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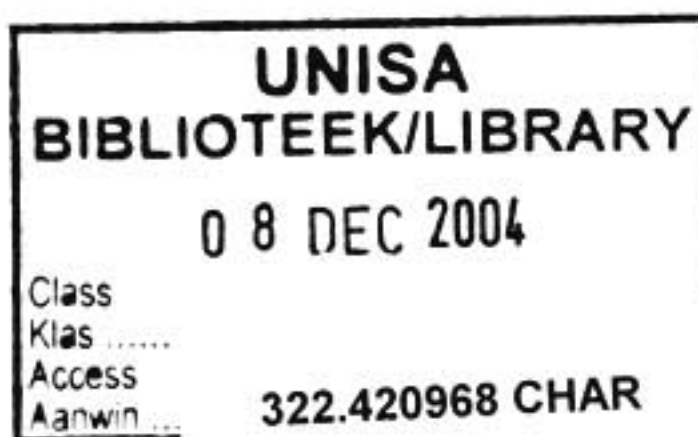
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A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of
Yale University
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy



by
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Dissertation Director: William Foltz

May, 2000



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Identity, Institutions, and the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa
Craig Russell Charney
2000

This dissertation presents an actor-oriented theory of transitions from authoritarian rule and tests it on the case of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa between 1966 and 1979. It begins by critiquing prevailing structuralist theories of regime change as reductionist, economistic, and elitist. It suggests an alternative based on collective actors and discourse, focused on three causal factors – oppositional social movements, changing state-society relations, and civil society institutions – which politicize collective identity and arouse mass mobilization, creating regime crises.

The case study begins with a historical review, examining the clientelist and corporatist politics of black communities and the half-hearted opposition offered by legal black opposition movements before their banning in 1960. It then explores social mobilization by the apartheid regime during the 1960s boom, intensifying clientelism and traditionalism along with repression, helping conservative black elites build significant followings. Regime crisis origins are traced to the emergence of new local solidarities in urban communities, their establishment of collective identities, and the birth of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in the black university, church, and press. Crisis developed as the BCM sought to create an independent civil society by forming an elite, co-opting black social communications institutions, and militant public opposition discourse. These politicized urban black identity and promoted local mobilizations,

increasingly autonomous and national, unlike past patronized, parochial actions. One local action snowballed into a series of general strikes and mass protests after police shot protesting Soweto students in 1976. The regime's brutality made Soweto a mobilization space; BCM organization, local social networks, and civil society institutions joined in Soweto's protests and in solidarity actions elsewhere. The resulting crisis shook the regime, redefined the boundaries of discourse, and created space for extra-parliamentary mass organization that ultimately ended white minority rule in South Africa.

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PREFACE

I began work on this dissertation in September 1989: another century, another world. George Bush was president of the United States, the Berlin Wall was still intact, and white rule continued in South Africa and looked set to do so for some time to come. As I complete it, Bill Clinton is finishing his second term, the Cold War has been over for a decade, and Thabo Mbeki has succeeded Nelson Mandela as South Africa's second democratically-elected president. We are living in a very different time today from the one in which this work began, one whose origins and challenges we still struggle to understand.

My own aim in this work is to understand the origins of one of the epochal changes of our time: the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa. These lie in the years between 1966 and 1979 when the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) revived opposition political activity in South Africa. One of the ironies of South African black political history is that so much of it has been written by whites, particularly foreign whites, and this work is no exception. Let us hope the story will be carried forward by black South Africans themselves.

The origins of this thesis lay in my first visit to South Africa, as a journalist, between 1980 and 1983. After studying African politics at Oxford, my direct exposure to it was a rude awakening: nothing I had read had prepared me adequately for what was happening all around me. Although the era of Black Consciousness politics was largely over, its legacy was everywhere, in burgeoning black civic, trade union, youth, and other movements. The first book that I read that began to make sense of it was by Sam Nolutshungu, who analyzed

the process of change then beginning in South Africa and assigned a central place within it to the struggles of the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s.¹ Overseas I sought him out and he became a friend and mentor until his tragic recent death. When I wanted to learn more about what I had gotten myself into, I decided to shift from journalism to the academy and do a dissertation on the BCM. The road proved longer than I had expected, leading first to Yale, then back to South Africa for a second stay from 1990 to 1995. The first two years were spent researching this thesis; afterwards I was detained by my involvement in the preparations for and aftermath of the first democratic elections in 1994.

I owe thanks to many people for making this thesis possible. First and foremost come my thesis director, William Foltz, and the other committee members, David Apter and James Scott, who were all consistently helpful, very encouraging, and endlessly patient. In addition, this thesis had been read in whole or in part by a number of others who have been of great assistance, including Gail Gerhart, Joel Barkan, Tom Lodge, Jeremy Seekings, Anthony Marx, Jane Mansbridge, Aldon Morris, Eve Sandberg, Elizabeth Cole, Ruth Havazelet, Ann Koenig, Daniel Cooper, and Lincoln Mitchell.

Financial and institutional support were also important in making this work a reality. My research work was supported by a dissertation fellowship from the Social Science Research Council. For the write-up, I received financial assistance from a Yale Dissertation Fellowship and the Anglo American-De Beers Chairman's Fund. While doing the research I was based in the Sociology Department of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg from 1990 to 1992. I am profoundly grateful for the help and collegiality I

¹ Sam Nolutshungu, Changing South Africa: Political Considerations (Manchester, Manchester University Press: 1982).

received there, and particularly want to thank the chair, Edward Webster, for his friendship and help in many domains.

A number of scholars and institutions assisted me with sources of information. Gail Gerhart was exceptionally kind to let me peruse documents from her archive, see her invaluable interview with Stephen Biko, and have numerous leads for my research. Les Switzer, John Phelan, and Robert Kaplan also provided important research materials. In Johannesburg, Jocelyn Kuper of Marketing and Media Research and Christine Woessner of Markinor gave me rare and valuable historical survey data. Dan Cooper did me the service of running the 1975 Mdantsane survey data, for which I am extremely grateful. The librarians and archivists at Wits University, Rhodes University, the University of Cape Town African Studies Library, and the State Libraries in Cape Town and Pretoria were also very helpful in finding hard-to-locate material. Special thanks go to the Department of National Education in Pretoria, which gave me special permission to examine archival records normally closed under the 30-year rule then in force, and to the Freedom of Information Act staff at the State Department in Washington, DC, who provided me with hundreds of pages of material on the BCM declassified in response to my requests.

This work has involved many more years and miles than I had expected when I set out on the journey so many years ago. There is a lovely Afrikaans word which describes the process that produced this thesis: *swerfjare*, or wandering years. Now my long journey is at an end. I want to dedicate the fruits to the following people: to my parents, Roy and Lena Charney, for all they have done for me; to my friend Sam Nolutshungu, the intellectual father of this work; and to Myra Alperson and Elisabeth Tiffenberg, the women who shared my life during much of this time.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Advisory Board
ACROM	Anti-CRC Committee
AICA	African Independent Churches Association
ANC	African National Congress
ARM	African Resistance Movement
ASM	African Students Movement
ASSECA	Association for Educational and Cultural Advance
ATASA	African Teachers' Association of South Africa
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organization
BAWU	Black Allied Workers Union
BC	Black Consciousness
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BCP	Black Community Programs
BPA	Black Parents' Association
BPC	Black People's Convention
BWP	Black Workers Project
CI	Christian Institute
CNIP	Ciskei National Independence Party
CNP	Ciskei National Party
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPRC	Colored Persons Representatives Council
FP	Federal Party
IDAMASA	Inter-Denominational African Ministers' Association of South Africa
KOR	Committee for the Defense of the Workers
KWARU	KwaZakhele Rugby Union
NAYO	National Youth Organization
NGKA	Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (African)
NGSK	Dutch Reformed Mission Church (colored)
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PEBCO	Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organization
PET	People's Experimental Theater
SAAN	South African Associated Newspapers
SABSA	South African Black Scholars Organization
SABTU	South African Black Theater Union
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACOS	South African Council on Sport
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions

SAD	Society for African Development
SAIC	South African Indian Council
SASM	South African Students Movement
SASO	South African Students Organization
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SPEF	South Peninsula Educational Foundation
SRC	Students Representatives Council
SSRC	Soweto Students Representatives Council
TECON	Theater Council of Natal
TNIP	Transkei National Independence Party
TRAYO	Transvaal Youth Organization
UBC	Urban Bantu Council
UBJ	Union of Black Journalists
UCM	University Christian Movement
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDW	University of Durban-Westville
UM	Unity Movement
UNNE	University of Natal Non-European Section
UWC	University of the Western Cape
WASA	Writers' Association of South Africa
WCYO	Western Cape Youth Organization
WRAB	West Rand Administration Board

Chapter One

BRINGING THE ACTOR BACK IN: Social Movements, Regime Transitions, and Black Consciousness

How can a people apparently armed only with words challenge a regime armed with guns? Recent years have witnessed the victory of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, Solidarity in Poland, mobilizations for democracy and impeachment in Brazil, and people power in the Philippines. In these and many other cases, movements lacking the normal resources of political parties or revolutionary groups have shaken or broken authoritarian regimes. Many other regime transitions were negotiated to avert mass mobilization, or followed disastrous wars launched to ward it off.

Unfortunately, academic discussion of democratization is largely marked by a dialogue of the deaf between scholars writing on transitions from authoritarian regimes and those writing on social movements. Until recently, transition studies focused on the state, work on social movements on civil society, largely in isolation from each other. As a result, much of the transition literature neglects the role of social movements as agents in regime change, stressing either contradictions in economic structures or elite decision-making processes. More recent work associates social movements with transitions, yet treats them not as causes, but as the effect of change in opportunity structures. Moreover, collective action is implicitly or explicitly treated in rational choice terms in all these approaches. Consequently, issues central to social movement theory, such as how groups forge common identities or become disaffected, are neglected. More fundamentally, if structural logic and strategic calculation are the

sources of democratization, the social struggles accompanying it become epiphenomena. The result is that the study of transition is largely an apolitical science.

A more adequate approach would bring in social movements as central actors in the downfall of authoritarianism. This implies a theory focusing on political struggle and competitive persuasion. In authoritarian societies opposition discourse spreads in normally apolitical settings, acquiring mobilizing potency in the minds and relationships of ordinary people. Thus, discourse forms a common field where undemocratic rulers and their opponents compete. Initially, conflicts are cultural: over opening the public sphere, privatizing political conflict, and dissident values and practices. Institutional battles follow: movements grow around new identities and elite networks, politicized private conflict, and public communication institutions, conscientizing and empowering opposition subcultures. Mobilizing discourse links activists to everyday social networks, making possible crises where local clashes trigger chain reactions of mass protest.

This chapter attempts to justify and propose a collective actor-centered theory of transition from authoritarianism, to show how political action by real people living through the drama makes a difference. It is principally intended to explain successful cases of democratization, though it does not claim regime crises inevitably produce democracies. It also draws on cases of revolution and movements for social change, and has some relevance to them as well. The first section critiques the regime transition literature from a post-structuralist perspective. It argues that the prevailing theories are overly reductionist, economicist, and elitist. The second section traces the course of regime crisis through its origin, development, and outcome. It shows how movement

growth can change political identity, enlarge institutional opportunities, and mobilize social networks. The conclusion links the three phases of crisis to movement development via Lukes' three-dimensional theory of power. An appendix suggests how this approach could be tested empirically against its competitors.

