

https://dspace.org/

Food, authority and politics: Student riots in South African schools, 1945-1976

Hyslop, Jonathan

1986-09
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/8781

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

A F R I C A N S T U D I E S I N S T I T U T E

African Studies Seminar Paper
to be presented in RW
4.00pm SEPTEMBER 1986

Title: Food, Authority and Politics: Student Riots in South African Schools 1945-1976.

by: Jonathan Hyslop

No. 200

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

A F R I C A N S T U D I E S I N S T I T U T E

African Studies Seminar paper to be
presented at Seminar in RW 319 at
4.00 p.m. on Monday, 29 September 1986

FOOD, AUTHORITY AND POLITICS: STUDENT RIOTS IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS 1945 - 1976

by Jonathan Hyslop

No. 200

At 9.30 on 7 August 1946, Lovedale, one of South Africa's leading missionary educational institutions, was hit by an explosion of student anger. A crowd of 150 to 200 male students stoned the houses of some of the staff and set fire to some small buildings and equipment. Staff who tried to intervene were themselves stoned. When police arrived to disperse the riot students threw stones at them as well. The police then fired warning shots and the students fled to the hill behind the school. At dawn they gave themselves up and 157 students were arrested. On 10 August, in defiance of orders from the mission authorities, about eighty male students marched into the town of Alice to visit their jailed fellows. On the return of the marchers, the women students, who up to then had been fairly quiet, became rowdy. The next day, Sunday 11 August, women students participated in stone throwing and ringing the church bell, while male students boycotted church. A letter from the students was handed to the Principal, Rev. R.H.W. Shepherd, demanding that those who had been arrested should not be subject to double punishment by the Lovedale authorities, and announcing that a boycott would be maintained until this issue was resolved. On the Monday none of the women students and only thirty .of the men turned up for classes. Shepherd suspended classes and sent all the students home. On 16 August the pupils who had been arrested were tried in the Alice Magistrate's Court. 152 were found guilty and of these sixty-four who were under nineteen years of age were sentenced to between six and ten cuts, while the remainder were given sentences of £5 or two months.[1] The supposed cause of the whole incident was students' discontent about the rationing of sugar, but as we shall see,[2] the meaning of school violence was far more complex than this. Before the Lovedale events were over, Healdtown, the Eastern Cape's other outstanding missionary educational institution, was shaken by similar troubles. Again supposedly in protest over the food - in this case a reduction of the bread ration -

a small group of pupils unsuccessfully tried to stage a boycott and riot on Wednesday 14 August, and then set fire to a school building and cut the telephone line to Fort Beaufort. A number of the leaders of this action were expelled, and the Institution's authorities referred the cases of those involved in cutting the wires to the police.[3]

These incidents at Lovedale and Healdtown are significant instances of a trend which emerged in South African mission boarding schools during the 1940s, a trend toward militant action by students against the authorities. As one studies the evolution of the black education system from the 1940s into the 1970s, one is struck by the continuities of these patterns. The kinds of incidents of arson, stone-throwing and boycott which multiplied in number in the 1940s continued into the early 1970s, fluctuating in level and intensity, changing their geographical distribution, but never quite disappearing. Mission schools bequeathed a tradition of student insurgency to the state system which began to take them over with the implementation of the Bantu Education Act in 1955.

This prompts an obvious question: to what extent did the mass student resistance which emerged in 1976 owe anything to the tradition of student militancy which has come before it? And was that tradition merely one of lumpen violence over trivial issues, or did it have more profound meanings? In addressing this issue one is immediately confronted with a methodological problem. How valid is it to make generalisations about different incidents, in varying parts of the country over a period of about thirty years, which do not necessarily have direct organisational or emulative connections with each other? An important contribution to historiographical thought on this issue has been made by Charles Tilly. Tilly argues that when people act collectively

> "... they ordinarily have a limited number of forms of action - a repertoire - at their disposal. Repertoires of collective action vary from one group to another, but in general they are limited and change rather slowly. Repertoires change as a function of the group's organisation and experience, but they also change as a function of the constraints imposed by other groups, including authorities."[4]

What Tilly is pointing to is that forms of social action are not chosen on a strictly rational basis from all the physically possible alternatives. Rather, a tradition develops within a particular class, class segment or sub-culture of acting in a certain way around certain issues. Forms of action are

> "... learned, historically specific, rooted in the existing social structures and seriously constraining."[5]

This has a number of implications for the study of contention in South African schools. Firstly, it should be possible to trace patterns or types of contention, across substantial historical periods. A repetition of particular forms of action in different times and places

signifies conflicts within similar patterns of social relations, and a continuity of specific traditions of resistance within those relations. Secondly, we need to consider the constraints imposed by 'other groups' on students' actions. In the course of this study the links between student insurgency and national levels of political mobilisation will be investigated. Amongst these 'other groups' whose action constrains collective action, Tilly mentions the 'authorities'. This indicates the necessity for an examination of student actions in the context of the state and educational authorities responses to them. In one respect this is quite easy in our case - the 'South African way of life' has always been one of repression and mission authorities were no leass ready than Bantu Education officials to call in the police, and expel or beat their students. But as we shall see, the changing institutional framework provided by the move from Missionary to Bantu Education was eventually to have profound effects on the kind of actions that students undertook. Thirdly, Tilly's work has the profound implication that the changing of forms of collective action is not an instantaneous process, and that thus new or specific problems may be addressed through old, recognised types of protest action.[6] Elements of an existing form of protest can be changed in the course of struggle but they are unlikely to disappear. The fact that a particular form of action is widely recognised by those participating in it forms part of the basis of their solidarity, even if they are taking part for differing or new motives.

While the limited nature of the data which is available to me prevents me from making the kind of detailed computerised breakdown of the characteristics of a set of cases of social actions undertaken by Tilly (a task which would certainly be a useful one for a South African cliometrician), I do think that a study of student action based on a close examination of its changing forms and focii can reveal important patterns. It is such a study which I intend to undertake in this paper.

The argument of this paper identifies a number of significant continuities and discontinuities in the nature of student protest. In the 1940s school students established a 'repertoire' of protest around their conditions of life. The main feature of these were those of the Lovedale and Healdtown events; physical damage to school property, arson, class boycotts, and sometimes attacks on teachers. These types of actions became widespread in schools in the mid forties and focussed on living conditions in the missionary institutions, above all food and discipline. But I will suggest that these issues became an accepted form of focus for student militancy, nominal issues around which wider and deeper political and social discontents condensed. These discontents centred on the way in which the authoritarian power relations of the mission summoned up and reflected those of the wider society. After a peak of activity around 1946, the riots diminished in number but continued through the 1950s. Through the forties and fifties, while riots occurred in a number of parts of the country they were concentrated in boarding schools in the Eastern Cape.[7] With the coming of the political crisis of the early sixties there was a considerable upsruge in student action. In some places this took the form of food and discipline riots which clearly masked wider concerns. The repertoire of militancy thus maintained its coherence while taking on new elements. But elsewhere during the student upsurge of 1960-3, overt issues of national politics became the focus of their actions, especially around the establishment of the Republic in 1961.

actions of this period were spread throughout the country, but were still mainly located within boarding institutions of missionary orgin. With the political restabilisation of the mid sixties, student action once more diminished, and was once again concentrated on traditional issues of food and discipline, although it was not without political undertones. These types of actions continued into the early seventies, becoming gradually more substantial but remaining concentrated in boarding schools and especially in the Eastern Cape. It was only in 1974/75 that a decisive break occurred in the forms of student protest. In this period the focus of student action began to shift to the urban day school, an institution which had till then played little role in student activity. For the first time students began to organise themselves around a political opposition to the education system. But the repertoire of action - boycotts, arson, attacks on buildings and persons had a long history which surely legitimated them. The argument I would make is not that the student movements of the mid seventies simply followed the lead of those who had rebelled before them. The new student movements were far more coherent and articulate in their grievances than their predecessors and engaged in a far more overtly political and carefully organised form of protest. All I would say is that the movements of June 1976 did not fall from a clear sky but must be contextualised in a long tradition of resistance stretching back to the forties. And I would argue that it was the creation of the Bantu Education system which explains both why mission-originated boarding schools remained the focus of rebellion in the 1960s and why they were replaced by urban day schools in this role during the seventies. The existing forms of student rebellion had been established in the older boarding schools, which were closely connected to one another, through religious and class networks. Certainly it seems that a high proportion of those at mission schools were the children of a Christian and literate African 'petty bourgeoisie'. These students established a tradition, a 'repertoire' of certain forms of action within the boarding schools, and the tradition was surely underpinned by the cultural and class links of those schools constituencies. In the cities however, a large cross section of working class children were drawn into the rapidly expanding urban 'Bantu Education' system. There, no such tradition of rebellion existed. It took a lengthy historical period for urban youth to develop its own confidence, to drawn on the 'repertoire' of protest of the mission institutions and to establish its own political agenda. The student movements of the seventies and eighties thus borrowed from earlier traditions of student protest and at the same time were a departure from them.

It will be clear in our discussion that outbreaks of militancy coincided and interacted with changes in the political and educational orders. The upheaval around 1945-46 can thus be linked to the urban political crisis, the radicalisation of the youth and the industrial conflict of the time; they can likewise be seen as part of the financial and credibility crisis from which the missions were suffering.

