a whole: "an age group located at such a moment in history can create a whole new social generation."(4)

Less concerned with the identity of social generations as historical creations - yet in effect demonstrating their importance - are approaches stressing population growth and patterns of age distribution as the demographic bases of youth politics. Moller, for instance, describes the period since the beginning of the nineteenth century as "the age of the 'population explosion'", and argues that within the phenomenon of rapid population growth the demographic variable of age distribution carries particular implications. A relative increase in the

ratio of youth to total population, especially if the society is also undergoing disruptive economic and social change, directly increases the likelihood of cultural and political change.(5) After surveying a number of twentieth century risings and revolutions, Moller finds that "young people provide the driving force and often, to a great extent the intellectual and organisational leadership."(6)

But what is the nature of the link between student rebels and intellectual leadership? This is effectively a sub-head in a broader issue that has long concerned Marxism: the historical and political role of intellectuals, and their relations with working class movements. Marx and Engels devoted three paragraphs of the **Communist Manifesto** to answering the question "How does the proletarian movement acquire educated elements?" Partly - they said - through impersonal pressures on sections of the middle class intelligentsia, precipitating them into the ranks of the working class; but also partly through conscious political choice. When class struggle reaches critical dimensions the "process of dissolution" in the old society "assumes such a violent, glaring character that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class."(7)

In their later writings, Marx and Engels viewed bourgeois intellectuals ambivalently: on the one hand as ideologists for the ruling class, but on the other hand as potential recruits to the struggle for socialism. Both authors delivered diatribes against the self-importance, irresolution and non-revolutionary philosophising of intellectuals in nineteenth century socialist movements. They said little specifically about students; what they did remark was frequently caustic (Engels: "How awful for the world ... that there are 40,000 revolutionary students in Russia, without a proletariat or even a Russian peasantry behind them ... all of them officer candidates without an army.")(8) Bourgeois intellectuals, concludes Draper, can tend to be "more volatile, erratic and unstable than most workers... This pattern may reach a peak with students, who are after all apprentice intellectuals."(9)

Lenin - writing during decades of student activism in Russia

- paid considerably more attention than Marx or Engels to youth and students. Some of the writings collected in On Youth(10) are essentially hortatory; a number are devoted to the role of the young as the builders and inheritors of a new society. In the more analytical passages, two themes emerge: a genuine enthusiasm for the revolutionary energies of students and young workers; and an insistence on certain objective limitations to their revolutionary capacities. Broadly speaking, there is a shift over time in Lenin's perceptions from the first, more positive, position to the second, more sceptical.

Thus, in 1903 Lenin wrote warmly of students:

> They are the most responsive section of the intelligentsia, and the intelligentsia are so called just because they most consciously, most resolutely and most accurately reflect and express the development of class interests and political groupings in society as a whole.(11)

In October 1905 (against a backdrop of unprecedented student/worker alliances in Russia) he wrote that "The students are guided by a sound revolutionary instinct, enhanced by their contact with the proletariat." In the same month he exuberantly urged the Combat Committee of the St Petersburg Bolsheviks:

> Go to the youth, gentlemen! That is the only remedy! Otherwise - I give you my word for it - you will be too late ... and will be left with `learned' memoranda, plans, charts, schemes, and magnificent recipes, but without an organisation, without a living cause. Go the the youth.

But the student "strikes" of 1908 were greeted with reservations and criticism. Even the "most active elements" of the students still clung "to pure academic aims" and reformist goals; they were bound by "thousands and millions of threads" to their class origins - "the middle and lower bourgeoisie, the petty officials, certain groups of the peasantry, the clergy, etc." Then, and subsequently, Lenin upbraided students for

characteristically youthful errors. He warned against infection by "the itch of revolutionary phrase-making" - that is, "superb, alluring, intoxicating" slogans without objective content. He called for vigilance against youthful ultra-leftism; chided immature rigidity and impatience; and scoffed at inexperienced or romantic revolutionism.(12)

Gramsci, in a sense, returned to the original query of the **Communist Manifesto** when he asked "Does every social group have its own particular specialised category of intellectuals?" And like Lenin, Gramsci was convinced of the the contribution of intellectuals to working class politics: "in order to organise itself as a class, the proletariat needs intellectuals, in other words, leaders."(13) But his approach involved a significant departure from classical Marxist thought, above all in the meaning he gave to the notion "intellectual". An intellectual was not defined in terms of mental labour, but instead in terms of performing particular functions in society.

His concept of organic intellectuals - "organic" to a social class, giving that class "homogeneity, and an awareness of its own function" - is elaborate and subtle, and has been widely discussed and criticised.(14) Here, it is necessary only to note Gramsci's capsule definition of an organic intellectual as an active participant in political life, "constructor, organiser, and `permanent persuader'" of a class; and to remember that the existence of such intellectuals, as a "left tendency", is facilitated by "a break of an organic kind within the mass of <traditional> intellectuals".(15) Such a fission is more likely to happen when a society is gripped by an organic crisis: a concept applied to contemporary South Africa in Section 2 below.

Writing as the events of May 1968 still reverberated, Hobsbawm delineated one axis along which such an "organic break" could occur: a revolutionary shift by a generation of young intellectuals.(16) Starting with the observation that "the characteristic revolutionary person today is a student or (generally young) intellectual", he asks why intellectuals become revolutionaries. Conscious revolutionism arises when people confront the apparent failure of all alternative ways of

realising their objectives, "the closing of all doors against them." Locked out of our metaphorical house - he suggests - we opt to break down the door: "even so we are unlikely to batter in the door unless we feel that it will give way. Becoming a revolutionary implies not only a measure of despair, but also some hope." This optimistic desperation occurs, typically, in societies "incapable of satisfying the demands of most of their people", societies "in whose future few believe."(17)

The radicalism of the late 1960s and early 1970s (Hobsbawm argues) sprang from a renewed "period of general crisis for capitalism". This crisis, moreover, bore acutely upon intellectuals, their numbers greatly swollen by th growth of scientific technology and tertiary education. An unprecedented expansion of higher education had three consequences: an acute strain on educational institutions; a multiplication of first-generation students; and "speaking economically, a potential overproduction of intellectuals." Student unrest, under these circumstances, is almost inevitable. "A large body of students facing either unemployment or a much less desirable employment than they have been led to expect ... are likely to form a permanent discontented mass" and feed into radical movements.(18) This analysis - it will be argued in Section 2 - is directly applicable to South Africa.

The concepts and perspectives discussed above recur in some of the case studies of youth movements elsewhere. If comparative insights are available from a voluminous literature, where might they be sought? Studies of highly advanced capitalist society, clearly, have less correspondence with the South African case than instances of late and unevenly developing capitalist economies. Moreover, if recognisably equivalent economic features were also accompanied by political authoritarianism, then the comparative exercise is potentially more useful.

Latin American case studies, accordingly, provided some suggestive pointers. In many countries, between the 1930s and 1950s, in the context of depression and dictatorships, student protests became "the earliest and most significant bases of

opposition to authoritarian governments". At the same time, student revolutionaries learned that without allies elsewhere in society they could not topple regimes: "they could articulate issues, assume vanguard positions, and take great risks, but in order to overthrow authoritarian governments ... coalitions were necessary." (19) In a number of cases, not only university students but also high school students became caught up in oppositional politics.