The chapter is intended to contribute to the literature in two ways: substantively, to build on existing theories of democratization, and theoretically, to add to the critique of rational choice and structuralist theories in political science. The chapter suggests that an approach in which social movement growth drives regime crisis is logically superior to the prevailing ones, better fits evidence from the secondary literature, and can be empirically validated through further case studies. In addition, a collective actor-based theory can explain the social solidarities and identities that rational choice and structural theorists merely assume, pointing to a more general need to reconsider the significance of values and agency. Structures and strategies are important, providing the raw material actors mould into movements and influencing their success. But to better understand democratization, a core question in the discipline today, political scientists need to look anew at two issues long on its margins: social movements and collective identity.

I. FROM STRUCTURE TO MOVEMENT

The two major approaches to change in authoritarian regimes are institutionalism and transition process studies. The former stresses the constraints imposed by economic forces and political institutions; the latter takes a more open-ended view of elite options. Yet until recently one would have searched the literature in vain for a discussion of the causal role that social movements are popularly thought to have played in democratization.¹ This blind spot reflects the two theories' common intellectual lineage: as Kitschelt notes, both "represent only strands within the structuralist camp."² Despite their differing emphases, institutionalist and transition process theories of authoritarian politics share several major premises. Even the newer work on the fall of communism, while paying lip service to civil society, retains the key assumptions of the earlier work. All these approaches thus share the problems of structuralism regarding agency, change, and ideology, along with those of the rational choice approach concerning identity and values.

Institutionalists focus on social and political structures, reacting against cultural and psychological theories of regime change. Their works are Neo-Weberian in inspiration and comparative-historical in method. The title of one well-known example

1. Exceptions include Scott Mainwaring and Eduardo Viola, "New Social Movements, Political Culture, and Democracy: Brazil and Argentina in the 1980s," *Telos*, no.61, (1984), Sonia Alvarez, Engendering Democracy In Brazil : Women's Movements In Transition Politics (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1990), and Georgina Waylen, "Women and Democratization: Conceptualizing Gender Relations in Transition Politics," World Politics, vol.46 (1994).

2. Herbert Kitschelt, "Political Regime Change: Structure and Process-Driven Explanations" American Political Science Review, vol.86 (1992), p.1028.

sums up their preoccupation: Bringing the State Back In.³ The school's most-cited work is Skocpol's States and Social Revolutions. She views regime change this way:

"[O]ne must be able to identify the objectively conditioned and complex intermeshing of the various actions of the diversely situated groups.... One can begin to make sense of such complexity only by focusing simultaneously upon the institutionally-determined situations and relations of groups within society and upon the interrelations of societies within world-historically developing international structures. To take such an impersonal and non-subjective viewpoint ... is to work from what may in some generic sense be called a structural perspective on socio-historical reality."⁴

While Skocpol wrote on revolutions, institutionalist perspectives in the democratization literature include those of Stepan, Rueschmeyer and Stephens, and Bratton and van der Walle.⁵

Transition process studies, in contrast, explore the choices of regime and opposition elites. They model decisions by actors under uncertainty, often using game theory. The best-known such work, O'Donnell and Schmitter's Transitions from Authoritarian Rule, argues that politics becomes unpredictable as authoritarianism breaks down:

"During these transitions, in many cases and around many themes, it is almost impossible to specify *ex ante* which classes, sectors, institutions, and other groups will take what role, opt for which issues, or support what alternative. ... This is not to deny that the macrostructural factors are still 'there'.... At some stages in the transition, in relation to certain issues and actors, those broad structures filter down to affect the behavior of groups and individuals. But even those mediations are looser, and their impacts more indeterminate, than in

3. Dietrich Rueschmeyer, Peter Evans, and Theda Skocpol, Bringing the State Back In (New York, Cambridge University Press: 1985).

4. Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions (Cambridge University Press: 1979), p.18.

5. Al Stepan, The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective(Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1978); Dietrich Rueschmeyer, Evelyn Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, Capitalist Development and Democracy (Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 1992); Michael Bratton and Nicolas van der Walle, "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa," World Politics, vol.46 (1994).

normal circumstances. The short-term political calculations we stress here cannot be 'deduced' from or 'imputed' to such structures – except perhaps in an act of misguided faith."⁶

Similar works include those of Drake and Jaksic and of Price.⁷ Yet though they differ with institutionalists on the breadth of elite choice, their analyses of crises in authoritarian regimes remain similar in other respects.

While the classic studies of transitions looked at those in Latin America and Southern Europe, which were easier to see as elite-driven, recent work on Eastern Europe could hardly ignore mass movements. Yet it, too, works within the same analytic frameworks. Some accounts strongly resemble institutionalist or transition process studies of the other regions.⁸ Others focus on mass protest, but see it as the consequence of changing political opportunities, which alter the population's cost-benefit calculations on participation to unleash bandwagon effects. Thus, Kuran writes, "Each successful challenge to communism lowered the perceived risk of dissent in countries still under communism. In terms of our model, as revolutionary thresholds in neighboring countries fell, the revolution became increasingly contagious."⁹ Such work helps elaborate how movements snowball, but it shares the utilitarian, rational choice

6. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press: 1986), pp.4-5.

7. Paul Drake and Ivan Jaksic, eds., The Struggle for Democracy in Chile, 1982-1990 (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press: 1992), and Robert Price, The Apartheid State in Crisis (New York, Oxford University Press: 1991).

8. See Marcia Weigle and Jim Butterfield, "Civil Society in Reforming Communist Regimes: The Logic of Emergence," Comparative Politics, vol.25 (1992) and Adam Przeworski, Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1991).

9. Timur Kuran, "Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989," World Politics, vol.44 (1991), p.43. See also Rasma Karklins and Roger Peterson, "Decision Calculus of Protesters and Regimes: Eastern Europe 1989," Journal of Politics, vol.55 (1993).

assumptions about political action of the rest of the transition literature, which are explored below.

At the risk of oversimplifying somewhat, we will lay out the assumptions underlying the prevailing regime transition theories. The focus here is on salient common features, without suggesting that every work using these approaches shares each claim just as put here. Generally, in the literature democratic transitions are conceived as involving two successive crises or stages: liberalization (widening rights), and democratization (widening participation).¹⁰ For analytic purposes, each crisis can be broken into three phases: origin, development, and outcome.

In the transition literature, the origin of regime crises lies in economic crises that the political institutions cannot resolve, because the social and political structures let privileged groups threatened by solutions block them. Two propositions regarding authoritarian economic and political institutions underpin this viewpoint:

(A) A strong notion of structural determination. The economy is seen as an autonomous institutional sphere whose rules have an impersonal logic, based on rational choice assumptions about the maximization of economic interests by individuals. Its operations are largely independent of the will of the state, social groups, or individuals. Thus, the economy determines or restricts their choices. Within those limits, the state enjoys relative autonomy from society, due to its own institutional character.

(B) Authoritarian regimes rule by force, not legitimacy. Rational choice assumptions about individual behavior and state autonomy exclude the issue of whether authoritarian regimes have legitimacy. Since members of dominated groups maximize economic interests, they obey because the costs of revolt exceed the gains of compliance.¹¹

10. This convention is followed in O'Donnell and Schmitter, Transitions from Authoritarian Rule, *op. cit.*, Przeworski, Democracy and the Market, *op. cit.*, and Weigle and Butterfield, "Civil Society in Reforming Communist Regimes," *op. cit.*

11. Jeffrey Berejikian, "Revolutionary Collective Action and the Agent-Structure Problem," American Political Science Review, vol.86 (1992) p.648. Thus, Skocpol says peasants "always have grounds for rebellion against landlords, state agents, and merchants who exploit them." Likewise, Kuran states that "a

The image of the development of crises in the regime change literature is functionalist. Systemic economic problems lead to a limited opening of the regime, by necessity (coercive capacity declines) or choice (to seek support). Lessening repression opens the floodgates to protest, sweeping the crisis towards a climax. These claims imply two further propositions:

(C) Social movements mobilize because of change in economic and political opportunity structures.¹² This view relies upon resource mobilization theory, which sees social movements as driven by resources, rules, and selective incentives, like more formal organizations and interest groups. Shifts in resources or rules change the cost-benefit ratio of resistance.

(D) The origins of social solidarity are taken for granted. Either "society" is treated as an undifferentiated whole, or the identity and grievances of groups who mobilize (blacks, workers, women, students, Catholics, etc.) are structurally defined and taken for granted.¹³ Elites are viewed as coherent entities who can take decisions for the groups they represent.¹⁴

Finally, in the literature the outcome of regime crises is a function of elite decisions. In the first, liberalization, rulers try to reform and defend the regime. In the second, democratization, elite choices determine whether negotiated transition, renewed authoritarianism, or revolution occurs. Institutionalists argue there is a single, structurally-defined optimal elite strategy, leaving little room for bargaining. Transition

revolution may break out in a society where private preferences are relatively unfavorable to the opposition." States and Social Revolutions, *op. cit.*, p.115; "Now out of Never," *op. cit.*, p.21.

12. Berejikian, "Revolutionary Collective Action," *op. cit.*, p.648. A fuller explanation of these concepts can be found in the social movement literature. See Doug McAdam, Political Process and Black Insurgency (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1982), and Aldon Morris, The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement (New York, Free Press: 1984).

13. For example, Karklins and Peterson focus on dissidents, students, workers, and party supporters in their opposition to communism, without ever exploring how those groups developed a collective self-consciousness or came to oppose communism. "Decision Calculus," *op. cit.*

14. See Kitschelt, "Structure and Process," *op. cit.*, p.1028.

process scholars theorize crisis as a game with uncertain rules, requiring stabilization by pacts between regime and opposition elites. But both schools agree on two key points:

(E) Transition outcomes result from elite decisions seeking to rationally maximize objective interests. The assumption of structural determination means that actors and their interests are defined by the economic and political order and sought via strategic rationality. During transitions, conflicts concern means, not identities or ends.¹⁵

(F) The periodization of the transition process is defined by elite action. During struggles for liberalization, the regime is strong, the opposition weak, and change comes from above. So do its limits: consensus exists among regime incumbents on keeping power. The succeeding stage of democratization sees a different balance among regime and opposition elites, but elite action defines the process and its outcome.¹⁶

Philosophically, the propositions underlying the transition literature – structuralism, functionalism, and elitism – rest on the same premises as all forms of structural determinism. Following Laclau and Mouffe, they can be spelled out as follows.¹⁷

1. As the ultimate determinant, the economy must be endogenous, e.g. determining politics and ideology more than they determine it. Economic forces shape the choices of individuals, groups, and regimes more than leaders, ideas, or politics do. This supports the strong notion of economic determination and the discounting of legitimacy.

2. The unity of social agents must be formed by the economy and the state, primarily by their own institutional processes. Thus, class and political structures determine social identity and action more than the other way round.

15. "As Berger and Offe argue, 'the game starts only after the actors have been constituted and their order of preferences has been formed as a result of processes that cannot themselves be considered part of the game.' ... In other words, the main issue addressed is explaining the choice of means which are appropriate given the ends of action." Scott Lash and John Urry, "The New Marxism of Collective Action: A Critical Analysis," *Sociology*, vol.18 (1984), p.43.

16. "The picture that emerges from the literature is one of leaders who seem to float above society, manipulating events, resisting change, entering into pacts, or otherwise shaping outcomes, apparently unconnected to their followers and unrestricted in their political options by larger social forces." Karen Remmer, "New Wine or Old Bottlenecks? The Study of Latin American Democracy," *Comparative Politics*, vol.23 (1991), p.485.

17. See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London, Verso: 1985), pp.76-88.

This is the basis of the view that social movements are the effects of structural change, and that the groups they mobilize can be taken as given.

3. Positions in production relations and state structures provide objective interests determining the positions of agents. Elites in turn seek mainly to discover and promote the interests of their groups within these structural limits. On this rests the notion that the key actors in transitions are elites whose rational maximizing behavior shapes the outcomes and periodization.

Like Laclau and Mouffe, I will argue that these premises are overly reductionist, economistic, and elitist.

