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by: Bruce Murray

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WORLD WAR II AND WITS STUDENT POLITICS

Introduction

Both nationally and on the Wits campus, the war years constituted a major divide in the realm of student politics. On the national level, the war promoted three developments. Firstly, for the duration of the war, there was virtually a complete breakdown in relations between the English-medium and predominantly Afrikaans-medium university institutions, bringing to a halt the traditional intervarsity competitions. The breakdown was effected at the instigation of the highly politicised Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond (ANS), the national organisation formed by the Afrikaner SRCs in the 1930s. Secondly, the war turned into a graveyard for the ANS, which identified itself with the paramilitary, pro-Nazi Ossewabrandwag (OB). The history of the ANS has yet to be written, but it is evident that the organisation fragmented badly in 1942 in the face of the drive of the parliamentary National Party to assert its ascendancy over political Afrikanerdom. After 1942 teacher training colleges, rather than university institutions, provided the ANS with its chief support base.[1] In 1948, following the formation of the Nationalist Government, the ANS was replaced by the Afrikaanse Studentebond (ASB). Thirdly, the outcome of the war was crucial in determining the character of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), effectively the national organisation of English-speaking students. During the war NUSAS sought to keep itself intact by averting polarising issues, notably the admission to its ranks of Fort Hare Native College. The outcome of the war, perceived as a defeat for the forces of Fascism and racism, ultimately ensured the admission of Fort Hare, and NUSAS finally emerged as a 'progressive' organisation.

On the Wits campus, student organisation and political culture underwent some profound changes as a consequence of the war, and the issues it raised. For the first time students at Wits acquired a real sense of being part of the politics of the country; an organised left appeared on campus in the form of the Federation of Progressive Students (FOPS) and the first attempts were made to construct a 'progressive' caucus within the Students' Representative Council (SRC); women seized the opportunity provided by the exodus of men to the battlefront to play a more prominent role in student politics; and the handling of student issues ceased to be the preserve of the SRC and NUSAS,

becoming a matter of mass student involvement. The era of the mass student meeting had dawned. In the protests over the 1943 fee increase, moreover, the Wits administration was given its first sniff of student rebellion.

Before the war, Wits had already been developing a distinct political culture. To be sure, the vast majority of students were essentially a-political, formal party political organisation and activity was officially disallowed, and the SRC was little more than an administrative body for co-ordinating and financing student societies and clubs, and general student activities. The alignments on the SRC, which was elected by faculties, were along faculty rather than ideological lines. Nonetheless, a considerable political activity had developed at Wits during the 1930s, and in its range that activity was quite different from any other university institution in the country, reflecting the diverse nature of the student body at Wits. Although denied recognition by the SRC on the grounds that it was an exclusive 'racialist' organisation, the ANS possessed an active branch at Wits to provide nationalist-minded Afrikaners with a political base. Its headquarters were in Braamfontein, where many Afrikaans students lived in digs.[2] At the other extreme, and also denied recognition by the SRC on the grounds that it was a 'political' organisation, was the Democratic League founded in 1935 as part of a united front against Fascism. Socialists like Guy Routh, and a group of Jewish Trotskyists, provided the mainstay of the League, which possessed about a hundred members.[3] Following the dissolution of the League in 1938, the Diogenes Club was set up to provide for the 'impartial' discussion of political issues, and it served as the main forum for left-wing students.

Altogether, politically involved students at Wits regarded the University as in the vanguard of student political activity in South Africa, or at least among the English-medium university institutions. Wits was something of a liberal flag-bearer within NUSAS, leading the movement for the admission of Fort Hare; it was at the cutting edge of the rivalry between NUSAS and the ANS, as a consequence of the ANS presence at Wits and also the proximity of Pretoria University, where Afrikaner nationalism was at its most assertive among students and staff alike; it possessed an active left; and the passage of Hertzog's segregationist 'Native' Bills in 1936, and the formation of a liberal wing of the United Party round Jan Hofmeyr, had stimulated a wider liberal interest in national political affairs.

It was South Africa's participation in the war against Hitler that gave students a sense of being directly involved in national politics. 'On a South African campus,' Ruth First recalled of her wartime student years at Wits, when she was a stalwart of the Young Communist League, 'the student issues that matter are national issues.'[4] It was during World War II that this became the case at Wits. At the broadest level, English-speaking students at Wits perceived themselves as pro-war and anti-Nazi,

and saw the ANS opponents of the war as pro-Nazi. Students developed a sense, particularly in the debate over the admission of Fort Hare to NUSAS, that the war invested their own political activity with national significance. The advocates of Fort Hare's admission represented it as a statement against the forces of Fascism and racialism that South Africa was supposedly fighting in World War II; it opponents saw it as divisive of white student opinion at a juncture when the overriding need was to promote a sense of unity in support of the war. More directly, the wartime ferment on the left in South African politics prompted left-wing students to seek to develop support bases within the University for political movements in the wider society. In 1942 the Students' Labour League was set up to promote the 'progressive' wing of the segregationist Labour Party; in 1943 it split from the Labour Party as a consequence of Labour's electoral pact with the United Party and threw its support behind the newly-formed and short-lived Independent Labour Party. In September 1943 the Federation of Progressive Students was founded, and it was soon widely perceived as a front for the Communist Party on campus.

A striking feature of Wits' student politics during the war was the transfer of the centre of gravity from the arts faculty to the medical school. The massive wartime enrolments in the medical school helped give it a directing voice on the SRC; 5 of the 7 SRC presidents who served between 1940 and 1945 were drawn from the medical school, and medical school representatives were crucial in giving successive SRCs some degree of continuity. Moreover, the strong Jewish presence in the medical school, together with the politically radical family backgrounds of a significant minority of those with East European origins, ensured a 'progressive' input from the medical school. Medical students, along with law and arts students, were the moving forces in left-wing circles at Wits. Engineering students, and to a lesser extent dental students, were better known for their conservative views, a reputation they had already acquired in the 1930s.

The existence of an organised left on campus, and the prominence of the medical school in Wits student politics, proved to be two enduring legacies of the war years. Another wartime development, the increasing involvement of women in student government, proved less enduring. At the end of the war, the Wits campus was swamped by ex-servicemen, and the consequent 'masculinisation' of the campus rapidly undid many of the advances made by women during the war years.[5]

Although by later standards students remained remarkably deferential to university authority, the war years also witnessed the emergence of a new assertiveness in student attitudes and behaviour. The Principal's censorship of anything likely to stir campus passions about the nature of South Africa's involvement in the war elicited a series of protests from the SRC, and initiated the process whereby the SRC sought statutory recognition for itself. The administration's failure to consult students over the increase in fees imposed in 1943 produced outright defiance.

The SRC and reactions to the war

The structural weakness of the SRC in relation to the University administration was underlined at the very outset of the war. Founded in 1905, in the days of the Transvaal Technical Institute, the SRC possessed no legal status within the University. This was not without its advantages, insofar as the SRC was an independent entity, operating with a constitution devised by students themselves, but it meant that the SRC had no legal standing in dealing with the University administration. The clash between the SRC and the Principal over the testing of student attitudes to the war made the powerlessness of the SRC manifest.