The upsurge of the early fifties (1952 - 1954) accompanies the development of the ANC's mass political campaigns, and the government's initial moves to establish the Bantu Education system. Troubles in the late fifties take place in the context of the state's implementation of its decision to take over the mission schools. The early sixties saw actions which respond to the period of Sharpeville, the establishment of the Republic and the emergence of the Umkhonto we Sizwe and Poqo.

Finally the students reassertion in the early seventies reflects black political reawakening in that era, while the new type of organising that emerges from 1974 - 1975 was prompted by the state's expansion of urban secondary expansion, which provided a new political terrain; by the political influences of the Black Consciousness Movement; and by the changed political situation signified by the Durban strikes of 1973 and the collapse of the Portuguese Empire.

An objection which is certain to be made to the approach of this paper is that it ignores the role of school boycotts called by political movements in the forties and fifties in building up a tradition of student agitation. Instances which may be cited are the 1944 Brakpan school boycott,[8] the 1952 Orlando school boycott,[9] and the ANC's school boycotts of 1955.[10] However these movements were all initiated by adult political organisations with students in a subordinate role. They did not link up with or resemble other contemporary forms of student unrest. And thus if one is looking for the roots of post 1976 student movements, which are characterised by a high degree of student self organisation they do not seem likely to be found there.

STUDENT RIOTS IN THE LAST YEARS OF MISSIONARY EDUCATION: 1945 - 1955

Missionary institutions had a long record of student disturbances. The earliest recorded of these was one at Lovedale in 1873 in which a section of the students protested against alleged discrimination in favour of the Fingos.[11] There seems to have been some increase in incidents after the first world war[12] - at Kilnerton[13] and Lovedale[14] in 1920, and at Blythswood in 1929[15]. In 1940 there was a strike at Clarkesbury[16] and in 1941 a stone-throwing incident at Lovedale.[17] However it was generally agreed by mission authorities and educationalists that there was no precedent for the great upsurge of student revolt that struck the missionary institutions at the end of the second world war. Lovedale's Shepherd said at the time of the 1946 Lovedale riot that there had been sixteen incidents in mission educational institutions in the last two years,[18] while the SAIRR counted 20 disturbances in the 1945-1947 period.[19] From 1947 there appears to have been some decline in the number of incidents - then in the early fifties conflict revived. I have found evidence of four major conflicts during 1950 (Adams[20] St Matthews at Keiskammahoek, St John at Umtata and Shawbury[21]); two during 1952 (Mfundisweni - Faku Institution,[22] and Bensonvale[23]); four in 1953 (Bethal,[24] Indaleni,[25] Marienthal,[26] and Healdtown[27]); and one in 1954 (Mvenyane[28]).

Student militancy in this period must be understood in the context of a gradual collapse of the mission school system, a collapse which was on the one hand an infrastructural one, arising from the missions' inability to cope financially on their existing budgets, and on the other a crisis in the relations between white mission authorities and black students, a crisis of authority relations underpinned by the spread of African Nationalist political consciousness.

There is a prevalent myth that the missionary education system was a smoothly functioning one which was wantonly destroyed by the imposition of the Bantu Education system. Like most myths it contains a kernel of truth: the best mission schools were far superior

educationally to the best Bantu Education schools, and produced students who enjoyed greater competence in English and greater intellectual confidence than those who came after them. But by the 1940s, the mission system was breaking down at all levels. This breakdown affected not just institutions which were incompetent in their teaching or administration, but the elite levels of the system. Lovedale and Healdtown, for example, which were plagued by student unrest, were institutions which between them provided during the early fifties, half of the African students passing Cape Senior Certificate, and a majority of students at Fort Hare, the country's only black University.[29]

Simply, the resources of the missions were insufficient for the educational task which they were addressing. The missions had to pay the entire cost of their buildings, infrastructure and medical services, as well as the salaries of non-teaching employees.[30] War-time inflation exacerbated this burden and the ability of the missions to deal with this by raising fees was undermined by the inability of parents to pay major increases.[31] The consequences were disastrous: by 1946 Lovedale was £30 000 in debt.[32] At the same time, the demand for education was putting pressure on the missions to take greater numbers of students than they could really reach: the inquiry into the 1946 Lovedale disturbance concluded that "... the number of students is too large for the Institution to handle effectively."[33] Thus by the late forties the missionaries themselves were appealing for greater state intervention in education. At a meeting of heads of missionary schools at East London in 1947, a statement was issued to the effect that the institutions could not bear their financial burden without greater assistance from the government.[34]

Simultaneously, the resource-stretched missions were affected by a situation in which black youth was increasingly influenced by African Nationalist aspirations. While for the mission authorities the riots were a sort of political Rorschach test which tended to summon up fantasies of all kinds of conspiracies, it is certain that students were in reality becoming increasingly aware of national political issues. This was certainly noticed by observers. The SAIRR commented in 1947 that the mission riots "appear to be symptomatic of a general unrest among the African people throughout the country";[35] one missionary wrote in 1953 that "... in the present ferment of things all over Africa all our institutions stand in the same danger of riot as we have lately seen active ...";[36] while another commented on the Healdtown disturbances "many things are contributing to a spirit of defiance and resentment in the sphere of race relations".[37] There was also a certain amount of political agitation taking place in institutions. In 1946 radical pamphlets and papers such as The Guardian and The Torch were circulating at Lovedale.[38] In 1953 'subversive literature' including The Torch and The Student were being distributed in Faku Training Institution and Mfundisweni hostel.[39] An awareness of international politics certainly played a role in the development of the strike wave. J. Radebe, trying to motivate his fellow students to strike at Healdtown in 1946 said:

> "There is only one way of getting our way. Look at overseas. The only language the Europeans understand is to go on strike. It is the only way by which things can be put right, and we shall to do that here."[40]

There was some influence on students from politicised African teachers who would discuss political issues with them: this was alleged to have been a part of the background to the Lovedale rising in 1946.[41] At Faku in 1953 staff were selling radical literature to students.[42] But such activities clearly were not very systematic. There is no evidence of a 'plan' by mass organisations to 'subvert' the schools of the kind the missionaries believed in. Rather, what was happening was that the political developments of the time were creating an atmosphere in which students were more likely to rebel.

THE FOCUS AND FORM OF STUDENT ACTION 1945 - 1955

The combination of the breakdown of the mission's infrastructure and the political changes of the time produced a breakdown in the hegemony of the missions over their students. The inquiry into the 1946 Lovedale riot noted that until 1939 discipline had been no problem at the school but now the students identified "the European staff in the institution as part of the Government machinery" and some students "behaved in a most unseemly way towards the teachers".[43] One of the teachers commented that "The feeling among the students is that the teachers are against them,".[44] The situation at Lovedale, others noted, was such that it was very difficult to preach in the church because of the students regrettable tendency to make fun of the preacher.[45]

The lack of trust also extended to strong feelings amongst students that the white missionaries were appropriating the resources of the schools for themselves. When J. Radebe was trying to persuade his fellow students at Healdtown to rebel in 1946, he denounced the fact that

> "the new latrine is not finished and the Governor builds himself a new house. The money that should have gone into latrines is being used on a new house"[46]

While the implicit charge of corruption was almost certainly unjust, the important thing is the perception involved - missionaries could not be trusted to refrain from using their power in a way which bolstered their privilege as whites.

The students distrust of the mission authorities was also underpinned by their sympathy with African teachers who were subjected to discrimination within the schools. The Lovedale inquiry noted that African staff saw the differentiated treatment to which they were subject as having "an unsettling effect on the minds of the students".[47]

It also seems likely that the increasingly militant attitudes of African teachers was contributing to a breakdown of the mechanisms of social control within the schools. At Lovedale, when new rules were instituted by the head of the high school in 1946, to "improve discipline and co-operation" these were not enforced by certain members of staff, and the attitude of some of them was described as one of "passive resistance".[48]

A particular source of student resentment was the prefect system. At a meeting between delegations from the Association of Heads of Native Institutions and the Cape African Parents Association in 1947, the Rev. J.A. Calata argued that students resorted to strikes because they had no other way of making their grievances known, as prefects did not convey the complaints of students to the authorities, while the students themselves were forbidden to approach Principals directly.[49] Certainly prefects were resented by other students for the privileges which they enjoyed, such as being able to go out to movies, dances and concerts.[50] And this was compounded by the way in which the vast age range in the mission schools produced a situation where 'junior' pupils were often older than 'snior' ones who were supposed to keep them in order.[51]

The way in which disciplinary systems were falling apart under the strain of the tensions of the times is well illustrated by the events which led to a 'stand-up' strike at Healdtown in 1953, when students refused their meals and refused to be seated in the dining hall, in protest against the placing of a prefect at each dining hall table.[52] In response to this the authorities sent about 100 students home. The Prefect system had been under strain at Healdtown for some time. In 1952 there was a mass resignation of prefects, who felt that their position was being undermined by the unwillingness of the Housemaster, Mr Mncube, to take action on disciplinary matters. Mncube's failure to prevent fights between "Port Elizabeth' and 'Transkei' students and the fact that students had been collecting weapons in the dormitories them came to light; he resigned and the prefects resumed their positions.[53] The institution of prefectship was clearly not fulfilling its Arnoldian purposes. Students accorded the prefects no legitimacy. In an anonymous letter to the authorities the Healdtown students complained: "The most important point which causes us to scribble this is because our representatives are not taking our complaints to you ... these rules are not for all our students but for the juniors and seniors who have no say in your Aristocratic form of Government ... what is the use of these prefects as being our Reps, they should be called your tools for marking us".[54] (Clearly the students had learned their lessons on the French Revolution only too well!) The feelings of resentment toward the prefect system were precipitated by the action of placing prefects at tables, which intensified resentment of other students at being supervised by younger people.[55] The older students felt their 'dignity' had been insulted and demanded the withdrawal of "Junior Prefects in the Senior Area in the Dining Hall".[56] Other grudges of the students related to the quality of the food,[57] the refusal of permission to visit the women's hostel and the carrying out of manual work, (in this case getting up at 3.00 a.m. to bake bread).[58] The issue of manual work had a particular significance; it featured in other mission disturbances. At Lovedale in 1946 "the toolshed and gardening tools were singled out for destruction".[59] One may legitimately surmise that it was the social inferiority which manual labour symbolised that was the issue at stake.