The Mexican student rising, brutally repressed in the glare of world-wide publicity during the 1968 Olympic Games, has a number of similarities with events in South Africa in 1976 - and 1985. Mexico, like South Africa, is a peripheral economy that has attained a measure of independent capitalist growth. GNP increased by over 300% between 1940 and the mid-1960s: an assessment at the time held that Mexico was "one of the handful of so-called underdeveloped nations to effect the transition to sustained, more or less self-generating economic expansion."(20) (If such a judgement rings hollow in the mid-1980s - as an increasingly embattled regime grapples with unemployment, inflation, a fall in oil revenue, and a huge foreign debt - this may offer further congruencies with the South African case!)

The student revolt began in 1966 on the campus of the main university in Mexico City - but in July 1968 it broadened and deepened. A fracas between teen-age high school students was broken up by riot police - and when students marched to protest against state violence, this was also brutally dispersed.

> Enraged, the students barricaded themselves in nearby preparatory schools, using commandeered public buses for their barricades... Other schools were occupied by the army and police to prevent their use by student demonstrators... Strikes spread throughout Mexico City's schools, supported by students and teachers alike.

After several months during which it sought to contain and defuse student militancy, in October the state opted for all-out repression, and soldiers opened fire on demonstrating students.

"The Mexican student movement ended with ... several hundred deaths, several hundred student activists and some professors in jail, and scores of others in exile." The rising quelled, the state responded with a mixture of reforms (the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18, certain political prisoners were released) and repression (a new penal code defined more sweepingly sedition, sabotage and "conspiracy against the nation"). (21)

A second case study also resounds with resemblances: the substantial role played by student militants in the closing years of the Franco regime in Spain. Students and workers were "the two crucial political movements working against the dictatorship" - and at one point a trade union leader saluted the young in these words: "Today the students are the vanguard of all revolutionary struggles. In the last twenty years they have become part of the vanguard of the working class movement." (22) So significant are some of the parallels between the Spanish and the South African case, that it may be useful for an analysis of the latter to outline the former, by drawing on an excellent study by Maravall.

He characterises Spanish fascism as a "specific historical product in the context of a capitalist economy and a system of capitalist class domination ... and where systematic labour-repressive policies are consistent with sharp class divisions." Between 1955 and 1975, the relative stagnation and economic autarchy of the post Civil War period was replaced by Spanish participation in the international capitalist boom. Between 1951 and 1958, the GNP per capita grew at 4,45% p.a. (only Italy and Germany achieved higher rates in Europe) - and between 1960 and 1965 the annual growth raqte of the GNP was a phenomenal 9,2%. Rapid industrialistion promoted social changes: Maravall singles out internal migrations and urbanisation as especially important. This provided the context for the resurgence of working class dissent in Spain.

Student opposition surfaced in 1956, (preceded by the emotional funerals of Ortega y Gasset and Baroja: "funerals were in those years a safety valve for political expression", recalled an activist) but was stepped up in the mid-1960s. An embryonic democratic students' movement was created; students established

links with the working class movement, holding demonstrations in solidarity with industrial strikes. By 1968, notes Maravall, activism had also become more radical:

> Limited demands for legalisation of the SDE, for a democratic university, were articulated in a global attack against the regime and this was in its turn integrated within a socialist alternative against monopoly capitalism.

One of the factors stimulating student opposition was - for the first time in a generation - the fairly widely available Marxist literature in Spain between 1967 and 1975. Maravall calls this a "tolerance at the ideological level" by the regime which was not matched "at the level of organisational politics". The target of severe repression in 1969, student militancy re-emerged in 1973, in a more underground, more revolutionary form. (23) Maravall's analysis of student/worker alliances - and the factors that enabled them - is taken up in a subsequent section.

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: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

How do the theoretical and comparative approaches outlined above inform one's understanding of South African realities? Firstly, the notion of a self-conscious "generation unit", with its implications for concerted social and political action, is directly relevant. The youthful militants of the ICU (24), the radicals who formed the Independent ANC (25), and the young intellectuals of the ANC Youth League all chafed against the restraint and moderation of their elders; they were the precursors of the Black Consciousness ideologues, the enrages of 1976, and the township comrades of the 1980s. Studies of the Soweto

risings, in particular, show clearly how a self-aware age-group sought generational unity, distanced themselves from their parents, and spoke for "we, the youth of South Africa."(26)

Secondly, the demographic factor is obviously of real importance in South Africa. The 1980 Census returns demonstrated an age distribution typical of a society in a phase of accelerated population growth. Half the population is under the age of 21. Over 43 per cent of the African population is under the age of 15 (corresponding figures for coloureds and whites are 39.75 and 28 per cent). Simply on the basis of the large contingents of children and young adults, one might predict social and political pressures. To move beyond mere arithmetic argument, and to endow demographic data with socio-historic dimensions, it is necessary to consider economic, educational, and employment trends as well.

Doing so leads to a third general finding. The "potential overproduction of intellectuals" noted by Hobsbawm, with its attendant student unrest, presents itself in South Africa in a form that is at once chronic and acute. Underlying and shaping the youth component of the political confrontations of the past decade (as distinct from the broader pattern of exploitation and oppression that generates black opposition) have been three inter-related factors. These are (i) the glaring defects of black education; (ii) the very substantial expansion of black schooling over the past couple of decades; and (iii) the issue of unemployment amongst black school-leavers.

It scarcely wants reiterating that the inequities and disparities within the segregated educational system both reflect and reproduce broader relations of exploitation and dominance within the society. Nor is there any need here to rehearse the depressing set of statistics and lived realities of gutter education as they affect black (and most acutely African) children. Grossly crowded classrooms are taught by ill-qualified teachers in authoritarian schools; pupils who survive monumentally high drop-out and failure rates are forced into deadening reliance on rote learning of heavily ideological syllabi. (27)

And not surprisingly, the short-term or immediate demands of

student movements - from SASO and SASM through to COSAS - have addressed themselves directly to the manifest shortcomings of the education system. Highly specific demands about textbooks, school equipment, corporal punishment and sexual harassment have been joined by calls for elected Student Representative Councils, for the scrapping of the age restrictions that disqualify older (and frequently politically active) students, and for the non-victimisation of student leaders. From these demands it is a short step to the argument that true educational reform can be achieved only in a unitary system of free and compulsory schooling - and that such a system can only be won in South Africa through fundamental political transformation.

As important as the defects of black education, but less frequently mentioned, is the huge expansion of high school and tertiary education that has taken place over the past twenty years. The bare outline of the story is conveyed in the following table: (28)

EXPANSION OF AFRICAN EDUCATION SINCE 1960

Year	secondary school	matriculants	university
1960	45 598	717	1 871
1965	66 568	1 606	1 880
1970	122 489	2 938	4 578
1975	318 568	9 009	7 845
1980	577 584	31 071	10 564
1984	1 001 249	86 873	36 604

Between 1960 and 1975 the numbers of Africans in high schools increased seven fold; in the next decade, they trebled again. The numbers proceeding to matriculation have increased even more startlingly: btween 1960 and 1984 there was more than a hundred-fold increase. Senior secondary education for Africans in 1960 was still the prerogative of an elite; by the 1980s it had become a mass phenomenon. (Within sharp limits: only some 35% of the 15-19 year age group was enrolled in high schools in 1980. This compared with a ratio of 77% for Coloured and 86.4% for white children in the same age group.) (29) The totals for

Coloured education show a similar "massification": there was a total high school enrollment in 1960 of about 25,00; in 1970 of 57,420 and in 1984 of 158,000.