The outbreak of war in Europe in September 1939, and the formation of the Smuts Government to take South Africa into the war, produced instant reactions among Wits students. The large majority took it for granted that South Africa should join Britain and France in the struggle against the Nazi menace. A minority, primarily Afrikaans-speaking, held that Britain's 'imperialist' war against Germany had nothing to do with South Africa. On the predominantly Afrikaans-medium campuses resolutions to this effect were passed by mass student meetings, and according to the ANS and the Transvaler, the mouthpiece of the National Party, there was a strong groundswell for neutrality on the Wits campus.

In this situation, the SRC President, Brian Bunting, called for a general meeting of students to express their opinion on South African participation in the war. Bunting, a lifelong member of the CPSA, was intent on demonstrating Wits student support for the war. However, Raikes was anxious to avert the divisive impact of such a meeting, and immediately prohibited it. The SRC thereupon proposed a referendum, and Bunting sent a telegram to Smuts seeking his views on the advisability of sounding out student opinion, but the referendum was likewise prohibited by Raikes. While the SRC accepted Raikes' prohibitions under protest, it determined to take legal advice as to its status and powers within the University.[6]

In the next year, the SRC formally endorsed South Africa's war effort by accepting the NUSAS statement on war aims. The statement, prepared by A.J. Friedgut and Brian Bunting, both from Wits, was a radical one, and was only adopted by the NUSAS Council at its annual meeting in July 1940, held at Wits, by 15 votes to 9. The Rhodes University College and Natal University College, Pietermaritzburg, delegates abstained. The statement asserted that the war was not a war against the German and Italian peoples but a war against Fascism, it urged that all anti-Fascist elements, including 'our Non-European population', be mobilised in the struggle, and it called for the conclusion at the end of the war of a just peace, upholding democratic rights 'in the victorious nations and defeated countries as well as in the various Colonies'.[7]

The responses of NUSAS and the Wits SRC to the onset of the war went far to help set the agenda for Wits student politics for the duration of the war. The clash between the SRC and Raikes over the referendum drove home that the SRC possessed neither legal standing within the University nor any mechanism for negotiating conflicts with the University authorities. These were deficiencies they were thereafter to seek to redress. The war, furthermore, was endorsed by NUSAS and the Wits SRC as a war of liberty and democracy against Fascism, and this had profound consequences for the content of student politics. For some, the contest against Fascism was a fight against racialism as well as totalitarianism, and that meant combatting racialism at home as well as abroad. That, in turn, meant transforming NUSAS into a militant body in South African student affairs, and inviting Fort Hare to become a member. For others, again, the war required that a premium be placed on promoting a sense of unity among all white students, Afrikaans as well as English-speaking, who supported the Allied cause, and that meant avoiding such divisive issues as the admission of Fort Hare to NUSAS. The only Wits student to serve as NUSAS President during the war years, Francois Daubenton in 1941-2, was firmly opposed to the admission of Fort Hare.

Fort Hare and Wits student politics

For many at Wits, Fort Hare was the test of whether NUSAS itself was truly liberal and non-racial, and it failed the test. The price paid by NUSAS was its virtual demise on the Wits campus for the duration of the European war; the cost for Wits students for their stand on Fort Hare was the severance by the SRCs of Pretoria, Potchefstroom, Bloemfontein, and Stellenbosch of all relations with Wits.

The issue of Fort Hare's admission had hovered over NUSAS for much of the 1930s, and had provided the main ostensible reason for the secession in 1933 of the Pretoria, Potchefstroom, and Bloemfontein SRCs from NUSAS, and the formation of the ANS. Assertive Afrikaner nationalism, together with a general mistrust of the 'liberal' tendencies in NUSAS, provided the basis for the secessions and the formation of a purely Afrikaner student body. In 1936 the Stellenbosch University SRC was the last to secede when its suggestion that the NUSAS constitution be amended to prohibit 'native, coloured or Asiatic' membership was not taken up.[8] Instead, the black students who were now being admitted to Wits and the University of Cape Town were accepted as automatically becoming members of NUSAS; at the 1937 conference Council ruled that they might attend the academic, though not the social, functions of NUSAS conferences.[9] Liberal opinion among white English-speaking students, while still shunning any notion of social integration, reacted against the passage of the Hertzog 'Native' Bills in 1936, and the removal of Cape Africans from the common voters roll, by affirming that educated Africans should be brought into the mainstream of academic life.[10]

It was in this spirit, and as a statement against Fascism and racialism, that the question of Fort Hare's membership was again raised at the NUSAS Council meetings of 1940 and 1941, with the initiative coming from the Wits delegates. As the opponents of the proposal perceived it, the issue was whether NUSAS should give priority to incorporating black students in its ranks or to conciliating the predominantly Afrikaans campuses. The decision taken was for the latter.

By 1940 the NUSAS leadership had effectively given up all hope or desire of securing a rapprochement with the ANS itself, but the majority of delegates to the NUSAS Council, reflecting United Party thinking, hoped to make an appeal to 'moderates' on the Afrikaans campuses and in this way to become truly 'national' again. In the NUSAS perception, the 'racialist' ANS, with its close links to the OB, had itself become distinctly pro-Nazi and consequently less representative of student opinion on the Afrikaans campuses, thereby opening up the opportunity for a NUSAS advance. Beyond that calculation, the majority of NUSAS delegates were extremely reluctant to be saddled with any responsibility for widening divisions within the white student community in time of war.

At the annual NUSAS Council meeting at Wits in July 1940 the motion to invite Fort Hare to join NUSAS was sponsored by two of the Wits delegates, Brian Bunting and Ruvin Bennun. Their contention was that NUSAS should act on the principles separating it from the ANS by admitting Fort Hare. The majority view was that the moment was inopportune. As argued by another Wits delegate, Rex Welsh, a law student whose previous studies at Pretoria had fully alerted him to Afrikaner opinion, the proposal was premature and divisive of white South African student opinion at a critical juncture when everything possible should be done to promote 'a spirit of true nationalism'. The inclusion of Fort Hare in NUSAS, he continued, 'would alienate the sympathies of every Afrikaans-speaking student as well as a large number of English-speaking students in South Africa'. The motion was defeated by 19 votes to 7.[11]

For the 1941 Council meeting, again held at Wits, the SRCs linked to NUSAS were asked by the NUSAS president, Ralph Horwitz, to determine their stand on the admission of Fort Hare. The decision of the Wits SRC, now under Welsh's chairmanship, was to refer the matter to a general meeting of the student body. On the motion of Dennis Etheredge, SRC secretary and a member of the NUSAS local committee, a rather poorly attended meeting in the Great Hall on 11 June voted by the margin of 168 to 54 to recommend that Fort Hare be invited to join NUSAS, and this served as the brief for the Wits delegates to the Council meeting. The delegation from the Durban campus of Natal University College, which housed a 'Non European' section, was similarly briefed.