Students unwillingness to obey the disciplinary system of the missions was thus both a symptom and a cause of the crisis into which the missions had entered.

It was the food riot however which was the most common item in the repertoire of student protest. Food though was, in these actions, often a nominal cause which masked their real meanings. There were certainly genuine inadequacies in the food in mission boarding institutions. Dr Cooper, the medical superintendent of Lovedale in 1946 admitted that

while the food in the Institution was adequate in quantity and was fairly well balanced, "it was monotonous and there was a shortage of vegetables".[60] Students at Lovedale in this period did not get tea or milk in their diet either.[61] Throughout the mission system such deficiencies in the food provided were made worse by supply problems and government rationing measures during the war and immediate post war period,[62] and the financial difficulties of the Institutions made it difficult for them to make major improvements in this area.[63] Thus it was certainly widely recognised that the food in the missions was unsatisfactory.[64]

Food was thus a real, material grievance for students. But the true significance of the food riots cannot be understood purely in these terms. A closer examination of food riots suggests that for the students the inferior quality of their food became a symbol of the forms of social domination they experienced in their daily lives. The issue of food often emerged as one which embodied the unjust relations of a racist society. Thus a host of issues relating to questions of authority, power and politics condensed around, and were symbolised by the issue of food. The riot became a form of protest which was well known and widely accepted within the student culture of the mission schools. By focusing on one universal issue of consistent discontent, it could unite students motivated by disparate grievances. The food riot was thus only partially about food; over time it was the expression of a changing set of challenges by students to the power structure of their schools and of protests by them at the power structure of the society. The food riot was so central and persistent a feature of the repertoire of protest precisely because of its ability to absorb new underlying agendas.

Frequently linking into these disturbances was a feeling on the part of students that the poor food represented a contempt on the part of the missionaries for their pupils, a lack of concern for them. An anonymous student at Healdtown wrote to his headmaster in 1953:

> "(i) We have been eating sour and dirty bread and raw porridge but because you do not eat these you don't worry.
>
> (ii) In the time of Rev. S. Mo we were given fresh fruits and fresh vegetables but see to what you give us."[65]
>
> (and on a related theme)
>
> "(iv) Just see to what you give us as a Doctor a mere fool."[66]

The way in which food grievances focused other discontents is well illustrated by several instances. In the 1946 Lovedale disturbances the students put forward the reduction of the sugar ration as the reason for their riot. However, both Shepherd and the Housemaster had discussed this issue with student delegations and had pointed out there was a sugar shortage. Moreover, students were still getting a pound of sugar a week.[67] It thus seems highly unlikely that the sugar issue itself was the real issue at stake. Similarly in the 1946 Healdtown disturbances,

those students accused as instigators by the authorities stated their motive as the reduction of the bread ration and its replacement by mealie porridge. However, when told by the teachers that the need for this had been explained to the student body who had accepted it, they admitted that they were really motivated by a desire "to do what Lovedale has done".[68] An even clearer illustration of how food became a metaphor for power was the incident which occurred at Mvenyane Institution, Cedarville, in 1954. On 9 March women students complained that the mealie porridge was smelly. Biscuits were given to them instead. The school authorities investigated and found that some bags of mealies were rotten. The bad mealies were picked out and only good ones used for the next meal. A new supply of mealies was ordered, but they were not immediately available, and this position was explained to the students. Staff tasted the porridge made from the good mealies and pronounced it good, but students refused to eat it. They also rejected good yellow mealies which were offered. On Saturday 13 March staff members again tasted the porridge and found it adequate. But the women students then all walked out of the institution. Both the District Surgeon and parents who brought back their daughters tried the food and found it acceptable, but despite this, on 14 March the male pupils carried out their own mass walk out.[69] Here the food was clearly the focus of a power and authority struggle rather than its real content. This incident is paradigmatic of the place which food conflicts occupied in student protest.

A minor role in the disturbances of the 1950s was played by ethnic conflict. Some missions certainly housed their students on a 'tribal' basis[70] which must have emphasised any tendency to ethnic definitions of conflict. At Lovedale in 1946 the discontent of students was underlain by the fears of non-Xhosa students that they would be excluded from the Institution, an erroneous impression created by the dropping of Tswana[71] and Sotho as language subjects because of insufficient numbers. In the Natal missions which had of course played a significant role in the development of a Zulu ethnic particularism,[72] such incidents were particularly intense. In 1950 when the Principal of Adams College banned a Shaka day celebration by the Zulu society,[73] an incident erupted in the aftermath of which he expelled 175 pupils. In a later incident at Ohlange Institute[74] in 1956 there was fighting between Zulu and non-Zulu students; the comment of The Torch that "at the Ohlange Institute the Zulu students are made to feel proud, different and even arrogant"[75] is probably valid in view of Ohlange's origins in the work of the father of modern Zulu particularism, Rev. John Dube.[76]

One aspect of mission education in the forties and fiftes which seems to have escaped from its popular image is the way in which mission authorities were willing to use stern reppression against their students in cases of disorder. The missionaries were no less wiling to summmon the constabulary and to engage in mass expulsions of students than their successors. At Mariathal, Ixopo, in October 1953, after students had thrown stones at the Rector's office, one of the Catholic brothers fired a warning shot; and the police arrived to restore order.[77] Four days later three car loads of them escorted away 26 students. On 14 May 1953, 184 students at Bethal Training Institution were arrested after a riot and only six days later another forty-two were arrested after an arson incident at Ndaleni College.[78] These are just some examples of the widespread use by mission authorities of the police in response to student rebellion.

Relations between the missionaries and police during these times of conflict seem to have been cordial. The Governor of Healdtown wrote to the Officer in Charge of the South African Police at Fort Beaufort in 1953 thanking him for the "most ready and willing assistance" which the force had given during tensions at Healdtown.[79] Not that this relationship was always untroubled. In the same period the Principal of Healdtown complained that a group of black and white SAP men had infuriated his students by driving through the Institution's grounds making congress salutes and yelling 'Afrika!'.[80]

The missionaries as we have seen themselves dealt harshly with students who strayed and mass expulsions were frequent.[81]

1955 - 1959 STUDENT ACTION AND THE INTRODUCTION OF BANTU EDUCATION

From 1955, the state began to take over the mission sector, and impose its own educational model. The history of student action does not show a dramatic spontaneous response to this change. The tradition of student contention continued, but the number of incidents did not significantly accelerate. Nor did that tradition spread into the expanding new schools of the Bantu Education system - if one excludes events related to the ANC's 1955 school boycotts, all the strikes and boycotts which took place in this period occurred in mission founded institutions, and most of them in the mission heartland of the Eastern Cape. I have found only one spontaneous student action during 1955 - at Xedaleni in Natal[82] - and as this took the form of a boycott of singing in chapel, and a demand for an end to compulsory church services, and culminated in students setting fire to the chapel,[83] it can hardly be interpreted as a protest against the state takeover of mission education!

However, as the boarding schools came under the control of the Native Affairs Deparment, conditions certainly worsened there in a way that did generate new frictions. The Unity Movement's paper, The Torch, complained in 1957 that school authorities were now tending to call in the police over trivial student offences; that African teachers found their position increasingly conflict-ridden; and that NAD officials had far more racist attitudes than the missionaries.[84] But the incidents which took place followed established patterns.

For example at Blythswood in March 1957, students launched a one-day food boycott, to which the headmaster refused to respond. Subsequently the boarding master called in the police to investigate the case of boys who had taken and eaten maize from the school fields, and the culprits were given lashes by the police. Thereupon, the boys staged a mass walkout.[85] The pattern of the food riot also recurred at Lovedale in 1959 where students in the Junior Hostel petitioned against the quality of their food and having to do manual work. Four were then expelled and twenty-six pupils left in protest. When further demands from the students were ignored, a boycott of school activities and church took place. A disciplinary committee was then convened: it refused to bend to the students demands. The students stuck to their position; and a mass expulsion of students was carried out, supervised by the police.[86] Other student actions took the form of protests of classroom and disciplinary grievances.[87]

Complaints by women students, at Shawbury in 1957, about their hostel conditions[88] led to the expulsion of the entire female student body,[89] and there were similar protests at Mfundisweni in the same year.[90] A boycott at Boitshoko Methodist Institution in 1958 was resolved without expulsions.