This spectacular growth in black schooling stems from two distinct causes. On the one hand, there has been an explicit attempt since Soweto to upgrade education so as to stave off school-based rebellion. On the other hand, black schooling was already showing mass growth before Soweto - and the impetus was mainly economic. The growth of the economy through the 1960s, a perceived skills shortage, and pressure from employers all shaped policy. Both these aspects - the place of education within the wider reformist strategies of the state, and the structural demands of a rapidly growing economy - have been discussed elsewhere. (30)

Even had the South African economy remained stable through the seventies and into the eighties, it is likely that the growth in black student numbers would have stretched the educational institutions uncomfortably. In the event, the protracted economic crisis of the past twelve years, assuaged only by the temporary benisons of rising gold prices, has seen the overall quality of black education fall. An inadequately financed system has strained to accommodate a ballooning school population. This combination of numerical growth and deteriorating conditions was inflammable enough; combustibility was ensured by the irregular but persistent recession. Overall, the economic crisis has sapped the living standards of the black working class; of central importance to the argument here has been the mounting unemployment - particularly youth unemployment.

There are no official statistics for the total number of unemployed workers in South Africa; estimates by academics, state officials and trade unionists vary widely; but the overall profile is clear enough. Ever since the late 1960s, a reserve army of unemployed has grown. In 1985, somewhere between 15% and 30% of the work force was unemployed. Within this huge total, high school leavers have fared particularly badly. They have been thrust onto the labour market at precisely the moment that it is contracting; many are too highly educated for cheap or unskilled

labour; and white collar openings are increasingly the preserve of those who manage to attain tertiary education. Almost two of every three unemployed blacks are under the age of 30.(31) ("What good is matric to get a job? Much better have a driver's licence" commented an unemployed youth in Cape Town in 1985.)

The impact of unemployment, and indeed unemployability for many, has undoubtedly been a spur to radicalism among black school students and school leavers. Its stimulus was added to an already highly charged circuit. By any stretch of the sociological imagination, the recipe for marginalising and alienating a generational unit is comprehensive enough. Take politically rightless, socially subordinate, economically vulnerable youths; educate them in numbers beyond their parents' wildest dreams, but in grotesquely inadequate institutions; ensure that their awareness is shaped by punitive social practices in the world beyond the schoolyard - and then dump them in large numbers on the economic scrap-heap.

To conclude this section, it remains briefly to relate the "crisis in education" to the broader, structural dilemmas confronting the South African state. Gramsci's concept of an organic crisis has been fruitfully applied to contemporary South Africa; its contours and fault lines have been charted. (32) In baldly summary form, one can identify the major components of an endemic and manifold instability.

At its heart is a crisis of capital accumulation. The halcyon years of growth and boom that shaped the 1950s and 1960s have stuttered into decline and contraction. The business pages of the South African press read like a litany of distress. Inflation, unemployment, and bankruptcies rise; fixed investments, domestic savings, and profits fall. These are integrally related to South Africa's status as a relatively backward capitalist power. Increasingly monopolised, national capital inextricably conjoined with foreign capital, the domestic economy sneezes convulsively when international capitalism catches cold. The prophylactic vagaries of a buoyant gold price can stifle the symptoms, but not cure them. When its remedial virtues wane, economic distemper is rife - in the form of balance of payments

deficits, mounting foreign indebtedness, and a shrunken Rand.

Economic malfunctions do not occur in a socio-political vacuum. On the contrary, they aggravate and are aggravated by social and political conflicts. South Africa's historical birthmark - distinguishing it from other middle-ranking capitalist powers - is the non-incorporation of the majority of its working class into its social and political institutions. The historical development of racial capitalism has created a series of antagonistic social divides: between possessors and dispossessed, between employers and workers, between black and white. So acute are these antinomies, that merely to regulate and preserve existing social relations the state has no option but to resort to authoritarian weapons and practices. Coercion, not consensus, is the social cement of the state edifice.

The principal contradiction - between large capitalist concerns and an exploited, oppressed and concentrated black working class - is no theoretical abstraction. It is the central feature of South Africa's recent history. In the 1970s, industrial conflict and mass political challenges served notice on capital and the state that the quiescence of the 1960s was ended. Political opposition moved rapidly through several phases. Reinvigoration and mobilisation under Black Consciousness was followed by the eruption of 1976/7. This in turn was succeeded by a phase (c.1979-83) in which a decentralised, localised, radicalised community-based politics took root.(33) In mid-1983, the formation of the National Forum and the United Democratic Front provided national umbrella structures for the new community politics. Since July/September 1984, political struggle has been extended and further radicalised in a number of ways.

These aspects of the organic crisis - profound problems of capital accumulation and of class rule - have also intensified a rupture at the ideological level. Positing a "crisis of legitimacy", Posel and Greenberg both stress the ideological reformulations that have occurred in the course of the state's reform project(s) of the past eight years.(34) This flux and confusion in the ideological domain creates a number of contradictions. In their analysis of the "predominantly coercive

state" in contemporary Latin America, Lowy and Sader identify an important aspect of "a profound crisis of hegemony":

> The ideological apparatuses <are> incapable of skilfully performing their functions as generators of consensus.... Schools, universities, the church, and political parties have experienced an increasingly intense crisis and encountered increasing difficulties in propagating the ideology of the established order. (35)

The "established order" in South Africa has faced a precisely similar problem. This tendency of the ideological apparatus to buckle has ensured the pre-eminence of educational institutions as a site of struggle in recent years.

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(3) STUDENT/YOUTH POLITICS IN CAPE TOWN IN 1985

Several accounts already exist of the sequence of events during the 1985 schools boycott in Cape Town. (36) They show that in the first half of the year the Cape peninsula was relatively unaffected by political and educational struggles being waged elsewhere in the country. The declaration of a State of Emergency over parts of the country in July provided a major impetus to organised youth-based politics: within a week scores of thousands of students were participating in a boycott of classes and a new co-ordinating body was created. From July until November, youth-based resistance - including the schools boycotts, the rallies and meetings, alternative education projects, direct action to harry and thwart security force movements - was the most dynamic element in local politics. It provided the "inspiration and framework for other forms of community action" such as the consumer boycotts, the Pollsmoor marches, and the September stay-away. (37)

While mobilising and organisational efforts of student activists - of which more below - played a part, beyond any doubt the major factor in ratcheting up student/youth militancy in Cape Town between July and December was the state's heavy-handed coercive measures. The rapid transition within a school, from peaceful rally through "planks and hankies" preparedness (38) to confrontation with soldiers and police behind fiery barricades was repeated time and again. Invasions of schools by police, the massive show of force on the day of the proposed march on Pollsmoor, the banning of COSAS, Carter Ebrahim's closure of the schools, the Thornton Road "trojan horse" shootings: each of these, and many other incidents, provided the student movement with new grievances, with first-hand experience of the state's repressive capacities, and with heightened militancy.

Hall, the SAIRR, and Jordi provide full chronologies and a wealth of detail: here, a skeletal summary of dates and developments may be useful for what follows.