The opposition to the motion for the admission of Fort Hare, sponsored by Wits, was led by the University of Cape Town and Rhodes. Speaking for the UCT SRC, J.R. Wahl contended that the

admission of Fort Hare would lead to the destruction of NUSAS and with it all hopes of securing unity between English and Afrikaans students. G.H.L. Le May stated that the views of the Rhodes SRC were the same: 'NUSAS should strive first for co-operation between English and Afrikaans before attempts were made to bring the non-Europeans into NUSAS'. On the loss of the motion it was resolved that NUSAS should not again discuss the question of Fort Hare until after the war and once Fort Hare itself had requested admission. In the meantime NUSAS was to 'make very real and energetic attempts to gain the co-operation of Afrikaans students and make our organisation truly national'.[12]

It was over the Fort Hare issue that the major political divisions among students on the Wits campus were acted out, and the most heat generated. For the proponents of Fort Hare's admission to NUSAS it was essentially a statement against Fascism and racialism; for its opponents it was an inherently anti-Afrikaner move. In a front-page report on the Wits student meeting, the Transvaler represented the outcome as a victory for the negrophilists over the Afrikaans-speaking students at Wits, and claimed that Welsh as chairman had not allowed Afrikaans students to put their point of view.[13]

At the outbreak of war, some six to seven hundred students at Wits, or roughly twenty per cent of the student population, were Afrikaans-speaking; they were concentrated mainly in engineering, medicine, and dentistry, faculties not yet established at the predominantly Afrikaans-medium universities. The organisation that claimed to represent them, the local branch of the ANS, while strongly anti-war, evidently made no real effort to stir up a systematic anti-war campaign on the campus itself. Instead, nationalist-minded Afrikaners at Wits made their stand on the Fort Hare issue, and the University's decision to open its medical school to black students. Following the vote of the Wits student body in favour of the admission of Fort Hare to NUSAS, the Wits branch of the ANS resolved to 'do away with these evils and abuses' and to mount a campaign for complete segregation at the University.[14]

It was in the field of intervarsity sporting relations that the ANS struck with most effect. Consistently denied recognition by the SRC, the Wits branch of the ANS now had its revenge by calling upon the neighbouring Afrikaans university institutions to boycott Wits in sport and other fields 'until the status of the University of the Witwatersrand has risen to Afrikaner heights'. Translated, that meant Wits should impose segregation between its black and white students at all levels. The SRC of Pretoria University responded by declaring itself compelled to end all connections with Wits, including sporting events, unless Wits could demonstrate it had been given the wrong information about what was happening there; the Potchefstroom SRC asserted that it no longer felt disposed 'to hold an Intervarsity with students who stand in open and vicious enmity towards the Afrikaner, and prefer connection with the native rather than with the Afrikaner'.[15]

Even though the last rugby intervarsity against Pretoria before the war had proved an ugly, brawling affair, with the Tucs cheerleaders hurling anti-semitic insults at the Wits crowd, the prospect of the ending of intervarsity was not taken lightly at Wits, and the extraordinary meeting called on 20 June to consider the Pretoria ultimatum was consequently packed out. A special edition of WU's Views, edited by Sydney Kentridge, was produced with the banner headline 'Intimidation?'; the editorial sought to rally the student body by asserting that it was 'inconceivable that Wits should be terrorised into apologising'.[16] So far from retreating on the Fort Hare issue, the meeting responded by rejecting outside interference in the University's affairs. At Wits, and at the other English-medium university institutions, the ANS had consistently been attacked for having introduced partisan politics into student affairs; the Wits meeting voted by 538 to 182 to reject the 'interference' of Pretoria and Potchefstroom and to upbraid them for intruding 'political differences into the field of sport'.[17]

Although NUSAS, in the name of promoting white student unity, declined to invite Fort Hare to join it, this did not avert a complete breach between the Pretoria and Wits SRCs and an end to all sporting contacts between the predominantly English and Afrikaans university institutions for the duration of the war.[18] Following the decision of the NUSAS Council at its July 1941 meeting, the Wits SRC duly invited Tucs to an intervarsity in Johannesburg for the end of August. It was in response to this advance that Pretoria finally severed all relations with Wits on the broad grounds, agitated for by the Wits branch of the ANS, that 'an alien liberal spirit inimical to the Afrikaner' prevailed at Wits. On 9 August the Pretoria SRC issued a proclamation which broke off all relations 'until the intolerable liberal policy of the students of Wits has been so modified that it opens the door for the restoration of normal relations'.[19] Thereafter Potchefstroom, Bloemfontein, and Stellenbosch also put an end to formal relations with Wits.

Anxious to appease the conservative, rugby-playing elements in its constituency, the Wits SRC initiated attempts to restore relations with Pretoria in each remaining year of the war. In 1942 the Pretoria SRC indicated it was prepared to negotiate with its Wits counterpart provided that a duly constituted general meeting at Wits apologised to Pretoria 'for insulting expressions made with regard to Afrikaans Universities during 1941', and that Wits modified its 'liberal' policy so as to make negotiations with the Afrikaans universities possible. These pre-conditions the Wits SRC declined to meet, with the result that in 1942, and again in 1943, negotiations with Pretoria failed to get off the ground.[20]

Developments at both Wits and Pretoria in 1944 cleared the way for a settlement in the next year. The 1944 Wits SRC, under the chairmanship of I. Bransby Welsh, a medical student, was a generally conservative one, and on its motion the question of insults was resolved on 12 June 1944 when an extraordinary

general meeting of Wits students agreed to apologise for a remark allegedly made by one speaker at the 1941 meeting that 'the Afrikaans universities are opposed to the natives and it would be better for NUSAS to work with a hundred native students than with a thousand students from those Universities who are opposed to NUSAS'.[21] The wider question of the 'liberal' policy of Wits remained, and it proved the stumbling block. At a joint meeting between the Wits and Pretoria SRCs at the Halfway House Hotel on 28 June, Bransby Welsh and his colleagues held firm in their rejection of outside interference in the University's internal affairs. The Pretoria spokesmen, for their part, insisted that issues of integration and segregation were national concerns, and that Wits' 'liberal' policy ran counter to the 'race feeling' (rasegevoel) of its own Afrikaner students. Negotiations finally collapsed when the Wits SRC declined to give a guarantee that Tucs students would encounter no blacks when competing at Wits.[22]

Once the war in Europe was finally over, with the German surrender in April 1945, student leaders at Wits and Pretoria moved rapidly to restore sporting relations not only between themselves, but among all the white South African universities. In June 1945 the Pretoria SRC, taking the negotiating initiative for the first time, proposed that the two executives meet to discuss the desirability of convening a conference of all South African universities on intervarsity sport. The Wits SRC, under the presidency of Ken Weinbren, a medical student and a member of the first rugby fifteen, endorsed the meeting and the principle of the conference. The executive was nonetheless instructed that the internal policy of Wits was not to be interfered with by any other university and that 'our non-European students be in no way discriminated against at Inter-Varsity sporting arrangements'. The attempt by the left to require the Wits executive to suggest the inclusion of Fort Hare in the conference was rejected by a single vote, 9 to 8, on the ground that such a move would prevent reconciliation at the outset. The proponents of the motion, led by J.N. Singh, one of the two first black members on the SRC, contended that as the Pretoria proposal referred to 'all student councils of our land', Fort Hare should be included.[23] In a dramatic gesture, the Wits executive met their Pretoria counterparts in the Pretoria General Hospital, where the Tucs President was lying ill, and it was duly agreed to convene the proposed conference.