In some ways it was the authorities rather than the students who increased the tendency to politicise the conflict in the institutions at this time through their relentless searches for largely imaginary 'instigators' and subversion. At Xedaleni in 1955, the chief response of the mission authorities to the riot was to blame it on "the reading of 'subversive literature'".[91] At Mfundisweni, African teachers who had intervened to try and resolve the 1957 dispute were reported to the authorities for inciting the students.[92] Similarly, following the 1957 Blythswood incidents a department spokesman told a parents meeting that students were getting 'poison' from people in positions of responsibility and that 'agitators' were influencing parents in country districts.[93] Now while it is certainly true that there was a high level of political agitation in the Eastern Cape region and that this may have increased student antipathy toward the authorities, the authorities certainly misunderstood the situation by adhering to a simple 'agitator' theory. Students had real grievances to do with their conditions of life in the schools at all levels - authority conflicts, racial oppression, educational problems and material conditions. In conflicts within the institutions these factors combined with nationalist political sentiment - agitators were not needed to spark so explosive a mixture.

To take the 1959 Lovedale incident for example: students concerns were certainly informed by a political awareness - they demanded an end to ethnic segregation of living quarters, stamping this as 'tribalism' - a terminology which does suggest a Nationalist outlook. But the unifying grievances which focused their discontent were around food and manual labour; and the issues had not been discussed with people outside the Institution. They were thus amazed when they were then told by the Regional Inspector at a meeting that they had been "instigated by the same people[94] who were behind the Victoria Hospital nurses strike in 1958".

The desire of the authorities to track down 'subversion' in fact frequently inflamed conflicts around the schools. In 1959 after pupils of St John's, Umtata, made congress salutes at Minister De Wet Nel's car, and one was expelled,[95] six teachers at the school were dismissed by the department. This heavy handed reaction propted a joint teacher/student/parent protest - which succeeded in blocking the department's move.

The character of this period was thus one where there was not a rapid increase in school violence. What actions took place certainly expressed a continuing resentment at the discriminatory political and educational orders, but were actually focussed on matters relating to food and discipline. The educational authorities (now the Bantu Education Department) were however increasingly tending to sharpen the issues by their confrontationist stance.

THE EARLY 1960s : STUDENTS AND POLITICAL CRISIS

During the early sixties the boycotts and riots in the missionary-founded boarding institution reached the height of their intensity. Concluding with the Sharpeville crisis, and the 1960 Emergency, there were five major incidents, at Amanzimtoti (Adams), Moroka, Tigerkloof, Kilnerton and Pax College, resulting in 360 suspensions.[96] But it was in 1961 that the militancy of the students in these schools reached its apex. The actions of that year differed in three important ways from those that had preceded them. Firstly, whereas the riots of 1960 had been around food or discipline issues (even if conveying hidden political messages), the incidents of 1961 were in many cases quite explicitly political protests against the proclamation of the Republic. Secondly, although the missionary-founded institutions continued to predominate in their role, there were more incidents in urban schools. Thirdly, the Transvaal schools seem to have played a greater role than before. This greater geographical and institutional spread reflects a rising politicisation of youth. The 1961 disturbances were impressive in their scope. Trouble broke out in the Transvaal at Kilnerton; Swartbooistad School, Pretoria; and Emmarentia High School near Warmbaths; in the Cape at Healdtown, Lovedale, Freemantle Institution near Queenstown, St John's at Umtata, Botha Sigcau High School at Flagstaff, Bensonvale, St Matthews and Mount Arthur; and in Natal at Ndaleni Training College.[97]

The level of conflict then dropped somewhat in 1962; the SAIRR, which kept the only consistent records of these events, recording trouble only at Kilnerton, Mariazell near Matatiele, and Bulwer Presbyterian hostel;[98] a decline which, I would argue, reflects the setback which African Nationalism had received as a result of the repression of the early sixties. But in 1963 there was once again a significant student upsurge centred in the mission foundations with conflicts taking place at Wilberforce, Lovedale, Healdtown, Botha Sigcau, St Francis Marianhill, Mfundisweni and Bethal College, Butterworth.[99] These incidents resulted in at least 471 expulsions.[100] While there is little direct evidence of what political factors affected this round of disturbances, the circumstances in which they took place do, I will argue, lend some credibility to the SAIRR's view that they were in part students responses to the activities of Umkhonto we Sizwe and Poqo.[101]

The troubles in mission institutions during 1960 appeared to have the same form and focii as before, but were differentiated by their greater frequency. Healdtown's difficulties, for example, focussed on the bread ration and (an issue with far more far-reaching matter) the special seating given to white staff in the dining hall.[102] The incident at Healdtown was a classic food riot. A protest against the quality of breakfast led to the expulsion of a student leader. The students then embarked on a boycott and set fire to the buildings. Police intervened and eight students were arrested.[103] So was the affair at Moroka Training Institution where students attacked the house of the teacher who was responsible for catering.[104] Kilnerton's upheaval, similarly, was a classic disciplinary riot. After friends and relatives of students were refused admission to an annual drama night, a class boycott, arson and an attack on the Matron of the hostel followed.[105] At Tigerkloof the old protests against manual work

resurfaced when the carpentry block was burnt down and the entire student body arrested and held for nine days.[106] Amongst these 1960s actions only one had an overtly educational-political focus - one in which fifty students at Amanzimtoti walked out over the quality of the tuition.[107]

But the next year showed decisive changes in the pattern of protest. The actions of 1961 were of three types - and two of these were new. For the first time there were school riots and boycotts on issues of national politics, centring on opposition to the coming of the Republic. Secondly, there were actions responding to unprovoked clamp-downs by the authorities. And finally there was some continuation of the traditions ot food and discipline boycotts. The significance of the existence of a particular tradition or repertoire of protest, in particular educational institutions is well illustrated by the events of 1961. In the mission founded schools of the Eastern Cape, for example, there was an immense flare-up at the time of Republic, but the schools in the regional urban centre, Port Elizabeth were quiet.[108] The Regional Director of Bantu Education, J. Dugard, comments:

> "Boarding schools caused many heartaches while the far more numerous day schools went quietly on their way."[110]

The capacity of the boarding schools to cause officialdom 'heartaches' existed precisely because their students could turn their strong tradition of internal protest in a direction which addressed the intensified political conflict at a mational level; the urban students without such an autonomous protest tradition could not. A generalised political eruption took place in the Eastern Cape boarding schools. At St John's College, Umtata, students held a meeting defying the government's ban on gatherings, which culminated in the burning of a government vehicle, the college library and furniture.[110] Altogether 204 students were arrested in the Transkei alone around Republic Day incidents, and 106 convicted of offences connected with illegal gatherings or public violence.[111] Action also spread to the Transvaal. At Emmarentia Bantu High School at Warmbaths on Republic Day, students refused to participate in the festivities which had been prepared and held a mass meeting instead. Police were twice called in to disperse them: a two day class boycott folowed and twenty-nine students were expelled.[112]

It is not clear to what extent the new wave of student action was organised. Unfortunately much of the little data which is available on this expresses the views of the educational authorities who inclined to an excessively conspiratorial view of student action. A conference of the senior officials of the Bantu Education Department in the Eastern Cape concluded that behind the disturbances lay "a powerful and ruthless organisation brought to bear on the immature but politically conscious minds of young scholars", this being part of "a considered and prepared attack on the Government and White supremacy".[113] They believed that there was a plan to oust "Europeans" from the institutions in order to place blacks in charge and create "strong Bantu political centres" which would become training grounds for "agitators and leaders of Bantu

nationalism".[114] One's initial suspicion that this was a fantasia which reflected the paranoia of the white inspectorate to a greater degree than any real knowledge of the state of black political organisation is confirmed when one examines the inspectors' knowledge of the issues. The Regional Director, J. Dugard, a relatively humane and enlightened official, was, to judge from his contribution to the debate, unaware that the ANC and the Unity Movement were separate organisations.[115] Furthermore, although he was convinced that there was a "cell" in each institution which "dictated" to the student body, he admitted that it had mysteriously proved impossible to find out who any of these "instigators" were.[116] However, some of the points which arose at the officials conference do help to explain what underlay the politicisation of the schools. The inspectors virtually admitted that their relations with both students and black teachers had totally broken down. The prefect system had been "neutralised". Prefects had either participated in the disturbances or become "negative". Those prefects regarded as "sell-outs" were subject to physical violence. Discipline was eroding as the sensitive situation compelled the authorities to ignore breaches they would otherwise have punished.[117] Black hostel staff and teachers who supported the authorities were being ostracised. The majority of black teachers could not be relied on in a crisis, and some were suspected of encouraging and supporting student action.[118] An understanding of why student action was able to move onto the political plane surely has to start with an understanding of how the mechanisms of social control had completely collapsed in the mission schools, both as a result of the direction of outside black public opinion against the education authorities and of the students own challenge to the legitimacy of the institutions' disciplinary structure. There was thus space for more overt forms of political action to come to the fore. The students who told the authorities at this time that "Education is not everything"[119] expressed a new form of political consciousness which was based on a local defeat of the legitimacy of the education system. It was to become generalised in the seventies when there was a more thorough collapse of that legitimacy.