CAPE TOWN 1985: CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE

Mar	5	UWC students boycott for one day in solidarity with students elsewhere in SA
	28	3500 attend commemoration service for Langa (Uitenhague) victims at UWC
May	1	More than 30,000 students at DEC high schools boycott classes in protest against events in Transvaal and Eastern Cape
Jul	19	1500 students at Guguletu service for Cradock Four dispersed with teargas and gunshot
	20	State of Emergency declared in 36 districts
	23	4000 students at UWC come out on boycott
	25	Students at 29 DEC schools join boycott
	26	WECSAC, representing 45 schools & colleges, formed
	29	DET schools embark on boycott
Aug	1-23	Numerous rallies, police reprisals
	20	Call for W. Cape consumer boycott

	28	Attempted march on Pollsmoor; massive security operation; COSAS banned
	29 to Sep 5	Mounting youth/security forces clashes
Sep	6	Carter Ebrahim closes 464 schools and colleges
	10/11	Stayaway
	17	Schools "reoccupied"
Oct	1	Official re-opening of DET and DEC schools
	15	Thornton Road shooting
	16-31	"Apogee of the rebellion in W. Cape" (Hall)
	26	State of Emergency in W. Cape
Nov/Dec		DEC examinations
Dec	28/9	SPCC National Conference

Very briefly, the content and course of youth/student struggles in 1985 can be summarised, before various aspects are examined in more detail. By the end of July, DET schools had joined UWC and DEC schools and colleges on a boycott of classes. Intially, DET school students and the Parent Action Committees of Langa, Guguletu and Nyanga focussed mainly on school grievances. The leaflet **Meet Our Demands Now** issued by the Joint SRCs and PAC in late July or August dealt mainly with age restrictions, SRC recognition, examination fees, school bus fares, shortage of classrooms, and the range of subjects taught. (These were preceded by calls for the ending of the State of Emergency and the withdrawal of troops from the townships.)

The focus of the DEC boycott, in July/August, was more broadly political. It expressed solidarity with students boycotting elsewhere; it protested against the State of Emergency; it invoked opposition to tricameralism and "dummy MPs"; it included general educational demands like democratic SRCs with local issues such as the reinstatement of a dismissed teacher. (39) The closure of the schools by the state to some extent realigned the main agitational thrust of the boycotters. Student/youth demands increasingly meshed with those of community organisations in the call for popular control over the schools. The new Parent/Teacher/Student Associations (PTSAs) formed in DEC schools called for democratic local control as the first step

towards a free, compulsory, unitary educational system.

"How many of us will find jobs?"

The unfolding of resistance in Cape Town should also be related to some of the variables identified in previous sections as having a bearing on youth-based politics. Age distribution and school-leaver unemployment both merit attention. As far as the proportion of young people in the overall population is concerned, it should be mentioned that for the African population in Greater Cape Town (GCT) the ratio is lower than in the country as a whole - because of tight restrictions on normal family life, the number of migrant workers, the high masculinity ratio, etc.

For those classified as "Coloured", the age distribution exhibits the large youthful contingent discussed earlier. Almost 36% of the coloured population of GCT is in the age group 0-14 years (comparative figures for whites and Africans are 23.3% and 27.3%) and the 1980 Census revealed that 60% of the coloured population is under the age of 25 years. A particularly high concentration of young adults is the demographic legacy of a "baby boom" between 1960 and 1965. (40) The rapid population growth has outrun employment opportunities. If the 1980s "are confronting youth in many countries with a concrete, structural crisis of chronic economic uncertainty and even deprivation"(41), this is well illustrated in GCT.

Examination of trends since 1980 reveal that "unemployment has risen substantially for all age groups and shows a marked upward trend." (42) Its brunt has been placed on what is still a relatively poorly educated 16-25 year old age bracket. Sixty-five per cent of unemployed coloureds in GCT are in this group. Moreover, unemployment showed a particularly sharp rise in 1985. Youth unemployment (which remained a fairly constant percentage of rising total unemployment) was particularly affected. In the following table, the figures are those of the Department of Manpower - and reflect registered unemployment statistics. These figures under-represent the total of youth unemployed in several respects. (43) Nonetheless, even if the scale of the phenomenon

is being minimised, the trend emerges clearly:

COLOURED UNEMPLOYMENT BY AGE GROUP: AVERAGE MONTHLY FIGURES

	under 21	21-35 yrs	
1981	197	1056	
1982	242	1478	
1983	310	2821	
1984	245	2082	
1985	516	5445	(44)

Awareness of an acute unemployment problem for school-leavers is undoubtedly widespread in DEC schools, and is explicit in a number of the pamphlets and leaflets distributed before and during the 1985 school boycotts. "Millions of young people are unemployed in out country. For months we struggle to find a job after we leave school, whether in Std 5 or 10" ran one. (45) A pamphlet issued in September or October 1985 pointed out that "The reality is that there is no work and that the majority of students will be forced into cheap labour ... or form part of the 6 million unemployed." (46) Local conditions were sometimes highlighted: "Every fourth person in Mitchells Plain, every second person in Atlantis, is unemployed." A Groenvlei matric pupil spoke bitterly during the boycott: "even if we pass", he asked, "how many of us will find jobs? The reality is that there are no jobs for us; white pupils with Std 8 certificates get jobs before those of us with matric certificates." (47)

Unemployment could also feed very directly into political involvement. A recent school-leaver being interviewed explained rather engagingly that "In 1985 I was unemployed and just an activist." Nationally, the youth congresses which have proliferated since 1982 have their base in the urban unemployed; they have "infused a deeper, sometimes more desperate, militancy into student and community politics."(48)

If these demographic and economic features arguably predis-

posed school students and young coloured adults towards oppositional politics, it is now necessary to look at other, more specific aspects of youth consciousness and political behaviour in 1985. These include: youth self-awareness; the search for unity with community and other political groupings; alternative education and "awareness programmes"; militancy and activism; political precocity - and immaturity; observable political strengths and weaknesses exhibited by youth/students in 1985; and the question of student/worker alliances.

"Almal is saam in die struggle"?

Generational consciousness amongst politically active youth was as evident in Cape Town as elsewhere in South Africa. The point could be demonstrated with any number of student publications and statements, but is illustrated here with a single emphatic example. A first year college student makes substantial claims for the contribution to the struggle by his generation:

> I mean there is no doubt about that, that the whole struggle in South Africa is dominated by the students. The students are in the forefront of the struggle. This is not a familiar thing if we look at the history of other countries <like Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique> where it was a question of guerrillas. South Africa takes a very different dimension, totally, we the students being in the forefront. The students organising and - you know - shaping the history of the country; and hence it is the students who forced apartheid to introduce so-called reforms. It is the students that have made different organisations the world over, like financial organisations, to threaten to cut their loans or whatever to South Africa.

Yet, very often, this kind of perception is tempered by recognition of the limits of "student power". The same student quoted above continued:

> The students are in the forefront, but it is not the students alone - it is the students with the back - the backbone of the whole thing is the workers. You know, even if the students can go on with whatever they do, but as long as the workers continue to support apartheid, there will hardly be any change... but as long as the students together with the workers and all the progressive people of South Africa work together they are going to <win their struggle>.(49)

The topic of student/worker alliances is discussed separately below. A number of other linkages are suggested in the phrase "all the progressive people" - and many of these were explored by youth/student politicians in Cape Town.