The conference, held at Wits in August and representing all the major white campuses, except Rhodes, resolutely confined its attention to sporting arrangements, and after much manoeuvring succeeded in restoring sporting relations among the white university institutions. On the central issue of segregation at intervarsities the conference approved the Natal University College motion that no black should be included in an intervarsity team without the permission of all the universities in the competition, and that visiting teams were entitled to insist on strict segregation at their matches. Wits alone recorded a dissenting vote. As Weinbren, heading the Wits

delegation, explained, their mandate from the SRC forbade them to discriminate against any Wits student, white or black, and they therefore could not endorse any segregationist motion. But that did not mean that Wits would not participate at segregated intervarsities. While Wits students would not be party to endorsing segregation, Weinbren gave the assurance that Wits would abide by the majority decision, and he underlined that the Wits Principal prohibited black students at Wits from participating in university sports. As Weibren explained it to a general meeting in the Great Hall, the arrangment meant that Wits itself was still free to compete against Fort Hare, if it so chose, and that 'members of a visiting team who desire it may be given a separate portion of the grounds where they (and only they) will not come into contact with ALL our students'.The Wits motion that each university safeguard the future of intervarsity sporting relationships by pledging themselves not to interfere in the internal affairs of other universities was ruled out of order as having nothing to do with sport.[44] NUSAS in the meantime, at its annual conference in Bloemfontein in July 1945, had finally agreed to admit Fort Hare.

The NUSAS Council decision to admit Fort Hare occasioned no long debate. The war was over, Fort Hare itself had applied for admission, and the general sense on the Council was that the policy of attempting to 'appease' the Afrikaans-medium universities had got NUSAS nowhere. The two Wits councillors, Arnold Klopper and Benny Sischy, made it quite clear that Wits would no longer tolerate the exclusion of Fort Hare. As Klopper put it, Wits believed in a fighting body, and if NUSAS did not stand by its principles, Wits was finished with NUSAS.[45]

The Federation of Progressive Students

The creation of an organised left on the Wits campus, in the form of the Federation of Progressive Students in September 1943, was the result of two sets of developments. The first was left/liberal disenchantment with NUSAS for its refusal in the early years of the war to invite Fort Hare to join it. The second was the spurt of left-wing activity and organisation in the wider society that followed South Africa's entry into the war, and even more so Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, which caused the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) to switch abruptly from an anti-war to a pro-war policy.

NUSAS, while holding together, went into something of a decline during the war years, nowhere more so than at Wits among the English-medium universities. On the predominantly Afrikaans campuses, so far from advancing, a NUSAS branch survived only at the former Grey University College, Bloemfontein, which had now become the University College of the Orange Free State. On the English-medium campuses the attitude of the vast majority of students towards NUSAS was generally apathetic.[46] The war itself, by putting an end to the NUSAS overseas tours and otherwise curbing its activities, was partly responsible for this

apathy, but the causes went much deeper than that. Organisationally, NUSAS had become divorced from the student populations it claimed to represent. When founded in 1924 NUSAS had been a federation of SRCs, but as a consequence of the reorganisation necessitated by the secession of the Afrikaans SRCs, control in NUSAS had shifted to campus committees, themselves often in the hands of narrow cliques. Particularly evident at Wits was the organised antagonism of the left towards NUSAS for its rejection of Fort Hare. In 1943, after NUSAS had refused to rescind its Fort Hare resolution, the left at Wits moved to challenge NUSAS by forming a new 'progressive' organisation, the Federation of Progresssive Students, which was intended to provide the basis for a United South African University Students Federation.[27]

This ferment on the left was by no means simply a response to inadequacies within NUSAS, but was also part and parcel of left-wing developments in the wider society, particularly the gyrations of the Communist Party.

The 1930s had proved a difficult decade for the CPSA, which was reduced by purges to a small sect of a few hundred members. At the outset of the decade the party was purged, at Moscow's behest, of many of its white traditionalists, who advocated class struggle as the way forward, so as to give priority instead to the notion of African nationalist struggle in South Africa. The Soviet Union's initial refusal to join the 'imperialist' war against Nazi Germany, and the CPSA's contorted attempts to support this stand and yet distance itself from the Nationalist opposition to South Africa's participation in the war, did little to bolster the party's appeal among whites, though through its association with the developing African trade union movement it began to expand its African membership. The party was in reality divided over the war, and some members, notably Hyman Basner, resigned over the Soviet Union's invasion of Finland.[28]

Basner, who was elected to the Senate in 1942 as a Natives' representative for the Transvaal and Orange Free State, cultivated a distinct following at Wits among students, chiefly in the medical school, who deemed themselves 'socialists'.[29] This group, many with wealthy parents, were horrified by the prevailing socio-economic conditions in the black townships around Johannesburg, and in 1942 they formed the Students' Labour League to encourage students 'to take an active part in bringing about a Socialist South Africa'.[30] The moving force in the Labour League was Nochem Feldman, the son of a cigar merchant and a charismatic figure at Wits during the war years, and other members included Arnold Klopper, who served as NUSAS President in 1945-7, and Michael Barry, all three medical students.[31] Initially, the Labour League affiliated with the Labour Party, which in the Transvaal possessed an active left wing, but in 1943 it rebelled against Labour's electoral pact with the United Party and threw its support behind the new Independent Labour Party, initiated by Solly Sachs and the Garment Workers Union.[32] As declared by Labour News, the newsletter of the Labour League:

'The Independent Labour Party and the Communists are the only progressive elements in our political world of today'.[92] Following the smashing defeat of the 3 ILP candiadtes in the 1943 general election, the party joined with Basner to form a short-lived Socialist Party.

Raikes strongly disapproved the active political involvement of the Students' Labour League, and the SRC itself withdrew its recognition of the League in June 1943 as a consequence of the League's refusal to abandon its socialist clause.[93] The League nonetheless continued to operate, in conjunction with the Socialist Party, and in the 1944 municipal elections it outraged sitting members of the Johannesburg City Council by running Arnold Klopper as a socialist candidate in Ward 12, the working class constituency of Booysens-Fordsburg, against Jimmy Green, the Labour Party boss on the City Council. The programme issued on Klopper's behalf by the League called for 'progressive, decent municipal government', and this was taken as a slur on the Council by both Labour and the dominant Ratepayers' Party, headed by J.S. Fotheringham. Fotheringham had long been allergic to student political activism, and in 1942 had played a leading role in getting the City Council to cut its annual grant to Wits in half; the fault, he said, lay with the students for their dangerous political activities. Not only were they to be seen at workers' rallies and Communist meetings, but they even had the effrontery to heckle him.[94] In Febraury 1944 Fotheringham and Green joined forces in the City Council to decry the 'gutter' tactics employed by students of 'extreme Left wing views', and councillor Swartz commented 'that it was astounding that among university students Communism was allowed to breed in a way that served to undermine public confidence'.[95] In the election. Klopper polled 957 votes to 1988 for Green.

The Labour League's loss of SRC recognition in June 1943 paved the way for the formation of another 'progressive' student organisation, the Federation of Progressive Students or FOPS, which was designed to make a broader appeal, bringing together all groups on the left, Communists, Socialists, 'enlightened' elements in the Labour Party, as well as liberals disenchanted with the sterility of NUSAS. The central event that made possible such an alliance was the Communist Party's switch to a pro-war policy following Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union.