Heavy-handed interventions by the authorities also help to escalate the level of conflict. At Healdtown, a few days before Republic Day, police staged a raid looking for 'weapons'. The trunks belonging to 200 students who refused to co-operate with the police were seized. A class boycott followed and the College was placed under Police guard. Following an attempt by pupils to burn down the Principal's office, the institution was closed.[120] Measures against those who participated in protests also provoked trouble. At Lovedale in July 400 boycotted classes in protest against the expulsion of fifty for participating in the May demonstrations. All 400 were expelled.[121] At Ndaleni fifty students walked out in protest at being required to sign a good conduct undertaking after returning from suspension over the May demonstration.[122] At Kilnerton in June a strike took place in sympathy with ten expelled pupils and with Healdtown and Lovedale.[123]

Few of the incidents reported in 1961 had the character of simple food riots - one such incident being a boycott over food at Swartbooistad School, Hammanskraal. Significantly this occurred during May. The food riot had however served as a bridge across which students could charge on to the political offensive. Disturbances in schools continued in 1962 although at a reduced level.[124] However, in the first half of 1963 there was a renewed flare-up.[125] A statement by the

Minister of Bantu Education also indicated a larger number of incidents but did not provide adequate details of them.[126] Speculation that the incidents of this period were linked to the activities of Umkhonto we Sizwe or Poqo[127] should not be taken too literally in an organisational sense. But at the same time the battles in the schools in 1963 did take on a bitterness and intensity which suggests a deepended political anger. The mood of the students could be summed up by a slogan which was written up by students at Healdtown during the 1963 disturbances:

> "Why must we wear uniform? Are we convicts or soldiers?[128] We are the future leaders of South Africa."

The last-ditch violence of the conflicts in society as a whole was reflected in the schools. At Wilberforce (Evaton) in February 1963, two students were expelled on allegations that they had incited others not to pay fees. Following this, the BED sacked the Vice-Principal Jack Lekala, who they claimed was inciting the pupils and was behind the campaign against fees. However, after his dismissal Lekala returned to the school and spoke to some students, a student meeting ensued and the Principal was stoned when he tried to intervene. The police then arrived and after being initially driven back by stones from the students, took control of the campus with the aid of a Saracen armoured car. When a boycott broke out the next day all the men students were expelled. After the Director of Bantu Education had intervened and been denied a hearing by the students, he had all the women students expelled as well.[129] In September 1962 students protesting expulsions at Kilnerton attacked students who were breaking their boycott with knives and sticks and burnt a teacher's car.[130] Students at Bulwer in 1962,[131] and at Healdtown in 1963[132] stoned members of staff. There was massive property damage: in an incident at Mfundisweni in April 1963 students stoned the church, smashed the mission lighting plant and burnt down a dairy: ninety-two of them were convicted in the magistrate's court.[133]

What is interesting however is that, unlike the riots of 1961, none of the riots of which I have been able to fund details in 1962-63 was launched on an overtly political issue. Every one claimed to be either about a disciplinary issue, such as expulsions or took the form of a traditional food riot. For example after the violent boycott and confrontation at Healdtown in 1963, the students claimed that their grievances were insufficient food and broken beds, although as pointed out earlier, the riot clearly had political undertones.[134] What was happening, I would suggest, is this: As repression increased in the early sixties, and as it became clear the state would not immediately be overthrown, the students became more cautious at putting forward overtly political claims. However, the underground activities of the time did have an impact on the students not as contemporary officialdom believed, in a direct organisational sense, but rather in an exemplary sense: these activities gave the students a sense of continuing struggle, of the possibility of the change. And the fact that the struggle was taking a violent form, I suggest, intensified their combativeness.

1964 - 1974: STUDENT PROTEST IN THE HEYDAY OF APARTHEID

Such an analysis would appear to be confirmed when one looks at the evolution of student action during the next decade. With the crushing of the underground political movements the level of student agitation subsides drastically. In fact I have been able to find no major incidents in schools during 1964. Then the traditional pattern of action begins to flare up again. It generally takes two forms - one being that of the food or discipline riot - the other being anonymous acts of arson. Overt political issues are never raised, though the occasional hint of underlying political discontents sometimes emerges. The level of action fluctuates but the pattern never quite disappears. Interestingly, despite continuing urbanisation, it is in the rural boarding school that the tradition of student upheaval remains - few incidents occurred in the expanding urban primary school sector. Clearly what was happening was that students in the boarding institutions responded to the change in the national political situation which had occurred by the mid-fifties. In the repressive situation of the mid-sixties and late 1960s they could not make political calls for mobilisation which were as overt as those of a few years before: nor did they have the space to be as aggressive. Their attention turned once again to the internal conflicts of the school; once again food and discipline became the metaphors of power.

The food riot was thus once again a major vehicle for the expression of discontents. At Botshabelo Training Institution, Middelburg, in April 1965, there was a strike after the boarding master had dismissed student complaints about the food and medical facilities.[135] A protest against the hostel master at Vryheid government Bantu School in November 1967 led to nineteen expulsions.[136] There were expulsions at Nongoma Vocational Training School in February 1968, following a food riot.[137] In September 1968 200 boys were detained at Clarksbury following a riot over food and in which buildings had been stoned and two cars damaged.[138]

Various disciplinary issues also became a basis for protests; in 1965 Marianhill pupils broke windows in protest against expulsions.[139] In 1965 a search of a classroom at Moroka Mission by prefects looking for weapons led to attacks on buildings.[140] At Lovedale in 1966, 300 pupils were expelled after they refused to attend classes in protest against two teachers whom they said were unqualified.[141]

Despite the generally lower level of conflict some incidents had very violent outcomes. At Moroka Mission, following the 1965 incident, arsonists set the mission on fire, causing R30 000 damage.[142] Shortly thereafter, Roodekuil Community School at Brits was burnt to the ground.[143] It was still possible too, to find signs of deeper political meanings in school disturbances. During the 1965 food riot at Botshabelo, the students were heard to be singing ANC songs.[144] While the level of student unrest did not rise sharply on a national scale before the mid-seventies, and there was one localised revival of activity in the Transkei/Eastern Cape, around 1970-1971.[145] This regional upsurge was fairly intense, with high levels of violent rioting taking place.[146] Interestingly, of the thirteen institutions in the Transkei and Eastern Cape at which I have evidence of student action, five were missionary founded boarding institutions with long traditions of student action in this latter period.

militancy[147] - St John's, Clarkesbury, Mvenyane, Buntingvale and Healdtown.

The continuity of the repertoire of protest through these institutions is thus once more apparent. The particular motivations of this wave of student action are not particularly clear. At Healdtown a teacher commented that when students who had attacked the headmaster's house, attempting to break his door and to beat him, were interviewed, "Their complaints were all very petty indeed ... the trouble does not lie with any individual, but with the boys who will not accept the rules and discipline ...".[148] In a sense this grasps the nub of the issue - the breakdown in the internal social relations of rural boarding schools, which had taken place under the missonary order had never been overcome. Neither Bantu Education nor the neo-Bantu Education of the alleged Transkei and Ciskei states could restore the credibility of the educational process sufficiently to reintegrate the students into it. they thus turned to violence around issues which could focus their broader resentments at the authority relations of the school and the society. It is tempting to suggest that the moves of the Transkei and Ciskei toward self-government were linked to the discontents of the students, but I have found no hard evidence of this. However, it is clear that the political tensions involved in this process sometimes acted in a way which provided the student with more space in which to act. In the case of the 1971 Healdtown incident, a row broke out between the Warden of Healdtown who had closed the hostel and suspended classes, and the Ciskeian Territorial Authorities education department.[149] The Department however reprimanded the Warden for taking this action: their view was that he should have tried to bring the school back to normal. The Ciskei's Acting Director of Education wrote that: "The Church is running the hostel for the Territorial Authority which represents the Xhosa people of the Ciskei, the parents of the children. The Executive Councillor must be able to say that every possible effort was made to keep the hostel operating, and that the Department was satisfied of the need to close."[150] The point is that the Ciskei Bantustan leadership wanted to build its political base and that the suspension of the children of the local elite who attended Healdtown was an obstacle to this. I do not suggest that the particular configuration of events at Healdtown was widespread, but it does suggest that the strains of transition to pseudo-independence may have contributed to the Ciskei and Transkei authorities difficulty in handling students at this time.

Conflict continued at a reduced level in 1972. There were 296 arrests of students at five schools, in connection with which there were 37 convictions[151] and at six schools in 1973 in connection with which there were 472 convictions.[152] These incidents took place in Lebowa, the Transkei, Zululand and Ciskei.[153] The classic pattern of the food riot often continued. For example at Bulwer in August 1973 the students were affected by food poisoning on a large scale. A doctor was called for consultations. But after he had left the students continued to be ill and no action was taken. A meeting to discuss this was held with a teacher, Mr Hlengwa, but he refused to show students the minutes he had taken. On Sunday 12 August the male students announced that there would be a boycott. Once it started on Monday, the police were called, but the boycott went ahead. On the Monday evening the students met with the circuit inspector, whom they presented with a list of no fewer than ninety-two grievances. The boycott continued throughout the day. In the evening students met with the Principal students met with the Principal, Mr Mthiyane. Four main demands were made: that a doctor

should be called: that the students should have access to the minutes of the meting: that staff should stop opening students letters: and that there should be no striking - "clapping" - of students by teachers. The head agreed only to the last of these demands. On Wednesday the students went back to school, and shortly thereafter a teacher struck a female pupil. This incensed the students and during the night they attacked school buildings. The police arrived and fired on the students. Two female students were wounded. The remaining students fled into the countryside. On the Friday school was suspended. After a few weeks students were allowed to return but when they found that some were being expelled for trivial offences, others left voluntarily.[154] This was a classic food riot situation. While there were real material issues - the students being poisoned by their food and the lack of medical attention - there were also underlying feelings that this situation was part of the injustice intrinsic to students' relations with authority. "To our surprise" one of the students wrote "the police were called within five minutes time after school time was past, but the doctor was not called immediately after we had eaten poison."[155]

It was this sense of injustice in the student experience of dealing with authority that fuelled their anger around more palpable issues.