The question of cooperation across generations was an ever-present one in 1985 - and the formation of Parent/Teacher/Student Associations (PTSAs) was an important attempt to answer it. Time and again, student/youth groups stressed to their members the desirability of making common political cause with their parents. "We must build representative student organisations to work through our problems with our parents and progressive teachers", urged the Students of Young Azania (SOYA) in August. Young people were called on to recognise the sacrifices their parents had made, and the hardships they suffered. Even so, an implicit criticism of the older generation's political position ran through this discourse. An April pamphlet explained: "Students have an important role to play in explaining to our parents why the <consumer> boycott is important." (50)

Partly overlapping with youth/parent relations, was another linkage widely discussed in youth/student circles: the relationship of their struggles to those of "the community". (This is not the place to review the problematic nature of the concept.) This relationship was seen in various ways. At times, it was perceived as a difficulty whose solution must be sought: one of the five aims and objectives of the Cape Youth Congress (formed in 1983) is "to normalise the relationship between youth and parents". In the second half of 1985, the need for community-wide unity became more urgent. A pamphlet issued in August argued:

> It is important that we build strong student, youth and community organisations because a well-organised community can never be defeated. It is important that we form student-teacher-parent bodies so that we can stand united in this time of intense repression. Some schools have already taken such steps. The struggles in the classrooms must be taken to the community and the struggles in the community must be taken to the classrooms.

Such sentiments did not remain only at the level of rhetoric. Student and youth movements consciously sought ways of linking with other organisations and other campaigns. At the end of the first week of boycotts, UWC students began a mass meeting by hearing reports from groups of students liaising with community organisations. (52) Student Action Committees (SACs) worked together with existing youth and civic organisations. On a number of occasions, students sought and won extensive public backing for their stand on boycotts, the return to the schools, and examinations. Ironically, perhaps the most effective agent of such unity was the state. Indiscriminate violence against protesting scholars won them sympathy - and the closure of schools, more than any other single action, outraged both middle class and working class coloured parents. The formation of PTSAs not only made concrete the terms of youth/community unity, but also posed a radically alternative conception of how schools should be administered.

The mass action by pupils and teachers, children and parents, on 17 September, in a symbolic re-occupation of the closed schools, was the highwater mark of this development. It also provided a dramatic cameo of community militancy: At Alexander Sinton High School a "citizen cordon" of commandeered vehicles six blocks deep effectively kept police under siege for two hours in the school (which they entered to arrest 173 people). Indeed, a number of reports from GCT during 1985 noted instances of communal solidarity translated into practical politics: in Athlone, for example, doors stood open whenever word filtered down the street of police or army movements; "That way"

(explained a housewife) "the kids can run into any house they see for safety." (52) Graphically, the **Weekly Mail** reported:

> Pressmen have seen youths being egged on by adults. Parents have been seen directing children in dragging old fridges and mattresses out of houses to be piled on to the barricades, and throwing their household benzine into the flames.

And:

> As soon as the police and army arrive, the streets are suddenly filled with private cars going nowhere in particular, making progress down the main thoroughfares a slow process for the ponderous Buffels and Caspirs. (53)

At times, indeed, the words of a ditty sung at the rallies sounded almost literally true: "Al die mamas en die papas, die boeties en die sussies, die oumas en die oupas, die hondjies en die katjies - almal is saam in die struggle."

Education for Liberation?

In his study of the 1980 DEC school boycotts, Molteno paid close attention to the political dynamics of the school and even the classroom. He argues that hierarchic and coercive structures and practices of these schools were directly challenged. The element of control "was most consistently and completely overturned in the boycott". While recognising certain limitations to student actions and perceptions, he concludes that they did "albeit temporarily - transform certain social relations fundamental to schooling as currently constituted". Molteno and other commentators also discussed critical attention directed towards syllabi and the content of education in 1980. (54)

In 1985, too, "alternative education" and "awareness programmes" bulked large during the boycotts of formal classes. Students found larger numbers of teachers and principals sup-

porting (or at least not obstructing) them: a tendency which found organisational expression in the formation of WECTU. Only days after the boycott had begun, a DEC liaison officer admitted that "at some schools pupils held `awareness programmes' instead of classes." (55) The main current of alternative education flowed in similar channels to those of 1980: debates, discussions, invited speakers, plays, poetry readings, films and songs. Prescribed textbooks were critically dissected; the daily press was read "politically". In one school, a teacher recounted, discussions were arranged on such topics as the State of Emergency, the cancelled All Blacks tour, education in South Africa, the consumer boycott, and the history of black resistance. The same observer described the SRC at his school in admiring tones:

> They can, and did, draw up and implement awareness programmes ... and were in a position to call for stay-aways (which were a hundred per cent effective)... It became increasingly obvious that the real power lay in the hands of the students. (56)

Two features are worth remarking. First, these sessions of informal education undoubtedly play an important part in forming and sharpening youth consciousness. A DEC teacher was struck by "the depth of the discussion in these classes", and concluded that "much informal debate had already taken place on the streets or in the playgrounds." He also commented on the "self-discipline exercised at our normally unruly `ghetto' school" as a measure of the seriousness of the students. (57) Similarly, a college student was pressed by the interviewer to identify the actual source of his political ideas and beliefs. Yes, he said, the media played a part; so did his family, and pamphlets issued by organisations. COSAS had been a paticularly important source of ideas at high school. But more important than any of these (he believed) were those moments when

> we had students coming together and we tossed around ideas... I think that for me this is the time we got our major ideas, because you have so many different people coming with different ideas... You come into contact with pamphlets and all that type of thing. Ah -

> but the major share is what you get from students because there you have a chance to discuss and that is when you really come out, because having somebody tell you or make a speech or read a pamphlet you just have facts given to you; whereas when you are with fellow students you are able to sort out - you grind out the matter, you know; then you can come to reality.

Secondly, compared to 1980, there appears to have been a far more explicit stress in 1985 upon the direct, practical uses to which an alternative education could be put. These ran from the general ("We must now learn about our true history of struggle, the South African economy, the political system ... To change the system we need to know how it works") to the specific ("We need knowledge of Mathematics and Physics to make and use more sophisticated implements than petrol bombs. We need history to understand the politics of Liberation.") (58)

"Action, comrades, action!"

Another significant development is by its nature more difficult to document. For the most part it can be described only impressionistically or by inference. This was the impact upon youth/student consciousness of direct, physically dangerous, violent confrontation with state power. As in other cases - Russia or Spain or Latin America - engagement with an authoritarian state engenders a political precocity, produces youthful veterans. Teargas, beatings, and detentions provide a crash course in class struggle. There were thousands, in Cape Town, who learned the practical science of making a petrol bomb; the street sociology of taunting armed soldiers; the pavement politics of pamphlet distribution and slogan painting; the geography of safe houses and escape routes; and the grammar and dialectics of under-cover operarations.

In a sense, this tendency is present even without baton-charges or buckshot rounds; it exists in the privations and institutionalised violence of township life. An Eastern Cape clergyman put it thus:

> Their frustrations have an educative effect on them. They now study every newspaper they can lay their hands on to see how events will affect them directly, be they political, social or economic issues. In fact, nothing they read, hear or see on TV do they take at face value, but study the media critically. (59)

A second general point that must be made about the turn to militant direct action is that it stemmed from a political culture that had itself undergone significant changes in recent years. In the Western Cape, as elsewhere in South Africa, the late 1970s and early 1980s saw the proliferation of community organisations. In 1980 and 1981, strikes, consumer boycotts and school boycotts accelerated this process: 85 voluntary associations were formed in GCT between 1980 and 1984. These - Walters and Matiwane have argued - were self-consciously democratic; they also displayed "a shift towards theoretical understanding rather than blind activism." (60) (This assessment, while identifying an important dynamic, must be qualified by a recognition of factors which in the Western Cape complicated and even weakened forms of political organisation. These included a factionalised local political culture, the relative weakness of trade union organisation, and a certain lack of continuity or depth in some local structures. These considerations are reviewed more fully in the concluding section below.)