The CPSA's identification with the war effort not only resolved fundamental tensions within the party, but enabled it to achieve a new respectability in white circles. The party gained access to a growing progressive white constituency, including the Wits campus, by linking itself to broader anti-Fascist and anti-racist movements.[97] Late 1941 saw the formation of the Springbok Legion as 'the soldier's trade union', committed not only to securing the rights of ex-servicemen, black as well as white, but also to 'working for a society based on the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity'.[98] The Home Front League of the Springbok Legion was launched in the next year. While largely non-Communist, the leadership of the Legion and the

League included several prominent members of the CPSA, and from the outset were regarded by the military authorities as 'markedly subject to Communist influence'.[39] The Home Front League, and the more obvious front organisations of the CPSA, the Friends of the Soviet Union and Medical Aid for Russia, asserted a major influence on left-wing politics in South Africa, and on the Wits campus.

On the Wits campus an important link in the chain was the Registrar, Ieuan Glyn Thomas. Thomas, a Welshman in his thirties who had belonged to the British Communist Party before joining the CPSA, chaired the launch of the Medical Aid for Russia campaign at the Johannesburg City Hall on 8 September 1941, and in the next year was elected chairman of the National Council of the Home Front League. The military authorities, or at any rate the Adjutant General, Major General R.D. Pilkington Jordan, regarded Thomas as one of the 'genuine humanist reformers' in the League who was being 'used' by the 'gangsters' really in control. He was 'shop window stuff' for the professional Communist crowd.[40] When FOPS was formed in September 1943, Thomas was elected honorary president. FOPS itself soon came to be regarded as a Communist front.

At this juncture the CPSA took its recruitment of Wits students sufficiently seriously to establish a special university group in its Johannesburg West branch, which had Hilda Watts as its secretary.[41] The moving forces in Communist circles at Wits were generally either of East European Jewish background, notably Ruth First and Benny Sischy, or were Indian students, such as Ismael Meer and J.N. Singh, who were radicalised through their contacts with Yusuf Dadoo in the CPSA. First, Sischy, and Meer were all elected to the first FOPS executive. The first chairperson of FOPS, Violaine Junod, the daughter of a clergyman and SRC correspondence secretary, described herself as a socialist.[42] The executive also included some members of the Labour Party, notably Boris Wilson, a mature medical student.[43]

The opening for FOPS on the Wits campus was provided by the sense that NUSAS had become totally ineffective, and it was this that the founders of FOPS sought to capitalise on.[44] A sustained campaign against NUSAS was initiated at the beginning of 1943 by the student newspaper WU's Views, which had adopted an altogether more serious, political tone since establishing its editorial independence of the SRC three years previously. Under the editorship of Boris Wilson, it declared NUSAS moribund, and fit only for the dissecting hall.[45] In September FOPS was founded with great enthusiasm, at a meeting attended by about two hundred students, for the specific purpose of supplying the 'progressive' leadership that NUSAS had failed to give. Incorporating those students who somehow identified with the 'left', except for the residue of 1930s Trotskyists who shunned it, the design of FOPS was to politicise the wider student body, chiefly on racial and trade union issues, and to maintain an organised body of student activists to assist 'progressive' movements in the wider community. FOPS, in short, was intent on engaging students in

'national' issues and causes.

In July 1944 FOPS staged a major conference on education, which ended with the adoption of an Education Charter calling for free and compulsory education for all children, regardless of race or colour, from six to sixteen. In addition to FOPS, the Charter was subscribed to by a range of left-wing youth organisations, the Young Communist League, the Zionist Socialist Youth Party, Hashomer-Hatzair, the Youth Section of the Jewish Workers Club, the Progressive Asian Club, and the African Youth League.[46]

At the end of 1944 FOPS participated directly in the elections for the next year's SRC. For the first time, these elections were staged in October, instead of the following March, so as to avert the need for a vacation executive, and a feature of the campaign was that FOPS endorsed a slate of 'progressive' candidates. In the view of its critics, FOPS was manoeuvring to gain control of the SRC. In a major expose on FOPS in March 1945 WU's Views, now under the editorship of Edna Linney, a Trotskyist, denounced the organisation as 'a branch of the Communist Party with Red Hilda for its typist', and accused it of forming a controlling caucus on the SRC after having manipulated the October elections. It listed eleven of the twenty-three person student governing body as members of FOPS, including the President, Ken Weinbren, Willem Boshoff, Anthony O'Dowd, A.I. Limbada, Sischy, Singh, and Ruth First. 'Students', the newspaper warned, 'Fops are in power. Wits slept and Fops, in the murk caused by their pseudo-cultural screen, organised and pinched the votes'.[47]

After an SRC vote of censure, WU's Views was obliged to apologise for its accusations about rigged elections, and a number of the individuals it named were never in fact members of FOPS, notably Weinbren. In his presidential report of March 1945 Weinbren made a point of distancing his own candidacy for the SRC from FOPS, and he thereafter emerged as an outstanding president, with a considerable reputation for integrity and judicious leadership.[48] The WU's Views expose nonetheless highlighted a new development in Wits student politics with the first attempt to organise a left-wing pressure-group on the SRC. The purpose of the FOPS presence on the SRC was not to provide that body with a highly politicised agenda, but to help ensure that it adopted a 'progressive' stand on student and university issues and that it again became an instrument for promoting a 'progressive' outlook in national student affairs.

Assisted by Weinbren's own diplomatic, persuasive qualities, the last SRC elected during the war generally saw liberals and radicals acting together to provide the student body with a 'progressive' leadership. Weinbren's SRC was duly insistent on the admission of Fort Hare to NUSAS, and it also threw its support behind the NUSAS campaign against Nationalist proposals in Parliament for segregated universities. For some students this latter was an instance of the SRC making an illegitimate foray into politics, with the result that the motion in support

of NUSAS at the general student body meeting on 19 March 1945 was hotly contested, finally passing by the margin of 583 to 344 votes.[47] The issue that revealed the gap betwen liberals and the FOPS group on the SRC was J.N. Singh's motion to include Fort Hare in the negotiations for the restoration of intervarsity sport. On the wider campus, FOPS continued an active propaganda campaign, staging lunch-time meetings on the front steps of the Central Block, and selling a variety of pamphlets.

The plan for FOPS to become a national organisation was never realised, primarily because the SRC of the University of Cape Town refused it recognition. Instead, FOPS moved back into NUSAS by taking control of the local NUSAS committee at Wits in March 1945.

At the end of the war Nationalists among the Afrikaans students at Wits also sought to reassert themselves, and something of a propaganda war developed between the two extremes on campus; in the complaint of WU's Views, Wits became a battle ground between 'the Kremlin and the Kruithoring'.[50] Ever since 1939 WU's Views had followed a policy of bilinguilism, but in June 1945 Spore appeared as the 'own paper' of Afrikaans students at Wits, and it immediately provoked a storm. Edited by R. Coertse and H.G. van der Hoven, it protested against the presence of black students at Wits and denounced the 'Jewish negrophilists' in student politics.[51] In October 1945 the SRC, on the motion of First and Sischy, condemned the 'racialistic policy' propounded by Spore, and a general meeting of students called on the Principal to ban its sale.[52] This Raikes declined to do, and thereafter Spore adopted a less provocative tone.