1974 - 1976 THE EMERGENCE OF A MASS STUDENT MOVEMENT

During 1974 student activity superficially displayed its traditional pattern. Transkei schools continued to predominate as the main centres of action, although there were isolated incidents in the OFS and Natal, and the older rural boarding schools - Marianhill, Osborn, Clarkebury and Buntingville were still to the fore.[156] But the following year shows a striking change in the geographical and spatial location of unrest: there was a noticeable trend in the Eastern Cape for trouble to occur in urban areas outside the Cape, with a number of incidents in Pretoria and Mafikeng.[157] There was thus a movement of student activity toward the urban day schools and away from the misionary boarding establishments.

But this shift was only a minor symptom of far deeper changes which were transforming the culture and politics of black urban youth. The secondary and higher primary schools of the townships were awakening politically, for the first time developing their own authonomous tradition and repertoire of action. This repertoire represented both a break and a continuity with that of the mission schools. A break because it was marked by a new strength and coherence of organisation, and because it posed well articulated demands on education issues, in a way which pointed to the broader political implications of those issues. A continuity because the tradition of challenging authority relations in education through the tactics of boycott and riot were carried over into the new period, and surely, were legitimated by their history.

How did these new social processes develop? Kane-Berman's contention that the creation of a new politics in urban schools was in large part of an outcome of the influence of teachers who were under the sway of the Black Consciousness Movements, especially SASO, seems to me to be substantially correct.[158] There is a great deal of evidence of the prevalence of BCM views amongst younger teachers at the time.

A former teacher who was in the profession in the early seventies says of that period

> The children could not have got those ideas from the stiff-headed old teachers. I mean when I taught the staff were divided into young and old - they called us SASO.[159]

Similarly, a former school student leader who is today a leading member of the UDF and keen to play down the role of the BCM, nevertheless admits that the magazines of SASM, the main school students movement of the time, were written by members of the Black Consciousness organisations.[160]

What was it, however, that made urban youth responsive to these new influences?

Firstly there were important changes taking place in the culture of the township outh. In an interesting recent thesis Lunn[161] argues that a distinct youthful sub-culture was emerging which was to be an important bearer of Black Consciousness ideas. This was the group known as 'cats', urban sophisticates, a relatively educated stratum of urban youth. They differentiated themselves out from the somewhat lumpen sub-culture of the 'mapantsula' (not to mention the despised rural bumpkins - 'moegoes' and 'barries').[162] The sub-culture of the cats was thus a thoroughly urban one, and one which was receptive to BC political messages. From the early seventies, the cats' sub-culture began to display BC influences, adopting 'Afro' fashions in token of this.[163] It thus provided a model and a medium for the transmission of a new political culture amongst urban youth.

Secondly, the beginnings of a recovery of popular initiative after the defeats of the 1960s had their effect, as did the decline of the regime's international position. Here the changes symbolised by the Durban strikes of 1973, the coming to power of FRELIMO and the debacle of the SADF in Angola are crucial. Such events brought new models of action to the attention of urban students. When Maree carried out research in a Soweto High School in April 1975[164] she found students formulating their vision of the future not only as one without apartheid and homelands but also in ways like this:

> "Riots are now going to occur. We are going to event things for ourselves."[165]

Thirdly, the schools themselves were in an overwhelming structural crisis. Partly this was because the strains of overcrowding and lack of resources were leading to harsh methods of corporal punishment and student resentment, resulting in what one student described as a "deadlock" between pupils and staff.[166] More importantly, as I have documented elsewhere,[167] the period from 1972 saw a change in state policy which involved a rapid expansion of urban black secondary education which had been virtually frozen during the 1960s. This expansion, expanded the sector of the school population most likely to take political initiative. And at the same time the expansion was organised in a way which was likely to exacerbate the tensions involved:

funding and organisation was inadequate. On top of this the reorganisation of education was to have two features which were to bring the schools situation to a fever pitch. On the one hand, it was decided to eliminate a year of primary school from the end of 1975, so that the numbers in the first year of secondary school were doubled at the beginning of 1976, which produced a crisis of resources. On the other, the Bantu Education Department, especially in the Southern Transvaal, put its campaign for the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction on full throttle. This of course provided the issue that would focus the struggles of 1976. As the policy was applied to the last year of higher primary school[168] as well as to the secondary school the drawing in of this sector to the conflict was also ensured. The Bantu Education Department thus prepared the terrain of its own defeat.

A NEW PATTERN

The new style of struggles in urban day-schools around educational political issues emerged first in the townships of the Eastern Cape and the Rand. They were far more organised and more explicit in their aims than the actions which had been mounted in the boarding schools. One school where these new currents emerged was Thembalabantu High School at Zwelitsha. In October 1974 three students there were expelled for contributing to SASM's magazine.[169] Following this, in May 1975 pupils presented a list of grievances to the head, who responded by expelling one of their number. The students then called a strike and held a meeting to discuss the issue. The police arrived and 140 students were arested.[170] A similar new combativeness was demonstrated by students at Morris Isaacson school in Soweto in September 1975. When Security police returned a student whom they had been interrogating to school, they found their way blocked by protesting students.[171]

The new type of student action was however exemplified by the actions of the students at Nathaniel Nyaluza High School, Grahamstown, during 1975. Here students clearly articulated and ferociously fought for their demands. In May they staged boycotts and demonstrations. They put forward clear and serious complaints. The teachers they said were poorly qualified,[172] had drinking problems, sexually harrassed female pupils,[173] and punished students for exposing their misdeeds.[174] There were also complaints about the conduct of the inspector, disciplinary procedures,[175] shortages of books and the poor quality of the buildings. For the first time the serious and central problems which students experienced within Bantu Education were being articulated by them and in action. But even more striking was the determined form of action the students took - they occupied the school buildings for two weeks![176] Mass meetings were held to discuss progress. The teachers, who were objects of much of the students wrath,[177] fled the school fearing that they would be attacked and eventually nineteen of them were sacked for refusing to return to their posts.[178] A new and tempestuous generation had arrived.

SOWETO

It was of course in Soweto in 1976 that the new character of youth struggle emerged in a way which dramatically changed the country's history. The events of 16 June and afterwards are well known, and need no rehearsal here. But for our purposes it is worth briefly considering the students role in the period before 16 June: a less well known period but one in which the new features of student organisation and articulation and the renewed one of aggressive militancy are well displayed.

The first indication of trouble in Soweto schools over the Afrikaans issue took place on 24 February when students at Mofolo Secondary School argues with their headmaster about it, and he called in the police.[179] During March the Black Peoples Convention, SASO and SASM were active in Soweto schools on the issue.[180] In the next month strikes began to take place in schools around the sacking of three school principlas by the Tswana school board in a row related to the Afrikaans issue.[181] Orlando West Junior emerged as a storm centre of the crisis. On April 30th students there went on strike against the Afrikaans medium of instruction policy;[182] and on 17 May held another boycott over the dismissal of a member of the school board, and bombarded the principal's office with stones.[183] They proceeded to draw up and present to the head a memorandum of their grievances.[184] By May 16th a boycott over Afrikaans had developed in Phefeni Secondary School;[185] it then spread to Belle Higher Primary School, and on to Thulasizwe, Emthonjeni, Khulo Ngolawazi HIgher Primary Schools.[186] The involvement of higher primaries is, as pointed out, significant because their highest form was affected by the department's Afrikaans decree. The actions were of a militant character including a demonstration at Thulaizwe[187] and at Belle, the locking out of staff and boycott-breaking students by the militants.[188] On the 24th pupils rejected a call by the Orlando-Diepkloof school boards[189] and the strike spread to Pimville Higher Primary.[190] SASM moved to consolidate the situation, holding a conference at Roodepoort at the end of May which discussed the campaign against the enforced use of Afrikaans.[191]

The explosiveness of the feelings of Soweto youth at the time is suggested by two incidents which occurred at this time. On 12 May a woman teacher was walking to school when she was stopped by two youths you intended to rob her. She yelled for aid and more than 100 students from Orlando North Secondary School rushed to help her. They pursued the robbers, caught them and beat them to death.[192] In another incident during May, a teacher at Pimville was stabbed by a student. When police tried to arrest the student they were stoned by his colleagues.[193]

The intensity of the Afrikaans conflict continued to mount. In early June there was fighting at Senoane Junior School and elsewhere between boycotters and students trying to return to work.[194] On 8 June Security Police arrived at Naledi High School and attempted to arrest the secretary of the SASM branch at the school. Students attacked and stoned the policemen and burnt their car: they had to be rescued from the principal's office by reinforcements. The next day police who returned to the school were driven off by stone-throwing pupils.[195] The situation was worsened as exams began, and students at several schools refused to write.[196] By this time collective action was being called for, and in this context SASM convened the meetings of the 13th and 15th

June which were to organise the march of 16 June. Student action was about to move from institutional protest to national political challenge.[197]

The forms of student action which characterised 1976 were not without precedent in the student resistance tradition. Nor was the willingness of students to confront the authorities. But in several key ways the actions of the time were new. The scope of student organisation was unprecedented, as was its focus on the political-educational conditions of students. And the attitude of confrontation was no longer merely a feature of occasional incidents in the rural schools, but was becoming generalised in the youth of the country's main urban centre.