1. A structural approach to regime crisis origins is reductionist, because it posits an untenable degree of autonomy for the economy and the state, neglecting ideology. Economic processes involve non-economic (ideological and political) relations, since they concern people with hearts as well as brains, engaged in social as well as economic relations. Without legitimization and control, no economy could work only by its own logic of production and exchange. Exploitation constantly creates tensions to be managed, defused, or temporarily resolved. Likewise, political domination requires some consent of the dominated, not just force. Otherwise, possibilities always abound for "everyday resistance" among subordinates in productive or community life.¹⁸ Moreover, since political and social institutions enjoy a degree of structural autonomy and perform work requiring internal debate, they, too, need legitimacy among their members, even if they belong to dominant groups. When those "up above" lose faith in their right to rule, it is a revolutionary crisis.¹⁹

2. The image of regime crisis development in the literature is economistic, because it views collective action as driven by the economy or state, under-emphasizing agency. Yet if the economy does not possess ultimate autonomy from polity or society, social agents cannot emerge from economic processes alone. Classes are divided along various lines, no less fundamental than class divisions. A de-centered view of social subjects follows from this, in which actors have various possible identities articulated together, reflecting their varying social relations. This, in turn, makes group affiliation and discontent processes to explain, instead of givens to assume. Otherwise, as in the existing literature, accounts of protest become circular: many join in because costs are low, and costs are low because many join in. In addition, the "free-rider"

18. Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks (New York, International Publishers: 1971), James Scott, Weapons of the Weak (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1985).

19. Nikos Poulantzas, Fascism and Dictatorship (London, New Left Books: 1988), Part VII, and Vladimir Lenin, "Symptoms of a Revolutionary Situation," in Robert Tucker, ed. The Lenin Anthology (New York, Norton: 1975), p.275.

problem – that the strategically rational choice is to abstain from the risks of collective action, yet enjoy the benefits – is not overcome merely by lowering protest costs, as rational choice accounts imply.²⁰ Economically rational individuals have no incentive to run any risk at all if they can still enjoy the benefits afterwards. This problem can be solved only if solidarity and values also come into play.²¹ Rational choice theories of collective action ignore how movement discourses generate meaning and willingness to sacrifice.

3. Finally, the treatment of regime crisis outcomes in the transition literature is elitist, because it treats the process essentially as the pursuit of exogenously defined interests by autonomous elite, neglecting social and political struggle. Yet if crises, actor formation, and mobilization are under-determined structurally, actors' interests also become contingent. The concept of objective interest represents the "arbitrary attribution of interests, by the analyst, to a certain category of social agents."²² How collective action alters identities, values, and interests needs to be studied, along with the impact of collective actors on elite and the public sphere.

On the basis of these premises, it is possible to formulate a set of alternative propositions that offer the basis for an actor-centered approach to democratization.

They are:

(A) A weak notion of structural determination. Instead of presenting structural conflicts as driving political change, it is more accurate to see economic and political structures as establishing potentials for change. Habermas argues that modernization involves not just technical progress, but new possibilities for social self-government and collective identities.²³ Changes in social reproduction – particularly communications – permit less coercive, more democratic forms of social integration. This can permit allow larger-scale

20. See Mancur Olson, The Logic of Collective Action (Cambridge, Harvard University Press: 1965) and Donald Green and Ian Shapiro, Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science, (New Haven, Yale: 1994), chs. 4 and 5.

21. Implicitly acknowledging this, public choice theorists are forced to call in "public goods motivation" or "desire to live in truth" as "preferences" to factor into calculations. See Karklins and Peterson, "Decision Calculus," *op. cit.*, p.599, and Kuran, "Now Out of Never," *op. cit.*, p.18. Yet these are merely awkward attempts to fit fundamentally non-utilitarian elements which do not involve cost-benefit calculations, identity and morality, into utilitarian frameworks. On the incommensurability of cost- and value-based judgements, see Ronald Dworkin, Taking Rights Seriously (London, Duckworkths: 1977), ch.7.

22. Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, *op. cit.*, pp.83-4.

23. See Jurgen Habermas, Communications and the Evolution of Society (Boston, Beacon Press: 1979) pp.116-29.

"intersubjectivity": interaction based on mutual respect, seeking shared norms for the common good.²⁴ But functional potentials do not automatically create their means of realization. Rather, democratization results from social movement struggles, which represent "learning processes through which latently available structures of rationality are transposed into social practice."²⁵ (Of course, those movements may also reproduce internally some of the power relations and conflicts in the segments of society from which they emerge.)

(B) Authoritarian regimes rest upon legitimacy as well as force. Various legitimating ideologies for authoritarianism are possible, including patrimonialism, racial or ethnic chauvinism, nationalism, market, modernizing, or bureaucratic ideologies.²⁶ However, all are monological in nature: voice by dominated groups is minimal.²⁷ In such conditions, an undemocratic regime's discourse is likeliest to meet Lazarsfeld and Merton's conditions for persuasive propaganda: monopoly, congruity with basic social values, and confirmation in daily life.²⁸ Only if it has little legitimacy does revolt become possible, when force becomes counter-productive among the masses and distasteful to the elite.

(C) Social movement activity precedes and helps cause changes in political culture and opportunity structures. Economic problems may worry the elite and the financial press, but crisis develops when popular discontent appears. As Melucci puts it, the function of social movements "is to reveal the stakes, to announce that a fundamental problem exists in a given area," or "to pose the

24. Here Habermas is seeking an operationalization of Kant's categorical imperative, which in some ways parallels that of John Rawls' Theory of Justice.

25. Habermas, Communications and the Evolution of Society, *op. cit.*, p.125. Habermas draws on Alain Touraine's work, particularly La Production de la Societe. For an application of his ideas to regime transition, see Patricia Smith, "Political Communication in the East German Revolution of 1989: Assessing the Role of Political Groups," Conference Paper, American Political Science Association, New York, 1994.

26. See respectively Alain Roquie, "Clientelist Control and Authoritarian Contexts," in Guy Hermet *et. al.*, Elections Without Choice (New York, John Wiley: 1978), Heribert Adam, Modernizing Racial Domination (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1971), and Guillermo O'Donnell, "Corporatism and the Question of the State," in John Malloy, ed., Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press: 1977).

27. Monological action is discussed in Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (London, Penguin: 1972), esp. ch.4 Maria Sonderegger provides an example. In Argentina, "The regime established in March 1976 tried to 'militarize' the political sphere in a manner that would eliminate the possibility of social protest and imprint a technical character to its management of society. In the absence of opposing views, in a situation of social silence, its discourse appeared to be the sole truth." "Aparacion con Vida: El movimiento de derechos humanos en Argentina," in Elizabeth Jelin, ed. Los Nuevos Movimientos Sociales (Buenos Aires, Centro Editor de America Latina: 1989), p.157.

28. Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action," in Wilbur Schramm, ed. Mass Communications (Urbana, University of Illinois Press: 1960), p.508.

questions that are not allowed."²⁹ The appearance of social movement organizations reflects a de facto extension of the boundaries of political action. They make the public monologue into a dialogue.³⁰ The mere fact that authorities must respond publicly to issues raised by opposition movements indicates that they are losing control of the agenda. Such challenges can impress the public and divide the elite on how to respond. Evers notes, "Even a few weak models of a deviant social practice signify a potential danger insofar as they tend to put into question the unconscious automatism of obedience."³¹ Even before mobilization, fear of it can make the elite liberalize or democratize, through the "law of anticipated reactions."³²

(D) Group identity and activation must be explained. The changing relationships of everyday life, forms of social communication, and discourses of power and resistance that ordinary people weave around them are the raw materials of collective identity.³³ The emergence of an alternative elite within those groups, who rework those discourses into politicized self-images, in turn transforms identity (and its bearers) into a potential for involvement. Explaining these processes is the hard, essentially political part of explaining opposition to authoritarianism. The rest is calculation.

(E) The outcomes of crises in authoritarian regimes depend on struggles around values and legitimacy. If regime crisis is largely discursive in nature, so too must be its resolution. The outcome of popular mobilization cannot be predicted solely from social interests or structures, because mobilization changes the views of those who participate. The results flow from contingent struggles, acts, and understandings. Transitions from authoritarianism are not natural consequences of structural difficulties in undemocratic regimes. Without mass opposition, the likelier outcome is policy adjustment (usually at the expense of dominated groups).

29. Alberto Melucci, "The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements," Social Research, vol.52 (1985) pp.799, 810.

30. "The sheer existence of a symbolic contest is evidence of the breakdown of hegemony and a major accomplishment of a challenger." William Gamson, "The Social Psychology of Collective Action," in Morris and Mueller, Frontiers in Social Movement Theory, op. cit., p.68. In highly repressive regimes, movements cause systemic problems just by existing. Their presence proclaims the presence of issues that are officially nonexistent (eg human rights violations or interests not recognized by official channels.)

31. Tilman Evers, "Identity: The Hidden Face of New Social Movements," in David Slater, ed. New Social Movements and the State in Latin America (Amsterdam, Center for Latin American Research and Documentation: 1985), p.5.

32. Scott Mainwaring, "Grassroots Popular Movements and the Struggle for Democracy: Nova Iguacu," in Alfred Stepan, Democratizing Brazil (Oxford, Oxford University: 1989), p.196.

33. Richard Couto, "Narratives, Free Space, and Political Leadership in Social Movements," Journal of Politics, vol.55 (1993), and Denis Martin, "Le Choix d'Identite," Revue Francaise de Science Politique, vol.42, 1992.

(F) The periodization of the transition process reflects changes collective struggles produce in consciousness and the public sphere. Liberalization is preceded by social struggles to open the public sphere and create the conditions for collective action. In the stage of democratization, the restructuring of the public sphere and the redefinition of discursive rules achieved by the struggle for liberalization are merely ratified by the regime's formal opening. As Furet notes, while the lack of a legal public sphere lets political decisions be taken behind closed doors by an elite, collective action creates a vast new public which must be won over by persuasion. Mobilization "substitutes for the struggle of interests for power a competition of discourses for the appropriation of legitimacy" – the cornerstone of democratic political culture.³⁴

Each of these assumptions represents a counterpoint to one of those underlying the structuralist understanding of transitions.

II. TOWARDS AN ACTOR-BASED THEORY OF TRANSITIONS

We can now outline a new theory of authoritarian regime change, which places collective identities and social movements before institutional opportunities and structural contradictions. The approach is plausible both for the philosophical reasons noted above and because its components already have some empirical backing in the secondary literature, as will be shown below. While its claims have not yet all been tested together, social scientific and historical research has supported each of them in various contexts.

34. Francois Furet, Penser la Revolution Francaise (Paris, Gallimard: 1979), p.73. Note the parallel to Habermas' "ideal speech situation." Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society, *op. cit.*

Origins of crisis: In an actor-based approach, the origins of authoritarian regime crises are primarily discursive. The essential processes involve words, debate, and access to the public sphere, altering political culture in ways that erode a regime's legitimacy and popular acquiescence. The essence is the struggle for the autonomy of civil society from the state. This may be facilitated by structural changes that allow political discourse outside official channels and create new potentials for social solidarity. Dissenters committed to freer expression and different values also play a role. These changes in state-society relations and activities produce oppositional identities, sub-cultures, and networks.

The first major step towards crisis in undemocratic regimes is the birth of a public sphere and public opinion. Habermas defines public opinion as informal criticism and control of state authorities through public debate.³⁵ The lack of channels for expressing public opinion under authoritarian regimes tends to leave their rulers out of touch. (This is particularly true in modernizing societies, where the increasing diversity of interests multiplies the state's information needs, while draining traditional representative forms of substance.³⁶) Yet the regime's capacity to respond to this crisis of representation is limited, because it owes its autonomy from society to the weakness of public expression. The emergence of public spaces in civil society is a sign that an

35. Jurgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere," in Steven Seidman, ed., Jurgen Habermas on Society and Politics (Boston, Beacon Press: 1989).