The Fees Protest

The most explosive issue on campus during the war years was the increase in fees that came into operation in 1943. The 20 per cent increase was simply imposed by the University, without any consultation with the SRC. Passions among students ran high in response, meetings at both the medical school and the Great Hall were packed out, and the first forays were made into organising a student boycott at Wits. From the outset, moreover, attempts were made by more politically-minded students on the left to broaden the protest against the fee increase at Wits into a campaign for free higher education for all in South Africa. The whole system of university financing in South Africa, they contended, was at fault, and it was consequently the system that required overhaul.[53]

The tight margins many families existed on, galloping war-time inflation, and the belief among students that fees at Wits were already outrageously high, made fee increases a highly sensitive issue, particularly among full-time students for professional degrees. The centre of the storm was the medical school, where fees for the last three years of the MB.BCh went up from £55 to £66 pa, and where the shortage of teaching staff and the generally overcrowded conditions had already generated

discontent among students. After the delegations sent to Raikes by the Students' Medical Council (SMC), under the presidency of Len Stein, had been given 'courtesy but no satisfaction', a general meeting of medical students in February 1943 voted unanimously to boycott the new fees and pay at the old rate. From the medical school the revolt spread to the main campus at Milner Park once its academic year got under way. But Milner Park proved a disorganised and disunited ally, and by the end of March some 70 per cent of students there had paid the new fees for the first half of the year. Particularly crippling to the boycott was the decision of the engineering students to pay at the new rate. In this situation the SRC, under its President, Alec Gonski, himself a medical student who had paid at the old rate, resolved to advise the remaining Milner Park students to pay the new fees under protest, but otherwise to support the medical students. For the fees due in August for the second half of the year, the SRC resolved to organise students to pay at the old rate.[84]

Thereafter the SRC, in defiance of a resolution of a mass meeting of the student body, backed off completely in the face of the 10 April deadline set by Raikes for the payment of fees in full and his announcement that Council had requested the Minister of Education to appoint a commission to investigate the University's finances.[85] Parents were advised by letter that their sons and daughters would be exluded from the University if the new fees were not paid by 10 April, and that produced a rush of payments. The core of the SMC, led by Nochem Feldman, the moving force behind the fees boycott, nonetheless attempted to hold their ground, and in so doing challenged the SRC. On Friday 9 April a general meeting of medical students reaffirmed their decision to pay the old fees, and demanded the resignation of the medical school representatives on the SRC. 'Gonski must go' became the cry of the medical students. Gonski, quite unprepared for the crisis that had overwhelmed his SRC, immediately resigned, and S.J. Mostert, an engineering student, took over as President. On the SMC Len Stein and six of his colleagues also resigned. They reckoned they could no longer continue to lead the medical students in terms of the resolution adopted; too many students had paid the fees to make the resolution meaningful.[86] The remaining twelve on the SMC pledged themselves to continue the struggle, electing Feldman as President. Feldman's immediate challenge was to the SRC for having wrecked student solidarity on the fees question.

Excitement at the University was now at fever pitch. Two thousand students crammed the Great Hall for the extraordinary general meeting on 12 April, WU's Views put out a special edition giving the SRC and SMC positions, and the University published the figures for fee payments, indicating that 89 per cent of all students had paid the new fees. Returning medical and dental students were the only major holdouts; 37 per cent of the former, and 30 per cent of the latter, had not paid their fees in full by the 10 April deadline. On Feldman's motion a vote of no

confidence in the SRC for having 'rescinded what the student body instructed them to carry out' was passed, and the next day the SRC resigned. In the subsequent elections, the large majority of them were again returned, and Gonski resumed his presidency.

The fees crisis of 1943 was itself resolved the day after the no-confidence vote when Raikes and the SMC negotiated a compromise agreement, which was immediately ratified by a general meeting of medical and dental students. The students agreed to pay their full fees without further delay, and Raikes undertook to provide a review of the whole question of fees in the light of the findings of the committee of enquiry into the University's finances and in consultation with the student body. To meet the central student demand for the creation of effective channels of consultation on issues affecting them, a joint SRC /Council standing committee was to be created to discuss all matters influencing University policy towards students.[77]

A disorganised SRC, and a student body weakened by the fact that while it voted not to pay the new fees, parents were busy paying them, ensured the ultimate failure of the fees boycott. As perceived by Raikes, as he told William Cullen in London, the ultimate aim of the fees boyott had been to force the Government's hand, and oblige it to increase the University's state subsidy: 'Naturally however I could not accept this point of view and had to take fairly vigorous steps to ensure that the fees were paid'.[78]

For critical outsiders, including the Star and Arthur Barlow's Weekly, the fees protest of Wits students smacked of unpatriotic behaviour at a time when many people viewed South Africa's crowded universities askance.[79] The student response to such criticism was to emphasise that their chief goal in protesting against higher fees was to ensure that higher education in South Africa was not reserved for the rich. As Feldman's SMC insisted, the existing high cost of medical education ensured that 'the primary factor in becoming a doctor is not merit, but financial status'.[80]

For the remainder of the 1940s fees served as a highly sensitive issue for Wits students. In 1944 the issue resurfaced, with the medical school again taking the initiative. This time the discontent was specifically directed not at the University, which had reduced the fee increase from 20 to 10 per cent for all students in their third year of study or later, but at the state. Not only was the Smuts Government denounced for its refusal to increase the University's state grant by the full £56 000 recommended by the committee of enquiry into the University's finances, but a concerted effort was also made by the radicals in the medical school to widen the issue and launch a national campaign to make higher education in South Africa more affordable.[81] At the annual general meeting of the student body in mid-March, the students voted by 355 to 102 in favour of Mike Barry's motion to set up an action committee to educate public opinion on the necessity for 'making higher education available to all who can benefit from it, and not as at present the small

section of the community who can pay for it', and calling also for a referendum on 24 April to determine whether students should embark on a two-day abstention from classes in protest against the Government's failure to carry out the recommendations of its own committee of enquiry into the University's finances.[42] The referendum was to be binding on the new SRC, headed by Bransby Welsh. In the event, the referendum was never held. Raikes, who made a great impression by personally attending an SRC meeting to explain the constitutional position, insisted that an abstention from classes was illegal in terms of the University's statutes; it would constitute a punishable breach of University discipline.[43] In the face of this the SRC and the student body finally backed down. At an extraordinary general meeting on 18 April, addressed by Raikes, it was decided by 1008 votes to 571 not to hold the proposed referendum.[44]

The fees issue left the SRC looking impotent, and not for the first time. On several occasions during the war the SRC had sought to protest against Raikes' autocratic behaviour in censoring anything he considered potentially divisive or offensive, but it had got nowhere. As Raikes insisted, in time of war particularly, he had full discretionary powers in controlling student meetings and other events on campus. Not only had he prohibited a general student meeting or referendum at the outbreak of war, but in 1942 he prohibited a Debating Union discussion on 'the arming of the native' in time of war and a Commerce Students' Society debate on 'whether the gold mines should be closed during the war', objecting to the way in which the subject for debate had been framed.[45] In 1943 he banned the Dramatic Society's production of Konstantin Simonov's war-time play, 'The Russian People', which was to have been staged in support of the Medical Aid to Russia Fund. These rulings clearly rankled the SRC, which sent a series of deputations to the Principal, but with little real effect. After the prohibition of the gold mines debate, the SRC persuaded Raikes and the Senate to agree to the creation of a joint Senate/SRC committee to regulate the activities of student societies, but Raikes did not even consult this committee when he banned 'The Russian People'.