The third quarter of 1984 saw a new peak of intensity in local opposition politics, in the shape of the anti-election campaign. After something of a lull locally in the first half of 1985, politics in GCT entered another highly charged period in July. Calls for "ungovernability" were echoed at rallies and meetings. Journalist Tony Weaver described the radicalisation of Athlone (a relatively affluent coloured suburb) in these words:

> Every block, every school, has its "action squad", coordinating action, providing direction, helping build petrol bombs and seeking material for barricades... Children who have not yet reached puberty tell you "I wish I had a hand grenade"; teenagers talk of AK-47s,

RPG-7s, and bazookas. (61)

Reporting from Hanover Park, another journalist wrote that "the call taken up by children as young as eight or ten years old was `Action, comrades, action'." (62)

As suggested, the political programmes derived from this direct action do not easily find their way into pamphlets or public speeches. They will be more apparent - it seems safe to predict - in the extension in the near future of a more sophisticated internal underground movement. Nevertheless, some echoes of activist radicalism are audible. The work of graffiti artists is an obvious example: "COMRADES, KILL SADF, SAP OR BE KILLED! THEY ARE VIOLENT MURDERERS" reads a wall in Athlone. A Student Revolutionary Front issued leaflets in 1985 which also capture this mood. One in August spoke of the need to "build a mass movement which will provide fertile soil for the development of successful armed resistance in both town and country." Another (October?) proclaimed "We are `Xhosas', `Zulus', `Coloureds', `Indians' and `Malays' no more. We are nothing else but young soldiers fighting a CLASS WAR."

This mode of activist politics could nurture a political perspective that one might dub "immediatism": an impatient anticipation of imminent victory, a hubristic assessment of progress made, and a naive underestimation of the resources of the state. This is not a surprising outcome. The fact that for many young people their political baptism was a heady mix of exhilaration, raw courage, and a sense of group solidarity meant that expectation could easily outrun actuality.

The popular (and ultimately controversial) slogan of "Liberation before Education" is the best known example of this frame of mind - but anyone who witnessed the rallies and meetings between July and December could cite many others. The same perspective is apparent in several leaflets. "Yes, the boycott is temporary", ran one: "But we cannot end it now - not now when we have got the government on its knees. If we end it now, the government will be able to get onto its feet again." In similar vein, the imposition of the State of Emergency on the Western

Cape was assessed thus: "This apparent show of strength by the state is merely the last kick of a dying animal." When students held a secret meeting at the end of November, they warned the government to meet their minimal demands "because the boycott won't remain at this level ... it will intensify to a great extent." (63) Less stridently, a student's confidence about the future is a representative voice of 1985:

> I am very optimistic. Botha tried to cross the Rubicon. He failed. I tell you I am optimistic that all progressive South Africans will cross the Rubicon and will shape their destiny the way they want. (64)

The political cost of immediatist expectations is that they all too easily feed into demoralisation and disarray when events reveal the balance of forces to be far less favourable to the youthful militants and their allies than had been anticipated.

A development within Western Cape youth/student consciousness that mirrored a country-wide process was a growth of popular support for the ANC. Lodge and others have chronicled the resurgence in recent years of ANC influence and loyalties (65). Overt, demonstrative allegiance to its emblems, its leaders and its programme was one of the most obvious features in township politics throughout 1985. Compared with - say - the Eastern Cape, where deep reservoirs of loyalty to the movement were tapped, in the Western Cape the enthusiasm for the ANC was frequently a real departure. Historically, the ANC was relatively weak in GCT. Contributing to this were the relatively small proportion of Africans within the population; the tilting of migrant workers towards the PAC; and the entrenchment among coloureds of political organisations critical of the ANC. The upshot was that the ANC commanded less support in GTC than in any other major South African city.

This has changed substantially. In some cases, youth/student support for the ANC rose directly from groupings affiliated with the UDF, with an explicitly "charterist" position. Thus, in June 1983 an AZASO pamphlet saluted as heroes and martyrs the executed ANC cadres Motaung, Mosololi and Mogoerane; called for a South

Africa based on the Freedom Charter; and concluded "after we have mourned their passing, let us mobilise, organise and unite, and take forward the struggle for freedom in our lifetime." But in 1985 a pro-ANC stance spread rapidly, especially in some DEC schools were it had previously scarcely existed. Press reports of meetings punctuated with cries of "Viva ANC" were almost as frequent as the graffiti celebrating Mandela and Tambo. Song sheets used at rallies in DEC schools frequently included Nkosi Sikilela and other Xhosa songs (plus translations).

Youth/worker alliance: rhetoric, chimera, or objective necessity?

The two most important elements in the forces ranged against the state in the past ten years have been youth-based political resistance and trade union organisation. This is neither an original nor a contentious statement; but it serves to introduce a recurrent theme in the speeches and printed ephemera of 1985 - that student/youth and workers' struggles should be linked. Answers to the questions posed by the issue are being sought both in theory and in practice.

It should be noted at the outset that certain objective factors make a common cultural identity between youth/student and organised worker consciousness relatively easily attainable in South Africa. There is the obvious fact of common racial/national oppression, experienced by black workers and black youth/students alike. There is the enforced propinquity across social divides - by courtesy of the Group Areas Act - of various strata within ethnically demarcated ghettoes. There is the widespread phenomenon of "first generation students", linking within single families the solidly proletarian and the potential petty bourgeoisie. And finally there is the lived experience of many students: many who complete high school or enter tertiary education can do so only by interrupting their schooling with periods of wage labour.

Even a cursory glance at the leaflets and pamphlets circulating in 1985 reveals the centrality in their discourse of the language of class struggle, class alliances, and working class

leadership of the struggle. It is present in the utterances of student/youth organisations variously aligned and affiliated. In some quarters it was a dominant ideological element well before the 1985 boycotts. "The battle being waged is between those who want to retain this profit-making system and those who want to overthrow it", ran a SOYA pamphlet of 1984: "On the one side are the bosses and their supporters, on the other side are the black workers, their children and allies." On the one hand, SOYA argued that students were objectively working class: "By and large black students' class position is defined by that of their parents, i.e. working class"; on the other hand, it also recognised that student/youth campaigns were not the same as those undertaken by organised workers: "The struggle of the students should not be isolated from the struggle of workers."

Now SOYA, it might be objected, is not a mass organisation; its theoretical position is derived from that of the bodies to which it is affiliated. But very similar analyses were far more widely forthcoming in 1985. In May, before the boycotts began, the Inter-school Coordinating Committee stated that it was "because of a system where workers are exploited that our fellow students are suffering." (66) AZASO, a UDF affiliate, defined apartheid as "a system of racial oppression and economic class exploitation". (67) The Athlone Students Action Committee said "We must continue to be PART of the worker struggle - not merely support it in words." Another pamphlet, issued by half a dozen action committees, argued that the capitalist economy was in crisis and perorated "Students Unite! A People United will Never be Defeated! Forward to a workers' society free from exploitation and oppression!" (yoking the student, the populist and the workerist positions in close harness).