36. The general argument draws upon David Apter, The Politics of Modernization (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1965). Examples include the search for representatives in the final years of the Ancien Regime, Furet, Penser la Revolution Francaise, op. cit., the growing distance between state and society in the communist regimes during the 1960s and 1970s, Weigle and Butterfield, op. cit., and developments in Latin America, Fernando Calderon et. al., "Social Movements: Actors, Theories, Expectations," in Arturo Escobar and Sonia Alvarez, eds., The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy (Boulder, Westview Press: 1992).

authoritarian regime is starting to lose its grip. Public spaces take many forms, of which the most important is the press; others include the church, theatre, concerts, sport or celebratory events, etc. All are spaces where private citizens gather to consider public affairs, allowing the formation of public opinion. As public opinion's domain grows, the regime's monologue with its subjects weakens.

A second crisis tendency in authoritarian regimes is the privatization of political conflict. Disputes constantly arise in the formally private, functional spaces of civil society: the family, clan, school, workplace, neighborhood, etc. They reflect both the normal social tensions in those groups and the refuge afforded political opposition in formally private spaces under undemocratic rule. The charge of such differences is increased by the fact that authoritarian regimes usually seek legitimacy by reasserting traditional social norms.³⁷ Expressing these quarrels is thus the most basic kind of opposition. Dissent manifests itself in "everyday resistance," such as apathy, absenteeism, autonomous associations, and strikes. It may also take cultural forms like dress, music, lifestyles, hair, drugs, language, dance, theater, or religion.³⁸ As Escobar puts it, "To assert one's difference is to practice cultural innovation and to engage in some sort of political practice."³⁹

37. Thus women confronted the triad of *kinder, kuche, kirche* ("children, cake, church") in dictatorial Brazil and Argentina, Sonia Alvarez, Engendering Democracy, *op. cit.*, p.250, and Maria del Carmen Feijoo and Monica Gogna, "Las Mujeres en la Transición a la Democracia," in Jelin, Los Nuevos Movimientos Sociales, *op. cit.*, p.45, while patrons demand the respect due elders from social juniors in neo-colonial African regimes, Jean-Francois Bayart, "Clientelism, Elections, and Systems of Inequality and Domination in Cameroun," in Hermet *et. al.*, Elections Without Choice, *op. cit.*

38. Scott, Weapons of the Weak, *op. cit.* See also Bayart, "Clientelism," *op. cit.*, on "popular modes of political action."

39. Arturo Escobar, "Culture, Economics, and Politics in Latin American Social Movements Theory and Research," in Escobar and Alvarez, The Making of Social Movements in Latin America, *op. cit.*

The values and practices of opponents form a third challenge to the regime's processes of political socialization. Activists propound popular values: participation, egalitarianism, local control, tradition, etc.⁴⁰ Initially, at least, they come from the more socially integrated groups, including the knowledge-based new middle class, students, and the old middle class, as well as housewives and the unemployed.⁴¹ They are the most aware of the constraints and opportunities of the social system, and they possess institutional and social resources that let them become a counter-elite. In the stage of the struggle for liberalization, they form small circles of dissidents. In the stage of democratization, they build upon the networks created in the previous one to reach out to the masses, often joined by activists from the popular classes. Together with the other processes, this one helps reduce the regime's legitimacy and the dominant group's social hegemony.

One major consequence is the growth of oppositional identities and sub-cultures — a precondition for mobilization. Post-structuralist social theory has explained how identity is socially constructed and contextual.⁴² It is formed dialectically, in relation to the power positions of others (superior or inferior), to give meaning to those relations. Defining "us" and "them" in this way sets social boundaries, though these are often fluid. A classic example is the emergence of anti-colonial ideology: the colonizers proclaim

40. See Scott Mainwaring and Eduardo Viola, "New Social Movements," *op. cit.*, and Zbigniew Rau, ed., The Reemergence of Civil Society in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (Westview, Boulder: 1991).

41. Alberto Melucci, "Getting Involved: Identity and Mobilization in Social Movements," in Bert Klandermans, et al., eds, *op. cit.*, pp.343-4, and Claus Offe, "New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics," Social Research (1985), pp.832ff.

42. The argument here draws on Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, *op. cit.*, Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "By the Rivers of Babylon: Race in the United States," Socialist Review, no.71 (1983), Denis-Constant Martin, "Le choix d'identité," Revue Française de Science Politique, vol.42 (1992), and Melucci, "Getting Involved," *op. cit.*

the inferiority of the colonized, which is partially internalized by the latter. They seek to recover their self-esteem by synthesizing indigenous and dominant cultures.⁴³

Forming an identity requires three things: content, channels, and connections among them. The content of the identity of a dominated social group is a "hidden transcript," in Scott's phrase. Such transcripts express the repressed values, practices, and history of subaltern social groups. They arise in the day-to-day power relations in civil society as the unvoiced text of everyday resistance.⁴⁴ The channels through which hidden transcripts circulate are "free spaces" through which they can circulate, as Couto notes.⁴⁵ These can be private, everyday relationships and functional institutions or specifically oppositional organizations. Whatever they may be, the oppressed seek them out: a dissident sub-culture "invests the weak links in a chain of socialization."⁴⁶ Hidden transcripts shared through chains of free spaces create what Melucci calls "submerged networks" of members of subordinate groups, which develop common views of themselves. These informal networks grow out of daily life, forming the nuclei

43. This example, cited by Martin, "Le Choix d'Identite," *op. cit.*, has been analyzed by Albert Memmi, *Portrait du Colonise* (Paris, Payot: 1973), Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, Grove Press: 1968), and Steven Biko, *I Write What I Like* (London, Bowerdean Press: 1978). On the relational character of ethnic identities, see also William Foltz, in Wendell Bell, ed. *Ethnicity and Nation-Building: Comparative, International, And Historical Perspectives* (Beverly Hills, CA, Sage Publications, 1974).

44. Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, *op. cit.*, ch.5. Thus Vila, "Rock Nacional," *op. cit.*, p.86, writing of the impact of dissident rock lyrics on Argentine youth under dictatorship, cites one who says, "We lived the music as something collective. It was all we had that was collective." Likewise, Couto describes how stories and spirituals circulated among black American family and community members before the civil rights movement, asserting their human worth, heroic past, and hopes for the future, "Narratives," *op. cit.*

45. He cites Evans and Boyte, who say that they "are defined by their roots in common, the rich, dense networks of daily life; by their autonomy; and by their public or quasi-public character as participatory environments which nurture values associated with citizenship and a vision of the common good." *Free Spaces: The Sources of Democratic Change in America* (New York, Harper and Row: 1986), p.20. Examples include the Highlander Folk School and movement "halfway houses" in the pre-civil rights U.S. South, or groups like the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in Argentina.

46. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, cited in Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, *op. cit.*, p.123.

of future local "micro-mobilizations," requiring only connection to a formal movement network to be available for larger scale collective action. Individuals who become involved in organizational and linkage roles within them begin to form an opposition elite. The various types of everyday resistance form the outward signs of recognition within subordinate sub-cultures as well as the main kinds of opposition to the regime in this phase. Localized riots or other disorganized, anomic explosions of anger may also occur.

The other important change in political culture when regime crises open is the emergence of new and wider types of community. The formation of submerged networks starts to realize the potentials for solidarity in the social structure. They afford a sense that the community has an existence and needs which are not based simply on individual, instrumental rationality.⁴⁷ At the same time, the circulation of discourses through public and private circuits helps extend the limits of concern from parochial to national.⁴⁸ Broader identities begin to appear, formed of all the submerged networks connected by ties in the public and private spheres. They may be country-wide (generational, class, or racial) or reflect new communities (urban, regional, or national). Wider conceptions of social ties than those contemplated by the atomizing and fragmenting ideologies of undemocratic regimes are thus constructed from both below and above.

47. See the discussion of Chile's *pobladores* movement in Rodrigo Bano, *Lo político y lo social* (Santiago, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, 1985), the development of neighborhood and church solidarities before the ABCD strikes in Brazil by Fernando Cardoso, "Associated-Dependent Development and Democratic Theory," in Stepan, *Democratizing Brazil*, *op. cit.*, and of the precedence of group identity over individual interest in Arthur Miller and Christopher Wlezien, "Social Groups and Political Identity," (Conference Paper, American Political Science Association, New York, 1994).

48. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, Verso: 2d ed. 1991).

Development of crisis: In this approach, regime crises spring principally from agency. Social movements challenge authoritarian regimes, provoking liberalization and democratization. They do so by exposing private problems in the public domain, breaking the rulers' control of the political agenda. This results from the growth of movement organization, the co-option of public communications institutions, and the politicization of private conflict. These developments politicize subordinate identities and opposition subcultures, while the regime's weakening grip on the public sphere expands political opportunities. They also contribute to a stronger sense of the possibilities of citizenship. These processes, in turn, lay the groundwork for mobilization against the regime.

The first major change in civil society marking the development of regime crisis involves the growth of opposition movement organization. Isolated circles of dissenters link up and debate among themselves, synthesizing ideas new and old.⁴⁹ This sharpens their sense of "we"-ness and produces an identity frame or image of the society. Yet the market-based view of them as "political entrepreneurs" in the literature does no justice to the enterprise, for they see it more as self-discovery than strategic calculation. Interaction and discussion in its formulation and exposition can "conscientize," making individuals more united, knowledgeable, confident, and tolerant.⁵⁰ (However, increasing partisanship within movement circles can result in greater intolerance of outsiders.) Social movement groups also challenge prevailing models of organization

49. See Sidney Tarrow, "Mentalities, Political Cultures, and Collective Action Frames: Constructing Meaning Through Action," in Morris and Mueller, Frontiers of Social Movement Theory, *op. cit.*, as well as Melucci, "Getting Involved," *op. cit.*, pp.332-3.

and rules on who can use them, developing new ones or opening old ones to new actors.⁵¹ As formal organizations develop, the new elite of the movement takes shape among those active in them. The elite can also include writers, artists, and the like, who help produce the new words and actions that the movement needs, but do not join organizations. As Melucci notes, "The ways of political socialization, the patterns of cultural innovation, the means of institutional modernization are therefore redefined outside the action of already established agencies."⁵² This slow, patient movement-building labor lays the groundwork for later, seemingly spontaneous mass mobilizations.

A second key aspect of regime crisis development is the struggle by opposition social movements to gain access to public communication institutions, which, if successful, broadens the public sphere. The targets include the press, the church, educational institutions and student groups, cultural institutions, and the like, particularly in subordinate groups. These communications institutions can spread movement views to a broader constituency, shield activities elsewhere forbidden, and offer resources. Couto describes the result:

"Covert resistance becomes a social movement when previously proscribed places, segregated institutions, the media, public hearings, or electoral politics become spaces to express community narratives. ... As the conditions of repression diminish and prospects for successful overt action increase, people take initial steps of resistance, part of that involves claiming new spaces, schools and work for example.... The expression of narratives in free spaces permits an

50. See Evers, "Identity," *op. cit.*, and Escobar, "Culture, Economics, and Politics," *op. cit.*, Mark Warren, "Democratic Theory and Self-Transformation," *American Political Science Review*, vol.86 (1992), Habermas, *Communication*, *op. cit.*, and Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, *op. cit.*

51. Elizabeth Clemens, "Organizational Repertoires and Institutional Change: Women's Groups and the Transformation of U.S. Politics, 1890-1920," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol.98 (1993).