CONCLUSION

What then are the conclusions of this study?

Firstly, that a distinct tradition of protest, having its origins in the crisis of mission education and the rise of African Nationalism developed during the 1940s and 1950s. This repertoire of protest focussed on issues of food and discipline. But these were often a metaphor for the authority relations of the mission and their articulation with the authority relations of a racist society. The golden age myth of missionary education ignores the fact that it was in the mission boarding schools that traditions of militant school student protest had their origins.

Secondly, that these traditions persisted in a direct way into the 1970s. It is apparent from the way in which the protests in the boarding school rose and fell with the level of political and social tensions that they remained a vehicle for the expression of deeper discontents, and in period of repression like the 1960s sometimes were even a shield behind which more political grievances marched.

Thirdly, with the crisis of the early sixties, a tendency began to emerge for students to address directly political issues. With the repression of the sixties this tendency died down but it began to re-emerge in the period leading to the events of 1976.

Fourthly, that the particular repertoire of student riot was located in a particular social institution, namely the rural, mission-founded, boarding school. It was this location that guaranteed its continuity across a long historical period. But this was also a factor which inhibited its spread to other sectors of the growing Bantu Education school system. It would take a long time before the internal conflicts of the urban schools, and the national political situation became such that urban youth began to appropriate parts of the student resistance tradition and at the same time develop their own repertoire of resistance.

Finally, in this sense the politics of the new student movements which emerged in 1976 was both a break and a continuity with previous student resistance. Its overtly political stance had little clear parallel except in the Republic Day protests of 1961; but earlier student protest had also been politically informed. It was its clear organisation that made it different. And also something else: Bantu Education had created an educational system which was essential to the reproduction of the urban working class and which drew in massive

numbers of youth in a way in which mission education never had. It was these features that placed school students in the cities in a position to mount a challenge to the racial social order which the inmates of rural boarding schools never could. Thus Bantu Education helped to undermine the very social order it had been designed to prop up - and this became apparent on June 16th, 1976.

* * * * * * * * * * *

FOOTNOTES

The following abbreviations are used:

SAIRR South African Institute of Race Relations

RDM Rand Daily Mail

All documents cited with the number-prefix MS are in the Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

1. MS 16 452 The Riot at Lovedale by Dr RHW Shepherd, Principal, manuscript, no date; Ms 16 453 P.M. Sebina Report to Chief Tshekedi Khama on the 1946 Lovedale Riot, 22 August 1946; MS 16 453 Report of Inquiry into the Causes of the Disturbance at Lovedale on 7th August 1946, 30 November 1946.

2. MS 16 453 "The Riot ... by Dr RHW Shepherd" op. cit.; MS 16 453 P.M. Sebina (1946) op. cit.

3. MS 16 598/5 Healdtown Missionary Institution : Principal's Report to the Department of Education on Disciplinary Action taken during the period 14th to 17th August 1946.

4. C. Tilly As Sociology Meets History (Orlando, Florida, Academic Press, 1981), p. 151.

5. Ibid p. 162.

6. Ibid p. 166.

7. Where I refer to the Eastern Cape in this paper, I include the Transkei and Ciskei.

8. See H. Sapire The Stay-Away of the Brakpan Location, 1944. History Workshop Paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 1984.

9. See J. Hyslop The Orlando Teachers Struggle Against Bantu Education (1951-1953) and the subsequent Development of the Politics of the African Teaching Profession in the Transvaal, unpublished paper, 1984.

10. See T. Lodge "The Parents School Boycott : Eastern Cape and East Rand Townships, 1955" in P. Kallaway (ed.) Apartheid and Education : The Education of Black South Africans, (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1984), pp. 265-295.

11. F. Molteno, "The Historical Foundations of the Schooling of Black South Africans"in Kallaway (1984) op cit. pp. 78-79 citing Kaffir Express IV (40), 6 January 1874.

12. B. Hirson Year of Fire, Year of Ash, The Soweto Revolt : Roots of a Revolution (London, Zed Press, 1979), p. 30.

13. Idem.

14. The Teacher's Vision vol. XII No. 2, January 1947.

15. F.Molteno (1984) op. cit. p. 81, citing South African Outlook, Vol. 59 No. 694, 1 March 1929.

16. Ibid, citing Inkundla ya Bantu, Vol. 3 No. 28, July 1940.

17. MS 16 453 D.A. Coghill Memorandum, 30 August 1946.

18. MS 16 453 P.M. Sebina (1946) op. cit.

19. SAIRR Race Relations Survey 1946-47, (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1947) p. 27; a similar figure is given by MS 16 453, "Report of Inquiry ... (1946) op. cit.

20. S. Marks Patriotism, Patriarchy and Purity : Natal and the Politics of Zulu Ethnic Consciousness, African Studies Institute paper, University of the Witwatersrand, August 1986, p. 37.

21. F. Molteno (1984) op. cit. p. 95.

22. MS 16 598/5 R. Crozier Memorandum, 13 August 1952; F. Molteno (1984) op. cit. p. 95.

23. MS 16 598/6 F.J. De Villiers, Chief Inspector of Native Education, Cape Town, to Rev. P.S. Mbete, Bensonvale Missionary Institution, 27 October 1962; F. Molteno op. cit. p. 95.

24. F. Molteno (1984) op. cit. p. 95.

25. Idem.

26. The Torch, 3 November 1953.

27. Eastern Province Herald, 30 October 1953.

28. MS 16 598/5 Confidential Memo by A. Hartman on disturbances at Mvenyane Institution, Cedarville, circulated to Association of Heads of Native Institutions by the Rev. S.G. Pitts, 20 April 1954.

29. MS 16 598/5 Healdtown Missionary Institution : A memorandum on the future of the Institution under the Changes involved in the implementation of the Bantu Education Act 1953 by the Principal, 1954.

30. MS 16 598/5 Association of Heads of Native Institutions : Minutes of meeting, East London, 14 October 1947.

31. Idem.

32. MS 16 453 Report of Inquiry (1946) op. cit.

33. Idem.

34. MS 16 598/5 AHNI meeting (1947) op. cit.

35. SAIRR (1947) op. cit. p. 27.

36. MS 16 598/5 Unsigned Letter from Moray House, Alice, C.P. to the Rev. S.G. Pitts, Healdtown, 27 July 1953.

37. Unsigned memo on the Healdtown disturbances n.d.

38. MS 16 453 Report of Inquiry ... (1946), op. cit.

39. MS 16 598/6 Letter from Rev. B.K. Hazzell, Faku Training Institution to Rev. S. Pitts, Healdtown, 20 November 1953.

40. MS 16 598/5 Housemaster's Report, 17 August 1946.

41. MS 16 453 Report of Inquiry (1946), op. cit.

42. MS 16 598/6 Rev. B.K. Hazzell (1953), op. cit.

43. MS 16 453 Report of Inquiry (1946), op. cit.

44. MS 16 598 Staff Meeting Minutes, Lovedale, 5 September 1946.

45. Idem.

46. MS 16 598/5 Housemasters Report, (1946), op. cit.

47. MS 16 453 Report of Inquiry (1946), op. cit.

48. Idem.

49. MS 16 598/5 AHNI meeting (1947), op. cit.

50. MS 16 598 Staff Meeting Lovedale, op. cit.

51. MS 16 598 Memorandum on Healdtown Disturbances, unsigned, 1953.

52. Eastern Province Herald, 30 October 1953; Evening Post, 30 October 1953.

53. MS 16 598/5 The Principal, Healdtown to the Rev. A.E.F. Garrett, Port Elizabeth, 28 October 1952.

54. MS 16 598/5 Anonymous Letter, Healdtown, 1953.

55. Daily Dispatch, 30 October 1953.

56. MS 16 598/6 We Complain!!, anonymous letter, Healdtown, 1953.

57. Idem.

58. Daily Dispatch, 30 October 1953; The Teacher's Vision Vol. XXI No. 4, April-June 1954.

59. MS 16 453 Report of Inquiry (1946), op. cit.

60. Idem.

61. MS 16 598 Staff Meeting Lovedale, 5 September 1946.

62. MS 16 453 Report of Inquiry (1946), op. cit.

63. MS 16 598 Staff Meeting Lovedale, 5 September 1946.

64. Z.K. Matthews and M. Wilson Freedom for my People : The Autobiography of Z.K. Matthews, (Cape Town, David Philip, 1983) p. 43.

65. MS 16 598/5 Anonymous Letter, Healdtown, 1953.

66. Idem.

67. MS 16 453 Sebina (1946), op. cit.

68. MS 16 598/5 Healdtown Missionary Institution : Principal's Report (1946), op. cit.

69. MS 16 598/5 Hartman (1953), op. cit.

70. MS 16 598/5 Comments on Paragraphs of a document shown to the Governing Council Meeting, 20 August 1946, Healdtown.

71. MS 16 453 Executive of Lovedale Governing Council Meeting, 20 August 1946.

72. S. Marks The Ambiguities of Dependence in South Africa ; Class, Nationalism and the State in Twentieth Century Natal, (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1986).