A large part of the SRC's problem was structural weakness. Existing purely by permission of the Senate, the SRC possessed no legal standing or rights in the University, no representation on Senate or Council, and no institutionalised mechanisms for communicating student views to the administration. The solution suggested by Raikes was that the SRC obtain statutory recognition. 'It will not give you the right to abstain from studies,' he told the students, 'but it would legalise the SRC's position and that of the Joint SRC-Council Committee and the SRC-Senate Committee both of which have been set up tentatively in recent years but have no statutory existence.'[46] The conclusion reached by WU's Views, when edited by Mireille Junod, was that the SRC needed to go much further and secure representation on Senate and Council. 'There have been many misunderstandings between the student and the authorities', it asserted of the war

years in an editorial of 2 June 1944:

> These misunderstandings could easily have been avoided, if responsible students had been present on the Senate, and we go further, on the Council to adequately represent student opinions and needs. The war, too, has altered the outlook of most students. The urge to be serious about matters inside and outside the University; and the urge to do constructive things for society is pre-eminently before them.

The proposal that the SRC seek representation on the ruling bodies of the University was by no means new. It had first been put forward in 1927, and was again approved in 1941, following the SRC's review of its legal status subsequent to Raikes' banning of the war referendum. But it was only at the end of the war that the SRC set its mind to working out a long-term strategy for securing such representation. The first step was to gain statutory recognition, and in March 1945 Weinbren's SRC concluded that this should be undertaken in conjunction with the other English-medium universities. It consequently requested NUSAS to take up the question of statutory recognition of SRCs. Thus began the long campaign for statutory recognition. The ultimate purpose was to gain representation on Senate, and thereby enable the SRC to play an active role in the making and implementation of University policy regarding student affairs. The inherent danger, as critics warned, was that statutory recognition would be used to impose statutory limitations on the powers and activities of the SRC.

Women in student politics

As WU's Views appreciated at the ouset, war conditions provided female students with a new opportunity to take a prominent role in student affairs and government. In response to the 'unprecedented' election of a second year women student, Anne Feetham, as an arts representative on the SRC in 1941, WU's Views concluded that as males departed for the armed forces, women would of necessity have to occupy many of the responsible positions in student administration. In the perception of WU's Views, in other words, women would serve as replacements for men for the duration of the war; thereafter men would again push women to the sidelines in student politics and government. It proved an accurate perception.

Under its constitution, provision was made for two women on the SRC, the senior women student and the representative for Sunnyside Women's Residence, and only occasionally was a woman elected as a faculty representative. As WU's Views put it, there existed at Wits 'an old-fashioned and rather eccentric idea which attempts to impose certain strict and defined limits to the sphere in which female students can act'. Feetham's election as a second year student represented an attempt to probe beyond the conventional limits. In 1942, when she sat on the SRC as senior woman student, she was made Vice President to Bert Cohen, and her

success encouraged others to folllow. Seven of the 24 members of Gonski's SRC of 1943 were women, including Gladys Levy from the medical school and Loes van der Horst as the first woman to be elected by the law school. Only 3 women, Violaine Junod, Phyllis Knocker, and Joy Tobias, sat on Bransby Welsh's SRC of 1944, but on Weibren's SRC of the next year the number went up to 5, among them Ruth First. Women were also prominent on the editorial board of WU's Views, with several serving as editor. In 1940 Rita Prinsloo was Afrikaans editor to Ellison Kahn, Peggy Sussman was editor-in-chief in 1941, Mureille Junod in 1944, and Edna Linney in 1945.

As contended by Felicia Tobias in her study of women at Wits in the forties and fifties, it is an over-simplication to see women simply as filling the places of men who had volunteered. There was still an ample supply of male students, as the critics of Wits as a 'funk hole' regularly pointed out, though doubtless some of them preferred to keep a low profile so as not to advertise the fact that they were studying and not fighting. More importantly, there was a new mood of confidence and assertiveness among women themselves; they sensed that war conditions provided them with new opportunities and the possibility even for challenging gender stereotypes. The success of the War Comforts Depot, organised by Nan Kirby, the senior woman student in 1940, not only gave women a higher profile on campus but boosted confidence in their own organisational skills; women in residence demanded, and got, permission to bring cars on campus and to stay out later during the week; and women on the SRC developed their own agenda.[67] In 1941, on the motion of Deirdre Bright, the senior woman student, and Feetham, the SRC voted to remove the requirement that woman wear stockings to lectures, and for the next academic year Raikes consented to women attending lectures 'with bare legs'.[68] In 1942 Feetham used her position as senior woman student to challenge the need for the post, which carried with it a range of social duties as well as a seat on the executive. In what she considers the most radical thing she ever achieved as a student politician, she secured the abolition of the post of senior woman student on the grounds that it segregated women into a 'faculty' apart from men students.[69] At the annual general meeting of the student body on 12 March 1942, it was agreed to replace the post with that of women's representative on the SRC 'who shall be in every way in the same position as any other representative'. Later in the year, on the motion of the women's representative, Margaret Becklake, that post was in turn abolished.[70] Women, in short, were now intent on participating in student government not as women but as students.

Women such as Feetham considered themselves as pioneering a new role for women on campus, but it was not to be. With the return of the ex-servicemen after the war, women again tended to be relegated to the political sidelines, even on the left. During the war, Ruth First and Violaine Junod had played a prominent role in FOPS, but after the war leadership on the left

became very masculine. In the post-war period a new sphere was fashioned for women, as beauty queens in the annual Rag procession, and as sportswomen.

Rag

Throughout the war the annual Rag, which ever since 1929 had been held in aid of funds for the Johannesburg General Hospital, continued to be staged, but not without challenge from within the University as well as from without. For Raikes, Rag was essentially a carnival and therefore inappropriate in time of war. For the anti-Rag faction that had emerged on the SRC even before the outbreak of war, the main objection to Rag was not so much that it was frivolous as that it allowed the state to evade its responsibilities. In the view of this faction, hospital facilities were the responsibility of the state, and should in no way be dependent on charitable donations. In 1939, and twice in 1940, the motion to abolish the Hospital Rag was put before the SRC; on the second occasion, in September, the ordinary members of the SRC voted 7 to 6 in favour of the motion, but the President, George Warren of the medical school, then used both his deliberative and his casting vote to overturn it.[71] In March 1941 the motion to abolish the Hospital Rag went before the annual general meeting of students, where it was defeated amidst what the minutes described as 'general uproar'. The solution finally approved by the annual general meeting of students in March 1945 was to substitute a University Rag for the Hospital Rag, and to allocate the funds collected to the medical and welfare projects undertaken by the University itself. The funds went to the Alexander Health Centre and University Clinic, the Fordsburg Community Health Centre, and the Medical School Occupational Therapy Society. Given a new sense of social commitment, with aid going specifically to blacks and poor whites, Rag was now safe from attack within the student body.

NOTES

1. M. Roberts and A.E.G. Trollip, The South African Opposition 1939-1945 (London, 1947), 140-1; P.J. Furlong, Between Crown and Swastika (Johannesburg, 1991), 169-70.

2. Interview with Carel de Wet, Johannesburg, August 1989.

3. Interview with Guy Routh, Brighton, July 1989.

4. Ruth First, 117 Days (New York, 1989), 122.

5. For a study of the changing position of women at Wits during and after the war see Felicia Tobias, "The Women of Wits 1939-1959" (unpublished BA Hons dissertation, History Department, Wits University, 1992).