52. Melucci, "The Symbolic Challenge," *op. cit.*, p.789. This process is described in Latin America in Orlando Falls Border, "Social Movements and Political Power in Latin America," in Escobar and Alvarez, *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America*, *op. cit.*

ever increasing number of individuals to recognize their ties to a community of memory."⁵³

The third change marking the onset of regime crisis occurs as private social conflicts take on political overtones. Individual, everyday resistance is complemented by collective disputes at work, in schools, families, clans, neighborhoods, sporting bodies, etc., which appear political to all concerned (including the state).⁵⁴ Since authoritarian regimes' attempts to close the public sphere and strengthen traditional values relegate politics to formally private spaces, tensions there call into question broader political and social relations. (Posing any demands at all in public challenges the rules of the game prior to liberalization.) Moreover, movement activists frequently work in "non-political" areas such as housing, gender, consumption, or popular culture, increasing their political charge.⁵⁵ The often harsh responses of authoritarian rulers to

53. Couto, "Narratives," op. cit., p.77. For instance, Daniel Leaven writes, in Latin America, "The Church's great organizational flexibility has been of crucial importance. While it cannot change authoritarian regimes on its own, nevertheless the Church has managed to organize and finance institutions to help the victims of oppression while keeping alive the hope for a different kind of future. In many cases, church organizations (particularly at the local level) have in effect become surrogates for the social and political participation and interchange no longer permitted in the society at large." "Religion and Politics, Politics and Religion: An Introduction," in Daniel Levine, ed., Churches and Politics in Latin America (Beverly Hills, Sage: 1979), pp.34-5. On the role of churches in the US Civil Rights Movement, see McAdam, Political Process and Black Insurgency, op. cit., and Morris, The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement, op. cit., and in East Germany, see Smith, "Political Communication," op. cit.

54. Thus in Brazil from the 1970s, "The *abertura* took place as a conflictual dialogue between democratic opposition forces and the military dictatorship. It was a gradual relaxation of repression both promoted by and fuelling opposition forces. ... The new social movements recreated civil society by expanding the terrain of politics. They addressed issues which had formerly been seen as personal or private – i.e. not legitimate themes for collective action – as public, social, and legitimate areas for mobilization." Howard Winant, "Rethinking Race in Brazil," Journal of Latin American Studies, vol.24 (1993), p.185. Similar points are made by Weigle and Butterfield, "Civil Society in Reforming Communist Regimes," op. cit.

55. Feijoo and Gogna refer to the "encystment" of politics in the private sphere under authoritarian regimes, "Las mujeres," op. cit., p.72. They describe the politicization of day care centers, soup kitchens, and women's groups under the Argentine dictatorship. Similar points are made by Evers, "Identity," op. cit., and Weigle and Butterfield, "Civil Society in Reforming Communist Regimes," op. cit.

private conflicts also underline their political implications.⁵⁶ Thus, disputes that would seem trivial in a democracy become anti-regime activity in authoritarian contexts.

Public communication institutions are usually among the first where collective conflict breaks out in an authoritarian regime. This reflects the contradictions inherent in organizations whose trade is discourse, even when their history and personnel tie them to dominant groups. Though part of the public sphere, they are formally private, and their autonomy is recognized by the state (e.g. as private firms, churches and universities with corporate privileges, etc.)⁵⁷ There is also tension between their ties to dominant groups and their need to maintain credibility in subordinate-group constituencies.⁵⁸ Moreover, members of such institutions belong to the new middle classes, the groups likeliest to be open to oppositional social movements (especially "pariah" or "organic" intellectuals" drawn from oppressed groups).⁵⁹ Finally, the ambiguities inherent in the values of communications institutions (the public interest, saving souls, etc.) make them islands of debate in an authoritarian sea.⁶⁰

Before liberalization, movement struggles begin in communications institutions, then spread to the rest of society in the stage of democratization.⁶¹ Prior to

56. Bano, Lo politico y lo social, *op. cit.*, p.67.

57. Poulantzas, Fascism and Dictatorship, *op. cit.*, Part VII.

58. This point is made forcefully in Thomas Bruneau, "Church and Politics in Brazil: The Genesis of Change," Journal of Latin American Studies, vol.17 (1985), and Levine, Church and Politics in Latin America, *op. cit.*, pp.33-41.

59. Max Weber, cited in Scott, Domination, *op. cit.*, p.124, on "pariah intellectuals." See also Gramsci on "organic intellectuals" in Selections from the Prison Notebooks, *op. cit.*

60. Scott Mainwaring, The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil, 1916-85 (Stanford, Stanford University Press: 1986), p.7.

61. Harold Wolpe, "Strategic Issues in the Struggle for National Liberation in South Africa," Review, vol.8 (1984), p.239.

liberalization, activists seek to constitute a legitimate extra-parliamentary stage for social and political action. Their work "is about reconstituting the most elementary links of solidarity, of restoring the capacity for association, of overcoming the silence."⁶² They form small groups more concerned with values than tactics, who mobilize better than they organize. With the legalization of an extra-parliamentary public sphere in the stage of democratization, movements no longer just speak out: they begin to organize the public. Larger organizational nuclei appear, expanding the networks born in the previous stage. They ultimately oppose (or threaten to oppose) society against the state. No longer just speaking out, movements begin to organize the public. While previously co-opted communications institutions play an important role, formal organizations (civic, union, women's, youth, and student groups) become more prominent, and calculation and bargaining appear alongside identity and morality. All these changes influence the development of regime crises by politicizing identities and broadening views of political opportunity and citizenship.

As this happens, sub-cultures and collective identities take on a politicized, overtly anti-regime tone. Struggles for political emancipation frequently start with the public assertion of the identity of the oppressed, and the rejection of the values of the dominant group. As Evers notes:

"On an individual as well as a collective level, the difficult first task consists in coming to a realistic self-perception of one's own characteristics, potentials, and limitations, overcoming offers of false identity from outside and passing through the tempests of alternating over- and under-estimation. At the very fundamental

62. Sonderegger also notes, "In this first reactive step, marked by repression, the society responds with isolated attempts at resistance. The attitude is frankly defensive: universal values are proclaimed, social actors seek their individual human rights from a perspective based on ethics and principles -- social obligation." "Aparicion con Vida," *op. cit.*, pp.160-1.

level, this means a reassertion of one's own human dignity, vis-a-vis the everyday experience of misery, oppression, and cultural devastation."⁶³

Asserting identity means claiming a place in the newly opened public sphere.⁶⁴

However, the emergence of new identities need not imply the disappearance of older ones, based on older social relations. Various articulations of new and old, with different emphases in different situations, are the normal outcome.⁶⁵ Mobilizing identity publicly and politically means fashioning hidden transcripts into what Apter calls "inversionary discourse."⁶⁶ If hidden transcripts are private declarations of groups' worth and past, inversionary discourse is argument for publicly challenging rulers (opposition ideology). Inversionary discourse makes moral claims centered on exclusion and suppression of the past, aiming at repossessing the self, society, and state. It may also reaffirm aspects of traditional discourses and relations of domination. It is consummatory and confrontational: it challenges the "naturalness" of hegemony through claims and representations (including styles, gestures, and collective actions) that shock

63. Evers, "Identity," *op. cit.*, p.56.

64. Quijano describes this: "Rather than a massive proletarianization, the main feature of social life in Ecuador is the multiplication of identities of social groups. *Pobladores*, women, the young, indigenous groups, regions, etc. construct themselves under other types of political parameters and other forms of addressing the instances of power. What is at stake is precisely their right to a space in social life. Perhaps their most important goal is the creation of a popular collective capable of constantly redefining its objectives through action. This feature effectively fractures the restrictive face of institutionalized politics." Cited in Escobar, "Culture, Economics, and Politics," *op. cit.*, p.81.

65. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, *op. cit.*

66. David Apter, "Democracy and Emancipatory Movements: Notes for a Theory of Inversionary Discourse," *Development and Change*, vol.23 (1992). This argument is developed more fully in David Apter and Tony Saich, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press: 1994), esp. chs. 1 and 9. See also Melucci, "The Symbolic Challenge," *op. cit.*, p.812.

regime adherents.⁶⁷ In authoritarian regimes, where official discourse justifies oppression, inversionary discourse enjoys "a self-evident logic of freedom and equity" that make it common sense to the oppressed.⁶⁸

Inversionary discourse reaches its intended audience when free spaces expand. It spreads via co-opted communication institutions and echoes through the submerged networks of members of their audiences. "The dissemination and expression of narratives measure the extent and political success of social movement participants," Couto says.⁶⁹ This occurs both through formal public spaces – the press, meetings and rallies, and the like – and the politicization of cultural and social activity – concerts, theatre, sport bodies, schooling, etc.⁷⁰ Such declarations undo the "spiral of silence," releasing feelings and tensions dammed up by power and fear, and persuade, politically

67. "Inversionary discourse claims 'emancipation' as a moral right rather than a form of alternative organization or structure ... [S]uch movements seek above all to rupture the discourse of the state by means of an anti-discourse which undermines ordered jurisdictions and stable networks. ... For such movements political action is an engagement with the past of suppressed events and episodes, submerged political upheavals, abortive uprisings which, unregistered in orthodox history, remain in the memory, in the retina of the political eye. How to transform the unhistory of the negativized, to make the anonymous impinge on history is one way to put the matter. ... [T]o gain power through loss is another. ... They 'reveal' negative conditions as more than accidents of individual fortune or collective circumstance and rather as fundamental defects of the system..." Apter, "Democracy and Inversionary Discourse," *op. cit.*, p.142-3.

68. *idem.* Examples of inversionary discourse include the use of passive resistance by the American civil rights movement, which turned blacks' "passivity" from vice into virtue, Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "By the Rivers of Babylon," *op. cit.*, part 2.; the discourse of farm worker organizations in South Africa, who use the tradition that they are "part of the farm" to argue for humane treatment instead of blind obedience, Andries du Toit, "Deel van die Plaas: Notes on the Construction of Antagonism on Western Cape Fruit and Wine Farms" (Conference Paper, Association for Sociology in South Africa, 1991); and liberation theology, which reverses the notion of "pastoral action" from better suffering existing society to changing it, Levine, *Churches and Politics in Latin America*, *op. cit.*, pp.18ff.

69. Couto, "Narratives," *op. cit.*, p.61.

70. Elizabeth Eisenstein writes that publishing under the *Ancien Regime* contributed to an "invisible meeting of minds." It "boldly spelled out the repressed content of interior dialogues. ... Fear of disapproval, a sense of isolation, the force of local community sanctions – all might be weakened.", "Some Conjectures About the Impact of Printing on Western Society and Thought: A Preliminary Report," *Journal of Modern History* vol.40, 1968. Schama recalls how theatre became a subversive institution in the same era, *Citizens*, *op. cit.* More recently, Argentine rock concerts and publications became the venues for anti-government expression, Vila, "Rock Nacional," *op. cit.*

contextualizing the repressed sentiments.⁷¹ They also divide the regime elite and change its discourse, particularly in those parts drawn from subordinate groups. Some switch sides, while others echo opposition discourse to compete with it.⁷²

The other cultural change as authoritarian regime crises develop is a stronger sense of political consciousness, opportunities, and citizenship. Mass conscientization begins as circuits open for competing political discourses. When no opinion is authoritative and people may debate as equals, a desire for political participation can grow.⁷³ Reading and talking alternative politics (and practicing it, for those in opposition groups) can build political understanding and identification with the community.⁷⁴ (Of course, much depends on the ideas and practices of the movement elite and the political culture, especially regarding tolerance.)

As movements develop, a sense of political possibilities and rights grows, for several reasons. Perceptions of growing opportunities reflect, in part, daily challenges to authority that make it increasingly difficult to maintain the deference on which the regime's authority rests.⁷⁵ When subordinate regime elites echo movement discourse,

71. Scott, *Domination*, *op. cit.*, ch.7, provides historical examples. Evidence from survey research is found in Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion – Our Social Skin* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 2nd ed. 1991).