The African townships Joint SRCs and PAC, in a single paragraph, established the relationship between the state and capital, and identified capital as the enemy:

> To enforce the State of Emergency, the security forces are allowed to patrol the townships. They do not patrol but have beaten up and killed hundreds of working class children. The owning class, capitalists, cannot

> rule on their own, they always look for people to rule on their behalf, that is why there are political parties like ruling Nationalist Party and the PFP. <The> parliament talk shop of Botha and Slabbert is used to win sections of the working masses by promising them a better life under the present system. During times of unrest, when the working people demand more than parliament can offer, the army and police are used to crush the uprisings. Some people argue that the SADF should play a neutral role: to that we say, with the absence of the "band of armed gangs" Botha and even his masters, Capital, would not be able to rule for a day. (68)

Obviously, using such evidence, one is dealing primarily with the consciousness of activists and leaders of student/youth politics, with those involved in writing and reproducing the pamphlets and handbills. It is impossible to extrapolate from these any accurate claims about rank and file consciousness, or to assess how much of this discourse has been internalised. Such findings await further research - and, of course, will be more fully and concretely revealed in the ebb and flow of political activism in the future.

Having established that many youth/student ideologues in GCT characterised as crucial an effective political alliance between their movements and the organised working class, certain questions pose themselves. How accurate is this perception? Have such alliances been achieved in GCT? Have they been achieved elsewhere? And if so, what have been the enabling factors?

In terms of mounting an effective political challenge, the case for constructing such an alliance is virtually self-evident. The student/youth activists <u>have</u> been in the van of popular struggles for a decade - so much so that it sometimes seems "that these students have been fighting apartheid all by themselves." (69) At the same time, they do not carry the same social weight, cannot flex the same political muscle, as an organised working class.

Hobsbawm, in the essay cited earlier, states the position lucidly. His reference point was the relationship between students and trade unionists during the Parisian May Days of 1968, but his analysis is directly pertinent to the South African setting. While any convergence of radicalised students and workers in "a single united left movement" is a source of "immense" political power (argues Hobsbawm), one cannot take for granted "that their confluence is automatic, nor that it will occur spontaneously." If such a junction fails to occur,

> the movement of the intellectuals may settle down as one or both of two things: as a powerful and effective reformist pressure group ... and as a fluctuating radical youth and student movement, oscillating between brief brush fires and relapses into passivity... On the other hand, it is also unlikely that the workers will make a successful revolution without the intellectuals, still less against them. They may relapse into a narrow movement ... militant and powerful within the limits of "economism" ... or they may achieve ... a sort of syndicalism, which certainly envisages and seeks to build a new society, but is incapable of achieving its aims... <W>orking people ... are capable of overthrowing a social order, whereas the intellectuals ... are not. If a human society worthy of the name is to be built, both need each other. (70)

(The chief amendment that one would move to make this more applicable to the South African case would be to minimise the likelihood of black intellectuals becoming a "powerful and effective reformist pressure group" on the European model: the alternative - a brush-fire radicalism - seems entirely apt.)

What precisely is the contribution a radicalised intelligentsia, and especially its student wing, can make to organised working class politics? Mandel (like Marx and Lenin) says that what students can offer young workers is "the product of theoretical production, that is, scientific knowledge ... a radical critique of the existing society." (71) More sweepingly

(as discussed in Section 1 above) Gramsci saw organic intellectuals not merely as human transmitters of "scientific knowledge" but as active political agents - "permanent persuaders" - in working class organisations. Gramsci also stressed the importance of a fissure within "traditional" intellectuals, so that some of their number would be available as "organising elements" for the proletariat.

The renascent independent trade union movement in South Africa, during the 1970s, drew upon the practical and theoretical skills of the (tiny) number of intellectuals who took positions as full-time union officers. In the Western Cape, only a handful of the "veterans" of student activism in 1980/81 have entered trade union work - although where they have, their impact has been considerable. The possibility that the "class of 1985" will feed into trade unions in greater numbers is already being discussed in some youth/student groupings. The outcome is complicated by the counter-attraction exerted by community or populist organisations.

What of experience elsewhere? It was suggested in Section 1 that the case of Spain was valuable in comparative terms. Not only does it offer the parallel of rapid capitalist development, but also that of the simultaneous re-emergence of student and worker resistance in a non-democratic regime after a period of repression. The phenomena of ideological ferment and the spread of socialist ideas, of intense shop-floor pressure within the factories, and of schools and universities emerging as "a sub-cultural ghetto" also resonate with contemporary South African history.

Maravall asks how one explains the persistence and growth of dissent under an authoritarian regime, and isolates three factors. These are: (a) rapid economic change and attendant social friction; (b) the presence of particular working class communities with "strong local traditions of working class radicalism; and (c) the crucial role played in the reorganisation of dissent by underground political parties, more paticularly working class organisations: either political survivors or newly created in secret. "The emergence of the working class and student movements

<in the 1960s> was dependent on the underground survival of the parties of the left." (72) (If one makes the direct comparison, the ANC clearly fulfils some of the functions played by the Spanish underground; equally, in comparison with the Spanish case, it has not so much promoted a socialist political alternative as mobilised under a nationalist banner.)

With particular reference to the Western Cape, Jordi argues convincingly that joint student-community-worker struggles "while finding often uneasy coordination at a leadership level have lacked an organised mass base". This has meant that recent struggles in GCT have "relied consistently and heavily on a militant student/youth initiative." (73) By comparison with the Transvaal industrial heartland, or Eastern Cape centres like Port Elizabeth or East London, he finds, the involvement of workers through their trade unions in recent community political campaigns has been "conspicuously absent" in the Western Cape. Greater Cape Town has not yet experienced a political campaign in which youth organisations, trade unions and democratic community bodies were welded together as effectively as in the Transvaal stayaway of November 1984.(74) Nor have youth and community groupings here become as politically imbricated as they have elsewhere - in the Eastern Cape and East Rand, for example.

There are a number of reasons for this, including the relatively undeveloped nature of the trade union movement in the Western Cape; the breach that existed between unions and community organisations in 1980; and the fact that community structures in GCT do not possess the solidarity or organisational depth that they do elsewhere (in itself partly a product of the complex factionalism of the area's politics). For these reasons, the stay-aways and consumer boycotts mounted in GCT recently lacked the "cumulative impetus provided by more localised community and union action and organisation" that has been enjoyed elsewhere. (75)

In short, it has been argued in this sub-section that alliances between youth/student movements and those of the organised working class are critically important. Theoretical, comparative and local perspectives all point to this conclusion.

In the Western Cape, several interlocking factors make its realisation more difficult - but no less necessary.

Youth/student politics in 1985: Towards an assessment

Through a composite of pamphlets and press reports (76) one can summarise the main strengths and achievements of youth/student political activists in 1985 - as they perceived these themselves. The first and most important gain was that students attained organisational unity: students from different schools in various parts of GCT were linked in joint action. The need for effective organisations had been recognised, and new structures created to achieve this. Secondly, these structures were democratic: "the ability of the students to democratically control the course of the boycott ... has been a great achievement". Thirdly, student political awareness had matured and deepened in several respects. Students "have realised that their struggle against the educational and political system won't be won if students stand on their own." They have learned "that liberation does not lie with one or two leaders, but can only be achieved through long, hard struggle, led by the working class." They have linked struggles over education with broader political struggles: "We realise that education can either be an instrument of capitalist domination or of liberation. We must turn our schools into centres of liberation." To this end, students have challenged the content, format, and goals of their education.