6. SRC minutes, 6,7 & 25 Sept. 1939.

7. President's report and minutes, 16th annual NUSAS Council meeting, July 1940, University of Cape Town Library Archives BC 586.

8. For NUSAS in the 1930s see Martin Legassick, The National Union of South African Students: Ethnic cleavage and ethnic integration in the universities (Los Angeles, 1967), 15-16.

9. Evidently, however, blacks were not encouraged to attend NUSAS conferences. At the 1939 NUSAS Council Brian Bunting protested that 'the present policy of the NUSAS towards the Non-European was misleading and dishonest; they were allowed to become members of NUSAS and prevented and not encouraged to attend conference'. Minutes of the 15th annual NUSAS Council meeting, 10-12 July 1939.

10. Interview with Sydney Kentridge, Johannesburg, August 1989.

11. Minutes of the 16th annual NUSAS Council meeting, 1-3 July 1940.

12. Minutes of the 17th annual NUSAS Council meeting, 30 June-2 July 1941.

13. ,Hewige Stryd Aan Randse Universiteit: Oorwinning vir Negrofiliste', Transvaler, 12 June 1941. According to Sydney Kentridge, in an interview, Welsh told one student to sit down when he addressed not his fellow Wits students but his fellow 'wit-studente'. Welsh also interrupted 'a speaker who thought that the incident at Slagtersnek and the wrongdoings of Lord Charles Somerset more than a century ago were relevant to the question whether Fort Hare should be invited to join NUSAS'. Address by Welsh to a general meeting of Wits students, 20 June 1941, UCT Library Archives BC 586 06.1.

14. Transvaler, 14 June 1941.

15. WUs Views, 20 June 1941.

16. Ibid.

17. Star, 21 June 1941.

18. The annual athletics intervarsity for the Dalrymple Cup was suspended for the years 1942-5, with the Afrikaans-medium universities and some teacher training colleges forming the Studente-Atletiekebond to compete in an annual athletics competition. See Arrie Joubert, The History of Inter-Varsity Sport in South Africa (SA Universities Athletic Association, 1985), 57-8.

19. WU's Views, 20 August 1941. See also Ad Destinatum: Gedenkboek van die Universiteit van Pretoria (Johannesburg, 1960), 346-8.

20. SRC minutes, 6 October 1942 and 12 March 1943; WUs Views, 10 June 1943.

21. Minutes of an extraordinary general meeting of students, 12 June 1944. According to an article in Die Volksblad of 13 August 1941 'het een van die Joodse studente die verwaandheid besit om to beweer dut hulle liewer met honderd naturelle sal saamwek as met duisend Afrikaners'.

22. WU's Views, 23 August 1944.

23. SRC minutes, 18 June 1945; WU's Views, 29 June 1945.

24. WUs Views, 31 August 1945; presidential report on the inter-university conference, 7 September 1945, SRC minutes.

25. Minutes of 21st annual NUSAS Council meeting, 3-5 July 1945.

26. Presidential report of N.G. Gracie to the 21st annual NUSAS Council meeting, 3-5 July 1945.

27. WU's Views, 10 Sept. 1943.

28. The CPSA had not been unanimous in opposing the war at its outbreak. According to Tom Lodge, members of the party in Johannesburg had held the view that the party should support an effective prosecution of the war before being overruled by the leadership in Cape Town. Tom Lodge, 'Class Conflict, Communal Struggle and Patriotic Unity: the Communist Party of South Africa during the Second World War' (unpublished African Studies Seminar paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 7 Oct. 1985), 3. For Basner, see Miriam Basner, Am I an African? The Political Memoirs of H.H. Basner (Johannesburg, 1993).

29. Boris Wilson, A Time of Innocence (Bergvlei, 1991), 87.

30. SRC minutes, 4 November 1942.

31. Interview with Michael Barry, Johannesburg, September 1993.

32. Leslie Witz, 'A case of schizophrenia: the rise and fall of the Independent Labour Party' in Belinda Bozzoli (ed), Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives (Johannesburg, 1987), 261-91.

33. Labour News, 28 June 1943, Garment Workers' Union Records, Wits University Library Historical Papers, AH 1092 Eba 1.

34. SRC minutes, 27 May and 1 June 1943.

35. Guardian, 20 August 1942. The full grant was restored after the Wits Council sent a deputation to the General Purposes Committee of the City Council. Council minutes, 11 September 1942.

36. Star, 16 February 1944; Auricle, 25 February 1944.

37. According to Baruch Hirson, at this juncture the party's 'real growth was among the white petty bourgeosie and few workers, black or white, were recruited'. Baruch Hirson, Yours for the Union (Johannesburg, 1989), 85.

38. Constitution of the Springbok Legion of ex-servicemen and women, South African Defence Force Archives AG (3) 154/696.

39. Brigadier-General R.D. Pilkington Jordan, Adjutant General, to Secretary for Defence, 22 Feb. 1942, Ibid.

40. Pilkington Jordan to Secretary for Defence, 28 Sept. 1942, Ibid.

41. Interview with Joe Slovo, Johannesburg, August 1990.

42. WU's Views, 8 April 1943.

43. Ibid., 10 September 1943.

44. Interview with Violaine Junod

45. Ibid., 12 March 1943. For Wilson's editorship of WU's Views see Boris Wilson, A Time of Innocence, section 21.

46. Star, 26 July 1944; WU's Views, 23 August 1944.

47. WU's Views, 13 March 1945.

48. Presidential report, 13 March 1945, SRC minutes.

49. SRC minutes, 19 March 1945; WU's Views, 11 April 1945.

50. WU's Views, 13 March 1945.

51. 'Die Toenemende Rasse-Vraagstuk aan Wits', Spore, August 1945.

52. WU's Views, 12 October 1945.

53. WU's Views, 13 October 1942 and 12 March 1943.

54. WU's Views, 12 April 1943; SRC minutes 30 March 1943.

55. SRC minutes, 6, 7 & 9 April, 1943.

56. Interview with Len Stein, Johannesburg, August 1989.

57. Star, 18 April 1943.

58. Raikes to Cullen, 4 May 1943, UA 138.5

59. Star, 10 April 1943.

60. WU's Views, 12 April 1943.

61. Interview with I. Bransby Welsh, Johannesburg, September 1992.

62. SRC minutes, 15 and 20 March 1944.

63. WU's Views, 28 April 1944.

64. Star, 16 April 1944.

65. SRC minutes, 2 June 1942. The case for closing the gold mines was argued by the Wits economist, John Reedman, who contended that the lend-lease programme of the United States obviated the need to pay for essential war requirements with gold, and that the mine workers would contribute more to the South African war effort either as soldiers or as munitions workers. Reedman's views were published by the Communist weekly, the Guardian, on 16 July 1942. The rumour on campus was that pressure from the Chamber of Mines obliged Raikes to ban the debate.

66. WU's Views, 28 April 1944.

67. Tobias, 'The Women of Wits', chap 2.

68. SRC minutes, 27 February 1942.

69. Interview with Anne Yates (Feetham), Oxford, 1989; WU's Views, 12 March 1943.

70. SRC minutes, 12 March and 18 August 1943.

71. Ibid., 9 September 1941.