72. In Brazil, for example, opposition movements' action helped shift official discourse from technocracy to participation. Scott Mainwaring, "Urban Popular Movements, Identity, and Democratization in Brazil," *Comparative Political Studies*, vol.20 (1987), p.149.

73. Habermas, "The Public Sphere," *op. cit.* For examples, see Furet, *Penser la Revolution Francaise*, *op. cit.*, Mainwaring and Viola, "New Social Movements," *op. cit.*, and William Sewall, "Collective Violence and Collective Loyalties in France: Why the French Revolution Made A Difference," *Politics and Society*, vol.18 (1990).

74. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, *op. cit.*, and Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, (London, Chatto and Windus: 1979) pp.468-70.

75. Sebastian Pflugbeil, founder of New Forum in former East Germany, says, "What we tried to do, basically, was to act as if these rights already existed, and thus we went ahead publicly saying what we

they, too, make dissent safer. Expectations of the success of challenges are also increased by results, especially when movement victories receive press coverage.⁷⁶ Press and public discussion of opposition ideas, groups, and personalities broadens their exposure, raises their status, and challenges the authorities to live up to their proclaimed values.⁷⁷ Indeed, by raising questions to which rulers must respond, through media or mobilizations, opposition movements weaken their control of the political agenda. Discussing and demanding redress of everyday injustice can also help build a sense of entitlement and rights among ordinary people.⁷⁸ They may also conscientize as well, as conflict over everyday issues can show how grievances are tied to larger political and social forces.⁷⁹ Movement discourse, with its accent on deprivation and compensation, strengthens this sense of entitlement.⁸⁰ It is movement defiance, not soft-liners' benevolence, that widens political opportunities and perceived possibilities.⁸¹

thought and what we wanted. To our utter surprise, that had an amazingly contagious effect." Smith, "Political Communication," *op. cit.*, p.18. Schama, *Citizens*, *op. cit.*, pp.179-80 mentions this in 18th-century France, Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, *op. cit.*, in 19th-century England.

76. Klandermans, "The Social Construction of Protest," in Mueller and Morris, *Frontiers of Social Movement Theory*, *op. cit.*, p.88.

77. See the comments of Lazarsfeld and Merton, "Mass Communications," *op. cit.*, on the status-conferring and contradiction-exposing roles of the press.

78. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, *op. cit.*, and Maria Elena Diaz, "The Satiric Penny Press for Workers in Mexico, 1900-1910: A Case Study in the Politicization of Popular Culture," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol.22 (1990).

79. Alain Touraine, *La Parole et le Sang: Politique et Societe en Amerique Latine* (Paris, Odile Jacob: 1988), p.256. See also Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, *op. cit.*

80. Apter, "Notes," *op. cit.* While facilitating the downfall of authoritarianism, a culture of entitlement can become so strong that the values of achievement and the market are threatened as well.

81. Calderon notes, "What they seek is precisely the reconstitution of the regime of rights through the transformation of social representation. Thus, social movements would be aspiring not only to actualize the rights of social and political citizenship (that is, participation in decision-making) but also to create a space of institutional conflict in which to express their demands." "Social Movements," *op. cit.*

The growth of solidary identity and perceptions of political opportunity create solutions to the free-rider problem. Group identity reduces fear that members will sit out conflicts. Because identity comes from shared norms and expectations formed in everyday interaction, it goes along with trust among group members.⁸² Mueller describes the result: "Individual logic is supplanted in a context of personal relationships in which individual ties among members activate the obligations of each to the group."⁸³ Acting on such ties is obviously facilitated by perceptions of movement success. Furthermore, the free-rider analysis relies on the classic rational choice premise that preferences do not change with the way in which alternatives are described.⁸⁴ However, what social movements do is precisely to change preferences regarding challenges to authoritarian rule.

As a result of the changes in political space, organization, and consciousness, local mobilizations with anti-regime connotations can begin. Though the process may start in the communications institutions of subordinates, it soon spreads. As movement organizations and public spaces grow, movement elites and discourses reach local submerged networks in dominated groups. This micro-mobilization process breaks down atomization and allows collective action, initially small-scale, sporadic, and brief.⁸⁵ Such clashes draw their force -- for participants and onlookers -- from

82. James Johnson, "Is Talk Really Cheap? Prompting Conversation between Critical Theory and Rational Choice," American Political Science Review, vol.87 (1993).

83. Carol Mueller, "Building Social Movement Theory," in Morris and Mueller, Frontiers of Social Movement Theory, op. cit., p.7.

84. Berejikian, "Revolutionary Collective Action," op. cit.

85. On linkages between movements and local social networks through "micro-mobilization," see Bert Klandermans, "The Social Construction of Protest," op. cit., and Escobar, "Culture, Economics, and Politics," op. cit.

"simulacra": the protests are seen as miniature replicas of broader social relations.⁸⁶

Participation reflects civic gratification and collective group goals more than rational choice and individual interest.⁸⁷ These confrontations polarize the society, setting the stage for more. Victories can trigger a domino effect, as Weigle and Butterfield note. "If independent actors succeeded in not only articulating alternative interests but satisfying them through social action, there ensued a natural progression from the 'low politics' initially represented in independent action to the 'high politics' of demanding representation in official structures."⁸⁸

Outcomes of crisis: In this conception, regime crisis outcomes are above all conjunctural. Collective struggles mobilize and transform the identities, values, and interests of masses and elites. The crisis peaks when politicized private conflicts mesh with growing oppositional organization, and are relayed to a mass audience through public communication institutions. The result is large-scale opposition mobilization, and the rapid crystallization of new loyalties and interests around citizenship and identity. These shifts alter the capacities, alignments, and even values of elites. In the liberalization stage, the regime survives, since collective action cannot be sustained for

86. For example, university student demonstrators and the administration they confront often see themselves in a directly political confrontation mirroring the dividing lines in society. David Apter, "Public Space, Private Space" (Unpublished paper, Yale University, 1987). See also Melucci, "The Symbolic Challenge," and Ralph Turner, "The Public Perception of Protest," American Sociological Review vol.34 (1969).

87. See Orlando Fals Borda, "Social Movements and Political Power in Latin America," in Escobar and Alvarez, The Making of Social Movements in Latin America, *op. cit.*, for Latin American evidence, and Kay Scholzman, Sidney Verba, and Henry Brady, "Participation's Not a Paradox: The View from American Activists" (Conference Paper, American Political Science Association, New York, 1994), for quantitative evidence from the U.S.

88. Weigle and Butterfield, "Civil Society in Reforming Communist Regimes," *op. cit.*, p.18.

long against repression, but it leaves new public spheres, movement networks, and collective identities behind. In the democratization stage overwhelming mobilization (or the risk it may occur) and the crumbling self-confidence and shifting loyalties of incumbents precipitate regime change through negotiation or confrontation. (Such change may also follow failed military adventures intended to distract the public from growing anti-regime movements.⁸⁹)

The changes that generate social explosions in undemocratic regimes occur in rapid succession in the private and public spheres. In the tense atmosphere prevailing, a local conflict becomes a simulacrum for the broader political order, touching off a cascade of grievances from many groups. Opposition groups help the popular outpouring, leaping into the fray. But the greatest impact is due to the mobilization's resonance through the public sphere as the news spreads, touching off chain reactions of protest. A vast variety of grievances, fused together in anti-regime sentiment, can manifest themselves across a whole city or country, peacefully or violently.⁹⁰

"The whole of society seems to swing against the state," as Furet puts it.⁹¹ Representation is more discursive than organizational: the dominated or dissident groups recognize themselves and their feelings in the words of the opposition. "That first declaration speaks for countless others, it shouts what historically had to be whispered,

89. While transitions in Greece in 1974 and Argentina in 1983 are usually seen as sequels to military defeat, it is often forgotten that the invasions precipitating those defeats were launched in the wake of swelling mass internal opposition.

90. Examples would include the Argentine Cordobazo of 1969, South Africa's Soweto revolt in 1976, and the rise of Solidarity in Poland in 1980.

91. Furet, Penser la Revolution Francaise, *op. cit.*

controlled, choked back, stifled, and suppressed," Scott writes.⁹² The inversionary nature of the text amplifies its power, asserting rights, building self-assertiveness, and naming (and shaming) opponents.⁹³ The result can be sudden change in values and perceived political opportunities, particularly in the struggle for liberalization. (For this reason, the movement can also prove as fragile as it is quick.) Even in the stage of democratization, when movements become interlocutors for the regime, their support is at most only partially linked to formal structures. (Shifting from discursive forms of representation to others based on members or votes is difficult, and a key test for groups prominent in the fight against authoritarianism.) Yet while showering rage on the authorities, participants in such a "saturnalia of power" display remarkable fraternity, reflecting their sense of community.⁹⁴ (For instance, a typical form of protest in poor quarters, building barricades, asserts a desire to keep authority out, not to invade rich neighborhoods.⁹⁵)

Social explosions also involve the massive expansion of free spaces, as control over expression collapses. In discursive institutions and in everyday life, the unthinkable becomes commonplace, in what Scott terms a "massive outpouring of voice."⁹⁶ Collaborative elites in subordinate groups lose authority and often become targets of popular wrath. Free spaces become physical, as "liberated areas" are created

92. Scott, *Domination*, *op. cit.*, pp.227,223.

93. Apter, "Democracy and Inversionary Discourse," *op. cit.*

94. See Aristide Zolberg, "Moments of Madness," *Politics and Society*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1972) for historical examples, and S.D. Reicher, "The St. Paul's Riot: An explanation of the limits of crowd action in terms of a social identity model," *European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol.14 (1984) for a contemporary one.

95. Touraine, *La Parole et le Sang*, *op. cit.*, p.248.

96. Scott, *Domination*, *op. cit.*, and Noelle-Neumann, *The Spiral of Silence*, *op. cit.*

by redecoration or occupation.⁹⁷ Protest is more discursive and symbolic than random or strategic: crowds attack authority symbols.⁹⁸ (Yet even when protest is non-violent, the specter of violence is part of its symbolism, for its power comes from a combination of appeal and threat.⁹⁹) Submerged networks come together massively in response to the call of action. As Zolberg puts it, the "new beliefs expressed in new language are anchored in new networks of relationships which are rapidly constituted during such periods of intense activity."¹⁰⁰ Linkages develop, if momentarily, through both the public sphere and personal contacts, connecting movement circles to the local functional networks of civil society. (Mobilization through social networks formed for other purposes is the social aspect of a social movement.) These networks are loose and disorganized, limited in organizing capacity and vulnerable to disruption. Violence is likeliest from the least integrated elements involved.¹⁰¹

Another consequence of mobilization is the rapid growth of new identities and notions of citizenship propounded by opposition movements. To quote Zolberg again, in such cases "the 'torrent of words' involves a sort of intensive learning experience whereby new ideas, formulated initially in coteries, sects, etc., emerge as widely shared beliefs among much larger publics. This may be the manner in which certain forms of

97. Apter, "Public Space, Private Space" op. cit.

98. Lang and Lang, "Collective Behavior," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, p.563, and Reicher, "The St Pauls Riot," op. cit., p.10, discuss the results of social research. For historical evidence, see Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd," op. cit., and Georges Rude, The Crowd in History: 1730-1848 (New York, John Wiley: 1964).