73. S. Marks, Patriotism, Patriarchy and Purity ... (1986), op. cit., p. 37.

74. The Torch, 24 July 1956.

75. Idem.

76. S. Marks, The Ambiguities ... 1986, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

77. The Torch, 3 November 1953.

78. F. Molteno (1984), op. cit., p. 95 citing Drum, July 1953.

79. MS 16 598/6 Governor, Healdtown to the Officer in Charge, S.A.P., Fort Beaufort, 11 December 1953: see also MS 16 598/6 Governor, Healdtown to the Officer in Charge, S.A.P., Fort Beaufort, 5 December 1952.

80. MS 16 598/6 The Principal, Healdtown to the Officer in Charge, The Police Station, Fort Beaufort, 10 November 1952.

81. For another example see MS 16 598/6 F.J. De Villiers, Chief Inspector of Native Education, Cape town to Rev. P.S. Mbete, Principal, the Bensonvale Missionary Institution, 27 October 1952 on expulsions of thirty students from Bensonvale.

82. The Torch, 17 May 1955; SAIRR A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1954-55, (Johannesburg, SAIRR), 1955, p. 186.

83. Idem.

84. The Torch, 14 May 1957.

85. Idem.

86. The Torch, 24 March 1959.

87. The Torch, 14 May 1957.

88. Idem.

89. Idem.

90. The Torch, 27 May 1958.

91. SAIRR (1955), op. cit., p. 186.

92. The Torch, 28 May 1957.

93. The Torch, 25 June 1957.

94. The Torch, 24 March 1959.

95. The Torch, 20 October 1959.

96. M. Horrell A Decade of Bantu Education, (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1964), p. 88.

97. M. Horrell (1964) op. cit., p. 88; MS 16 598/6 Memorandum on Disturbances at Bantu Educational Institutions in the Ciskei during June 1961 by Mr J.H Dugard, Regional Director of Bantu Education, Kingwilliamstown, 1961.

98. M. Horrell, 1964, op. cit., p. 88.

99. Ibid., p. 89.

100. Idem.

101. Race Relations News, April 1964.

102. MS 16 698/6 A.E. Mathlabane to Rev. Mthembu, Healdtown, 13 May 1960.

103. SAIRR A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1959-1960 (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1960), p. 220.

104. Idem.

105. Idem.

106. Ibid., p. 221.

107. Ibid., p. 220; The Star, 8 June 1960.

108. MS 16 598/6 Memorandum...J. Dugard, 1961, op. cit.

109. J. Dugard Fragments of my Fleece, (Pietermaritzburg, Kendall and Strachan, (1985), p. 130.

110. SAIRR A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1961, (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1962), pp. 239-240.

111. The Torch, 19 July 1961.

112. SAIRR (1962), op. cit., p. 240, citing The Star, 10 June 1961; The Torch, 14 June 1961.

113. MS 16 598/6 Memorandum Arising out of a conference held under the chairmanship of the Regional Director of Bantu Education (Ciskei) at the Regional Offices, King Williams Town, 23 June 1961.

114. Idem.

115. MS 16 598/6 Memorandum ... J. Dugard (1961), op. cit.

116. Idem.

117. MS 16 598/6 Memorandum Arising... (1961), op. cit.

118. Idem.

119. MS 16 598/6 Memorandum ... J. Dugard 1961, op. cit.

120. SAIRR (1962), op. cit.; citing The Star, 1 and 5 June 1961; The Torch, 7 June 1961.

121. The Torch, 26 July 1961; SAIRR (1962), op. cit., p. 239.

122. SAIRR (1962) op. cit., p. 240, citing Natal Daily News, 8 August 1961.

123. SAIRR (1962), op. cit., p. 240, citing The Star, 22/23 June 1961, Contact 27 July 1961.

124. SAIRR A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1962, (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1963), p. 183.

125. Race Relations News, April 1964, SAIRR (1963), op. cit., pp. 183-184.

126. SAIRR Press Cuttings Box 124, Transcript of Hansard, 26 March 1964.

127. Race Relations News, April 1964.

128. SAIRR Press Cuttings 124 Transcript of translation from Imvo Zabantsundu, 6 April 1963.

129. The Torch, 13 March 1963.

130. SAIRR (1963), op. cit., p. 184.

131. SAIRR (1963), op. cit., p. 183.

132. SAIRR 124 Press Cuttings, Imvo Zabantsundu reference cited.

133. The Torch, 10 May 1963.

134. SAIRR 124 Press Cuttings, Imvo Zabantsundu reference cited.

135. RDM, 15 April 1965.

136. SAIRR A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1968 (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1969), p. 226 citing Hansard 8 col. 3004.

137. Idem.

138. Ibid., p. 226 citing The Star, 14 September 1967; RDM, 16 September 1967.

139. Natal Witness,16 August 1965.

140. The Star, 16 October 1965.

141. The Evening Post, 21 May 1966.

142. The Star, 18 October 1965.

143. RDM, 26 October 1965.

144. RDM, 15 April 1965.

145. The Daily Dispatch, 12 June 1971; The Star, 3 June 1971; RDM, 18 March 1971.

146. The Daily Dispatch, 12 June 1971.

147. The Daily Dispatch, 12 June 1971; The Star, 3 June 1971; RDM, 18 March 1971.

148. MS 16 598/5 Unsigned letter from Healdtown to the Director of Education, Ciskeian Territorial Authority, 15 March 1971. Specific grievances mentioned were compulsory wearing of long trousers and refusal of permission to ask questions in class; RDM, 19 March 1971.

149. MS 16 598/5 The Warden, Healdtown to the Acting Director of Education, Ciskeian Territorial Authority, 26 March 1971.

150. MS 16 598/5 Acting Director Ciskeian Territorial Authority, Department of Education and Culture to Rev. H. Bollen, Warden, Healdtown, 23 March 1971.

151. SAIRR A Survey of Race Relation in South Africa 1973, (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1974), citing Hansard 13 col. 860 and Hansard 15 col. 917) p. 308.

152. Ibid., no citation.

153. Idem.

154. W. Khuzwayo, Letter, Dlangezwa, 3 October 1973. In the possession of L. Callinicos.

155. Idem.

156. SAIRR A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1974, (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1975), p. 75; The Daily Dispatch 17 May 1975.

157. SAIRR A Survey of Race Relations 1975, (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1976), p. 229.

158. J. Kane-Berman South Africa : The Method in the Madness, (London, Pluto, 1979), p. 229.

159. H. Lunn Antecedents of the Music and Popular Culture of the African Post-1976 Generation, (MA thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1986), p. 234, citing interview with Z. Mshoba.

160. S. Monsitsi "Lessons from 1976" in NUSAS Beyond the Challenge of Change, (NUSAS, 1983).

161. H. Lunn (1986), op. cit., especially pp. 197-206.

162. Idem.

163. Ibid., (1986), p. 206.

164. L. Maree "The Hearts and Minds of the People" in p. Kallaway (1984), op. cit., pp. 148-159.

165. Ibid., p. 156.

166. RDM, (Township Edition), 16 April 1974.

167. See J. Hyslop State Education Policy and the Social Reproduction of the Urban African Working Class : 1955-1976, ASSA Conference Paper, Durban, 1986.

168. SAIRR South Africa in Travail : The Disturbances of 1976/77 : Evidence Presented to the Cillie Commission by the Institute of Race Relations, (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1978), p. 3.

169. The Daily Dispatch, 25 October 1974.

170. RDM Extra, 27 May 1975.

171. RDM Extra, 23 September 1975.

172. The Eastern Province Herald, 24 May 1975.

173. The Weekend Post, 24 May 1975.

174. Idem.

175. Eastern Province Herald, 24 May 1975.

176. RDM Extra, 13 June 1975.

177. The Eastern Province Herald, 27 May 1975.

178. RDM Extra, 13 June 1975.

179. Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Riots at Soweto and Elsewhere from the 16th June 1976 to the 28th February 1977, chairman, Cillie, J., Vol. I (Pretoria, The Government Printer, 1980), p. 74; SAIRR, (1978), op. cit., p. 2.

180. Cillie Commission (1980), op. cit., p. 75.

181. Ibid., p. 76.

182. SAIRR, (1978), op. cit., p. 3.

183. Cillie Commission (1980), op. cit., p. 78.

184. SAIRR (1978), op. cit., pp. 3-4.

185. Cillie Commission (1980), op. cit., p. 79.

186. Idem.

187. Idem.

188. Idem.

189. SAIRR (1978), op. cit., p. 4.

190. Cillie Commission (1980), op. cit., p. 80.

191. Ibid., pp. 84-85.

192. Ibid., p. 77.

193. Ibid., p. 83.

194. SAIRR (1978) op. cit., p. 5; Cillie Commission (1980), op. cit., p. 85.

195. SAIRR (1978), op. cit., p. 6; cillie Commission (1980), op. cit., p. 91.

196. SAIRR (1978), op. cit., p. 6; Cillie Commission, op. cit., p. 6; Cillie Commission, op. cit., p. 93.

197. Cillie Commission (1980), op. cit., p. 98.

.....