None of these claims is unimportant. All represent political advances. Yet an important qualification must at once be lodged. One way of doing so is simply to quote from a Students-Parents-Workers Manifesto issued by the Committee of 81 - in May 1980. This carried "a short and incomplete summary of the victories we have won with the boycott". These included:

> "Students, parents and worker discussed their grievances together... the boycott has created the

> climate and mood for <a> wider workers' struggle to be intensified... The boycott has seen many structures arising... We have achieved a high degree of political awareness and consciousness... The whole community has been rallied as a unified force... It has shown the possibility and desirability of disciplined, planned struggle. The end of unorganised mass protest has arrived... We have rocked the state... The distortions in our syllabi have been pointed out. We have started on what can be called a deindoctrination process. We want Education for Liberation..." (77)

To quote this - with its inevitable sense of deja vu - is not intended to belittle the claims made in 1985, nor those made five years before. Rather, it serves as a reminder of a simple but nonetheless significant feature of student/youth movements: that they are by their nature impermanent and discontinous. It is difficult for them to sustain "continuity of activity, organisation, or perhaps even programme and ideology". (78) Each generation of students (and one is speaking of a four or five year turnover) must, in its political education as in its formal education, repeat many of the lessons that its predecessor learned.

Secondly, even some of the individual claims have to be qualified further. New student umbrella groupings were created - but they also experienced problems of loyalty and cohesion. Student unity did not extend to significant joint action between DET and DEC students. Within DEC schools, where the Department made examinations a show of strength between the state and students (as opposed to more flexible arangements by the DET) decisions about whether or not to sit the end of year papers created deep divisions. The unity sought across generational lines - between students and their parents - was repeatedly stretched thin, and on occasions frayed. In addition, the importance of schools as a base for mobilisation became a weakness once they were closed by the state: "the potential for militant pupils to reach the community and agitate ... was seriously complicated" by the loss of the schools as bases. (79)

Costs of a quite different kind were also incurred during the vehemence and violence of struggle in 1985. Even the resilience and adaptability of the young does not suffice to insulate all of them from trauma. The discipline of the young militants did not - could not - hold all the time:

> As an outlet for political anger you see a lot of violence in the classroom. There has been systematic wrecking of classrooms, the kids fight each other at break, the violence has been turned inwards to the schools...

said a teacher in November. (80) Another described her school: "Tears, tears, tears, and more tears. And there's a lot of aggressive behaviour too. There is mass distress..." (81)

To identify these actual or potential weaknesses within youth/student political organisations is not, however, to discount their importance or undervalue their achievements. The youth-based resistance that has been the subject of this study engaged more intensively and effectively in political and social struggle than it had before. Simply in terms of courage, ingenuity and commitment, a great deal was demanded: youth activists faced not mere discomforts or reprovals, but the retributive violence of the state. Circumstances at the time that this is written ensure that such qualities will be necessary again.

Secondly, at both a programmatic and an organisational level, educational issues were linked more concretely to broader political objectives. The closure of the schools by Carter Ebrahim served to link the question of control of schooling to the rejection of tricameralism and collaboration. The formation and defence of democratic SRCs and the creation of PTSAs provided an embryonic structure fo a democratic "people's education". (82)

Thirdly, perhaps the most important advance made in 1985 was at the level of consciousness: the maturing recognition within youth/student organisations of an objective necessity for an alliance with an organised working class. Even if this

perception, in the Western Cape, remains an expressed goal rather than an achieved reality, the popularisation of the concept during 1985 is hardly to be doubted. The realisation must also be present in the trade union movement; and where it is not present, must be fought for. When such an alliance is forthcoming - when it is politically feasible - then the vitality and fervour of black youth politics will be massively augmented by the experience, continuity and weight of the workers' movement.

Finally, this paper has tried to relate the pattern of youth-based struggle in GCT in 1985 to the distinctive aspects of similar movements elsewhere. It has suggested that there is an essential dualism to youth politics: on the one hand, it is characteristically militant and dynamic; on the other hand, by its nature it is short on theoretical sophistication and experience. Youth/student politics in a time of crisis is a hybrid of precocity and immaturity. This dichotomy was observed by Lenin in pre-revolutionary Russia, and by a host of commentators elsewhere.

In South Africa, too, it is precisely this dual nature of youth-based resistance that must be understood. Its strength and vigour are indispensable; its limitations and its weaknesses must be confronted, assessed, and addressed. Youth-based resistance is doubly important to the broader struggle for liberation, democracy, and transformation. Not only are militant cadres recruited from its ranks, but so are intellectuals: those most equipped to provide a theoretical leadership.

Youth has a great deal on its side, not least the future.

NOTES

(Where necessary I have used the terms African, coloured, and white to distinguish between "racial" categories enforced by the state. Such usage does not indicate any acceptance of such categories. I use the term "black" to refer to all who are not classified as "white". DET (Department of Education and Training) schools are for African pupils and DEC (Department of Education and Culture) are for coloured pupils.)

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J. Maravall, **Dictatorship and Political Dissent: Workers and Students in Franco's Spain** (London, 1978), p. 113.

3 K. Mannheim, **Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge** (London, 1952, originally 1928), pp. 286-320; quotation p. 303. See also M. Rintala, "Political Generations", **International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences**, vol. VI (New York, 1968), p.92.

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5 Moller, "Youth as a Force in the Modern World", p. 254.

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37 Jordi, "Parents, Workers, Unite with our Children".

38 "Half an hour later, two Casspirs arrived containing about fifteen heavily armed policemen. This resulted in the students becoming extremely agitated. They armed themselves with planks from the back of their desks, tied hankies around their faces for the teargas and get ready, naively, to defend themselves..." - from "Inside Boycotts - a Teacher´s Story", **Deduct** (UCT Education Faculty, October 1985), p. 15.

39 **Cape Times**, 1 August 1985.

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42 **Ibid.**, p. 30.

43 An extremely narrow definition of "unemployment" is used; moreover, many unemployed youths will not have worked previousluy, and are therefore not entitled to UIF. (See McMenamin, "`Coloured´ Youth Unemployment", pp. 8-9, 28-9).

44 Table derived from figure 18, pp. 56-7, in McMenamin, "`Coloured´ Youth Unemployment".

45 Cape Youth Congress, 1984 pamphlet.

46 Athlone Students Action Committee, Sep/Oct 1985.

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48 Chisholm, "From a Revolt to a Search", p. 17.

49 Interview.

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51 **Argus**, 31 July 1985.

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73 Jordi, "Parents, Workers, Unite with our Children".

74 See Labour Monitoring Group, "The November Stay-away", **South African Labour Bulletin**, vol. 10, no. 6 (May 1985); more generally, see **ibid.**, vol. 11, nos. 1, 2, & 3.

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76 Especially **Weekly Mail**, 12 September 1985; **Cape Times**, 16 October and 12 November 1985; "The 1985 School Boycott - organised retreat or demoralised rout", anonymous leaflet, 1985.

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