99. Turner, "The Public Perception of Protest," op. cit.

100. Zolberg, "Moments of Madness," op. cit., p.206.

101. Scott, Domination, op. cit., and Lang and Lang, "Collective Behavior," op. cit.

cultural change that are relevant to politics occur in the highly institutionalized cultures of modern, literate societies."¹⁰² Hirsch suggests several reasons, including intense collective debate in a crisis, bandwagon effects, and polarization by repression, which increases group anger and cohesion despite raising the costs of protest.¹⁰³ The result can be the rapid collapse of old legitimacies and the widespread acceptance of new political concepts.¹⁰⁴ (However, delegitimation and violence may reach the point where they endanger the social relations on which the community depends.) Whenever it occurs, a social explosion against an undemocratic regime redefines the actors and their possibilities strengths. Even if the regime survives, nothing after is quite as before.

The thrust of this chapter is that the phases of crisis in authoritarian regimes correspond to those through which opposition social movements grow. Klandermans notes:

"The social construction of protest (movements) can be seen as a value-added process in which each level sets the terms for the next level. At the first, the most encompassing level, the long-term processes of formation and transformation of collective beliefs takes place, and the collective identities that determine the constraints of mobilization campaigns are formed. At the second level, competing and opposing actors attempt to mobilize consensus by anchoring their definitions of the situation in the collective belief of various social groups.... And at the third level, which involves only those individuals who participate in or observe an episode of collective action, collective beliefs

102. Zolberg, "Moments of Madness," *op. cit.*, p.206, and Lang and Lang, "Collective Behavior," *op. cit.*, p.564.

103. Eric Hirsch, "Sacrifice for the Cause: Group Processes, Recruitment, and Commitment in a Student Social Movement," *American Sociological Review*, vol.55 (1990), pp.245ff.

104. This is discussed in revolutionary France in Sewell, "Collective Violence and Collective Loyalties," *op. cit.*, and in contemporary Brazil in Mainwaring, "Urban Popular Movements," *op. cit.*, p.148.

are formed and transformed under the impact of direct confrontations with opponents and competitors.¹⁰⁵

In other words, the lesson of the movement literature for transition theory is that identities, organizations, and structures interact in a specific way when undemocratic governments are brought down. The process by which oppositions gain strength is the same one that takes it away from regimes. Yet the process is contingent, because it is driven by politics and actors more than rational choice or structure. Such an understanding of transitions is both more theoretically adequate than current approaches and more realistic in terms of observed phenomena.

To return, then, to the issue with which this chapter opened: how do discourse-based movements develop the power to confront an authoritarian regime? A reinterpretation of regime crisis based on social movements and collective identity can be linked to Lukes' theory of power to provide a response. Lukes sees three dimensions of power: control of beliefs, agendas, and outcomes.¹⁰⁶ Each phase of opposition movement growth involves overcoming one of these levels of power, shifting the battle to the next.¹⁰⁷ A narrow public sphere is the foundation of hegemony under authoritarianism; the growth of communication and collective identity respond. Authoritarian regimes monopolize the public sphere: opposition movements change the institutional agenda. Coercion is the regime's last resort; direct conflict steels opposition

105. Klandermans, "The Social Construction of Protest," *op. cit.*, p.87. Although the book appeared after the writing of this paper, the argument here also resembles Sidney Tarrow, Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics (New York, Cambridge: 1994).

106. Steven Lukes, Power: A Radical View (London, Macmillan: 1974).

107. John Gaventa, Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Resistance in an Appalachian Valley (Urbana, University of Illinois Press: 1980).

movements. This correspondence is no coincidence, for every social movement theory is based on a theory of power.¹⁰⁸ Thus, the phases of movement growth identified by social movement theory, identity formation, resource mobilization, and conjunctural grievance, respectively correspond to the dimensions of power theory. In treating mass opposition to authoritarian rule as the product of structural conflicts or institutional opportunities, prevailing transition theories deal only with the first dimension (outcomes), or at most the second (agendas), ignoring the third and most fundamental (hegemony). This reflects the incompleteness of structural and rational choice accounts of these political phenomena. Transition theory must account for all three dimensions of power, for each denotes a battle to be fought if a people armed with words is to overcome a regime with guns.

III. A CASE STUDY: BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS IN SOUTH AFRICA

I propose to put some flesh on these theoretical bones with a case study: specifically, one of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in South Africa from 1966 to 1977. Led by Steven Biko, the movement reawakened opposition to the apartheid regime after the banning of the principal black political movements, the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1960. Propounding black exclusivism, a radical critique of the country's white minority

108. McAdam, Political Process and Black Insurgency. *op. cit.*

regime, and militant cultural nationalism, the movement drew on domestic and foreign sources as diverse as Robert Sobukwe, Franz Fanon, Stokely Carmichael, and Paulo Freire. Originating among university students, the BC message spread to black churches, schools, newspapers, cultural groups, and welfare bodies. The goal was to create a network of groups and "conscientized" individuals ready for overt struggle against the regime. Its rapid growth in the mid-1970s, simultaneous with the onset of a regime crisis, was followed by the 1967-77 Soweto revolt, a country-wide cascade of school boycotts, riots, general strikes, and protests. Although the state killed Biko and suppressed the BCM's organizations in late 1977, the movement left in its wake a new extra-parliamentary political space, a set of elites and social networks ready for renewed mobilization, and a regime struggling to liberalize while retaining white control. Yet despite its role in the initiation of the decisive phase of the long struggle for democracy in South Africa, Black Consciousness has never received a full-length study. Existing, rather summary scholarly treatments largely conform to the prevailing structuralist paradigms of authoritarian regime change. A study of the BCM thus offers an important opportunity to test these approaches against a post-structuralist actor-centered approach, while also improving our understanding of a turning point in South Africa's recent political history. This section therefore reviews the current literature on the topic, outlines a discursive understanding of the movement's development and the structure of the rest of the thesis, and concludes with tests to determine which alternative offers greater explanatory power.

Of the four major published works which discuss the Black Consciousness Movement, the three most recent are squarely within the structuralist school. Lodge's

Black Politics in South Africa since 1945 is based on painstaking research on local-level political economy between 1950 to 1964, but applies the same methods in broad-brush fashion to the BCM in his concluding chapter. Nolutshungu's Changing South Africa, the most theoretically erudite of the four, illustrates claims that political and economic structures are relatively autonomous with a brief study of BC based on limited primary-source work. Both are written within a framework similar to that of Skocpol and the institutionalist school.¹¹⁹ The third book, Marx's Lessons of Struggle, devotes two chapters to the ideology and development of the BCM, based on considerable elite interviewing and documentary research. Gerhart's Black Power in South Africa, a thoughtful study of the development of black-exclusivist ideology in the country based upon extensive interviewing and archival work, contained the first important discussion of BC. Yet while she wrote within an older, social-psychological approach to political change (relative deprivation theory), and displays greater sensitivity to consciousness than the other authors, her approach to social movements and regime change, like Marx's, resembles those of Schmitter and O'Donnell and the transition process studies.¹²⁰ To illustrate these similarities and contrasts, we will examine how these

119. Tom Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945 (London, Longman: 1983), Sam Nolutshungu, Changing South Africa: Political Considerations (Manchester, Manchester University Press: 1982). Though Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions, *op. cit.*, is cited in neither work, both draw on intellectual sources firmly situated within similar structuralist traditions. Lodge's work was inspired by the English social historians and Marxist African studies, while Nolutshungu's owes an explicit debt to the structuralist Marxism of Poulantzas.

120. Anthony Marx, Lessons of Struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960-1990 (New York, Oxford University Press: 1992); Gail Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1978) These authors, too, do not cite the regime transition studies, but they also share critical theoretical premises, as will be shown below. C.R.D. Hlisi, Dividing Lines: Black Political Thought and the Politics of Liberation in South Africa, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1988, also deals with the development of Black Consciousness thought, but focuses narrowly on the relation between BC ideology and its historical sources, with very little treatment of the practice of the movement and its impact on South African politics. Because it is concerned with different issues, our analysis of the literature focuses on the four works previously cited.

works present the origin, development, and outcome of the South African regime crisis of the 1970s and the role of the BCM in it.

Three of these four books treat the origins of the regime crisis and of the Black Consciousness Movement as distinct phenomena, though sharing roots in the capital accumulation process and the institutional order. Lodge explains the origins of the political crisis through a structural economic crisis: apartheid-imposed restrictions on black social and labor mobility had limited the internal market and produced a skills shortage, whose effects were aggravated by a fall in the price of gold, the country's principal export. These factors reduced growth and increased inflation, but the desire of business for reform was blocked by the privileges of the white working class, entrenched by the whites-only franchise.¹²¹ Nolutshungu and Marx, while sketchier in their accounts, are largely in accord, though Nolutshungu places more stress on the common interest of all whites in maintaining their privileged access to the state.¹²² In contrast, Gerhart's account ignores the relationship of economic factors to the crisis, treating it implicitly as a product of the increasing political sophistication of the black elite and the social modernization of the working class. All four authors agree that the origins of the BCM were institutional and structural: political opportunities declined with the repression of black political organizations and in the white national student union; they increased where economic growth swelled the ranks of better-educated blacks and apartheid herded them into segregated universities and schools.¹²³

121. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945, *op. cit.*, p.325-26.

122. Marx, Lessons of Struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960-1990, *op. cit.* Nolutshungu, Changing South Africa: Political Considerations, *op. cit.*, ch.3.

123. These are standard features of accounts of South African politics in the era in question.

Structuralist theories of crisis origins are most explicit in Nolutshungu's work and largely shared by Lodge and Marx (though Gerhart differs significantly here too). Nolutshungu strongly emphasizes determination by political and economic structures: "The mode of [political] domination, which is both presupposed and called into existence by [the mode of economic] exploitation, in its turn, calls forth resistances to itself..."¹²⁴ It is also the case for these authors that the South African state is based exclusively on force, not legitimacy. Here, too, Nolutshungu is the most emphatic, discerning "an objective, structural political problem in two senses: the absence of a format of legitimation as regards the vast majority of the population, and a dialectic of suppression and revolt (rather than persuasion and difference, say) is built into the totality of public, social relations – economic and political."¹²⁵ A similar position is implicit in Marx's dismissal of the Inkatha movement (and presumably any other black group in official representative institutions) as a "client of the state," and in Lodge's decision not to examine such groups altogether: collaborators are not taken seriously as competitors for black loyalties.¹²⁶ On these issues, Gerhart differs considerably, arguing that "the colonial relationship becomes unstable not necessarily when conditions among the oppressed are at their worst, but rather at the point when the colonized masses begin to perceive their conditions as fundamentally unacceptable."¹²⁷ While conceding a

124. Nolutshungu, Changing South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.xiii. Lodge emphasizes the economic, indicating that "class-related concepts" are the most useful for the analysis of black political movements in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.ix.

125. Nolutshungu, Changing South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.67.

126. Marx, Lessons of Struggle, *op. cit.*, p.x, Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945, *op. cit.*, p.ix.

127. Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa, *op. cit.* p.300.

degree of economic determination, she presents its political impact as affecting the potential for agency. She also ascribes some legitimacy to the South African regime, in the middle class due to relative privilege and white-controlled churches and schools, and among the masses due to the persistence of traditional socialization and the desperate struggle for survival.¹²⁸

The account of the development of the regime crisis in Lodge, Marx, and Nolutshungu centers on the worsening economic conjuncture and its consequences. For Lodge, the "re-emergence of black political and industrial resistance" is equated with strikes by the urban working class (and not with the student protests, mass demonstrations, and other manifestations of the BCM). Industrial unrest is structurally explained, through a combination of rising unemployment and inflation with the political opportunities afforded by the support of officially-designated black leaders, aided by the bandwagon effect of successful strikes.¹²⁹ Marx discusses at some length the increasing economic hardships confronting black South Africans in the mid-1970s, concluding that "worsening material conditions heightened the mass anger expressed in the readily available terms of Black Consciousness."¹³⁰ Similarly, Nolutshungu maintains that the principal BC grouping, the South African Students Organization (SASO) "found a receptive public whose disposition to respond to its appeals must be explained independently of the rise and fall of that organization and which must surely be seen in conjunction with other signs of militancy among the black population,

128. Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa, *op. cit.*, pp.25-29, 32-37.

129. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945, *op. cit.*, p.325.

130. Marx, Lessons of Struggle, *op. cit.*, pp.60-64.

including the wave of strikes in 1971-73."¹³¹ (Gerhart does not comment directly on this approach, but it seems inconsistent with her stress on legitimacy and on black political initiative as the source of political change.¹³²)

While there is broad agreement in the literature on the institutional character of the BCM's emergence, there is some dispute about the extent and nature of its impact. All four accounts trace, at varying lengths, the spread of its organizational networks from students to include black clergy, journalists, writers and artists, and welfare projects. (Gerhart also notes its impact on the discourse of black politicians operating within the official system.)¹³³ In each account, the groups involved seem internally undifferentiated: who participates and who does not is not explained. As to the extent of the movement's audience, or how its ideas moved them, there is no consensus among these authors. Lodge and Marx present Black Consciousness as a movement of the intelligentsia, whose following was largely the urban middle class and educated youth (though its slogans trickled further down the social scale). Nolutshungu and Gerhart see it as a movement of the "black community" (though both focus on its urban manifestations).¹³⁴ BC ideology was essentially instrumental for Nolutshungu and Marx, rationalizing anti-regime positions that preceded the theory. They argue it is best understood as a calculated strategy to encourage defiance (changing perceptions of

131. Nolutshungu, Changing South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.149.

132. Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.303.

133. ibid., p.289

134. ibid., p.34, Nolutshungu, Changing South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.193.

political opportunities) and permit resource mobilization (churches, etc.)¹³⁵ For Lodge and Gerhart, the discourse also plays an expressive, value-oriented role, joining together common frustrations and offering a new frame for perceiving interests.¹³⁶

The most important similarity in these accounts of crisis development is an elitist view of social agency. For all four authors, the middle classes are the sole social actors or subjects: they alone possess the capacity and opportunity to consciously redefine their identity and values (through choice or movement participation). Gerhart is clearest on this, referring to the middle class as the "natural leaders" of African society, because of their education and freedom from the preoccupations of poverty.¹³⁷ Marx claims the students forming the "core constituency" of the BCM were uniquely concerned by ideas and racism. In contrast, these accounts present the masses as objects: they are acted upon rather than agents. The working class is mobilized by external factor (economic stress, political opportunity, or middle class ideas). The structural explanations of mass mobilization in Lodge, Nolutshungu, and Marx imply an aggregation of individual decisions regarding the costs and benefits of participation.¹³⁸ These could be affected by increasing social strains, changing perceptions of opportunities, bounded rationality, or selective incentives, but they remain economic

135. Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa, op. cit., pp.286, 291, Nolutshungu, Changing South Africa, op. cit., p.162.

136. Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa, op. cit., pp.286-287, Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945, op. cit., pp.324-325.

137. Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa, op. cit., p.30.

138. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945, op. cit., pp.326-328; Marx, Lessons of Struggle, op. cit., pp.60-62, Nolutshungu, Changing South Africa, op. cit., p.201.

interest-based.¹³⁹ To workers, the BC stress on culture was "precious" according to Lodge, "foreign" and "frivolous" according to Gerhart. She described the working class as anomic, parochial, and "unable to generate more than a sprinkling of talented leaders from its own ranks."¹⁴⁰

Yet while all the authors stress the role of elites, one of the most important distinctions in the literature concerns elite choice, broadly following the distinction between institutionalist and regime transition positions. Lodge and Nolutshungu, in keeping with their strict structural emphases, treat the choices of the BC elite as largely determined by structural factors. Nolutshungu's claims are as stark as those of Skocpol: "national[ist] political responses – the class alliances and cross-class interpellations – are structurally determined by the racial and national places in the social division of labor."¹⁴¹ Marx and Gerhart, on the other hand, stress the importance of elite choices about ideology and tactics, rather in the manner of Schmitter and O'Donnell. Thus, Gerhart writes that the central theme of her book is the increasing "ability of politically astute African leaders to anticipate and manipulate ... mass attitudes to serve African group interests."¹⁴²

139. Bounded rationality, is a concept developed by Herbert Simon which suggests that individuals can have different assessments of the same action in different circumstances, while the provision of selective incentives for participation is Samuel Popkin's solution to the free rider problem. See Berejikian, *op. cit.* Nolutshungu suggests that black South Africans were less risk-averse than whites regarding political participation because they suffered more repression in their daily lives, *Changing South Africa, op. cit.*, pp.174-175. Marx argues that the unavailability of selective incentives was a major weakness in the BCM's mobilizing capacity, *Lessons of Struggle, op. cit.*, pp.16-17, 59-60.

140. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945, op. cit.*, p.324, and Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa, op. cit.*, pp.291, 30.

141. Nolutshungu, *Changing South Africa: Political Considerations, op. cit.*, p.64.

142. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa, op. cit.*, p.304. Similarly, Marx writes, "Ideology is encapsulated in images of collective identity, such as race, nation, or class, that imply different political constituencies, goals, and strategic affinities. Elites manipulate such images for political advantage...."

As to the outcome of the regime crisis, Nolutshungu and Gerhart say little on the social explosion which began in Soweto, while Lodge and Marx again place primary emphasis on structure. Arguing that economic crisis was the key reason for collective action, the latter attribute secondary responsibility to the BC Movement itself. For instance, Marx writes, "It was only when the economy pinched that BC's message was taken up more broadly and submissiveness faded."¹⁴³ The initial mobilization among students is seen as the product of organization, while other township residents seem to have joined in an "immediate and spontaneous" bandwagon effect. Lodge presents the parents as atomized and confused, while Marx argues that anger and grief over police repression united the black community.¹⁴⁴ Neither author suggests that the revolt produced a permanent change in community values, though Lodge writes of a "generalization of resistance." Analyzing the aftermath, Lodge and Nolutshungu remain faithful to their institutionalist approach, arguing that the deepening tensions within the regime left the rulers unable to proceed beyond very limited changes.¹⁴⁵ Marx, working within an elite-choice approach, notes how the uprising sparked new debates among

Lessons of Struggle, op. cit., p.236. This conflation of identity, constituency, ideology, and strategy – central to Marx's work – is the essentialist view of discourse criticized in Laclau, Politics and Ideology, op. cit. Each discourse of identity is presumed to interpellate a unique set of people, who have a specific set of interests, and to imply one particular set of tactics or alliances. In this view, movement discourse does not involve the articulation or construction of identities (this is specifically denied), but rather an appeal to (presumably) structurally-defined essences. The problems of identity construction, differing interpretations, and tactical alternatives simply disappear.

143. Marx, Lessons of Struggle, op. cit., p.71.

144. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945, op. cit., pp.333-334, Marx, Lessons of Struggle, op. cit., p.69.

145. Nolutshungu, again, is ultra-structuralist in his analysis of the likely outcome of the crisis: "It is the nature of the relations between the various structural levels (economic, political, and ideological) and contingent strains upon it ... that will determine the subsequent development of both ideology and the oppositional political practices of the various categories of blacks," Changing South Africa, op. cit., p.200.

state and opposition elites, leading to an official reform strategy seeking to broaden the regime's base and an opposition strategy of community organization around concrete issues.¹⁴⁶ The difference here is sharp between the latter writer and Gerhart, who argued that the most important change produced by Soweto occurred in mass values and outlook. The regime's black collaborators had definitively lost legitimacy in the cities, and the Black Consciousness Movement left to its successors "an urban African population psychologically prepared for confrontation with white South Africa."¹⁴⁷

The task of the remainder of this thesis will be to present an actor-centered account of the Black Consciousness Movement and the crisis in the apartheid regime in the 1970s to which it was linked, in keeping with the alternative approach to crises in authoritarian regimes in the preceding section. Chapter Two will discuss the social history of power, politics, and protest in black South African communities in the years prior to 1965. It will begin with an account of the older black South African political culture, localist, oral, clientelist, and personalist, which marked informal social life, the workings of officially-created political institutions, and, until their suppression in 1960, that of the formal black nationalist movements. Chapter Three looks at the social foundations of the apartheid regime in the 1960s and 1970s, exploring what the Black Consciousness Movement was up against: a determined attempt to narrow the public sphere for oppositional activity together with a powerful effort at social mobilization along traditionalist lines by black conservatives allied with the authorities. Chapter

146. Yet structure still ruled: "A mass movement grew [in the 1980s] to take advantage of the strategic opportunities implied more by structural change than as a direct response to the ideological debates of activist elites." Marx, *op. cit.*, p.107.

147. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, *op. cit.*, p.315.

Four will trace the changes which took place in black civil society during the long boom of the 1960s, as new urban communities emerged and the growth of education, the press, and the mainline church created a new public sphere within which black South Africans defined new collective identities. The period was also marked by the development of the disconnected elements which had the potential to form social movements: spontaneous small-scale mobilizations within submerged networks, actors with sizable audiences, and small circles of dissidents – including those which gave birth to the Black Consciousness Movement.

The development of the social movement and the regime crisis from 1971 to 1976 is the subject of the next three chapters. Chapter Five examines the development of the movement's discourse and social networks of opinion leaders throughout urban black civil society, the institutional arenas in which Black Consciousness struggled to gain influence. It also looks at the dramatic changes in black public discourse which resulted, in the black press, on the lips of politicians – even the black conservatives and moderates competing with the BCM – and black drama and poetry. In all these domains, the discourse of Black Consciousness became increasingly hegemonic. Chapter Six looks at consequences in terms of political culture and mobilization which became increasingly evident by the mid-1970s. The expansion of free spaces and the circulation of BC discourse struck a responsive chord in urban black communities, echoing what they had said privately before. It furthered an assertion of rights, politicized the community, and increased its members confidence in their capacity to be political actors. Other signs of collective response to the BCM included increasing mass political awareness, rejection of the regime's legitimating ideologies, suspicion of black

leaders collaborating with it, and the growth of democratic values. In this environment, a variety of local mobilizations took place, including not just strikes, but bus boycotts, sporting activities with political overtones, political protests, and school boycotts. These developments showed how the elements of discourse, leadership, and local social networks came together in local mass action. They also pointed to the emergence of a new repertoire of collective action among black South Africans, in which parochial and patronized action was giving way to national, autonomous action which posed a much greater potential threat to the regime. All these occurrences, along with guerilla wars in neighboring states and underground activity by the reviving nationalist movements in South Africa, helped generate a palpable sense of crisis in the country by mid-1976.

The last two chapters present the apogee of the BCM and the outcome of the regime crisis – the Soweto revolt and its aftermath – along with conclusions and comparisons to other authoritarian peripheral regimes. Chapter Seven discusses events after June 16, 1976. On that day, a march of school pupils in Soweto – the huge black township outside Johannesburg – organized by a BC pupils' group was met with a hail of police bullets, transforming it into a simulacrum of the brutality of apartheid for South Africa and the world. Student networks were at the core of the mobilization of protest and revolt, while their message was carried to the general population of the big cities by the social institutions the movement had co-opted, including a sympathetic press and supportive churches and mosques. Its reach among non-students reflected both these institutional resources and the activation of hidden networks (kin, neighborhood, youth, and religious) that created community solidarity. The collapse of collaborative institutions and their legitimacy in many urban areas is demonstrable,

along with the rise of new community elites from the merger of some older factions with the emergent BC elite. The mobilization occurred around values of communal and national solidarity, reinforced by repression. Although the BC organizations themselves were banned and the fires of revolt quenched in much of the country in October 1977, the movement's legacy was profound, as the chapter's conclusion shows. It will follow the upsurge of protest from 1977 to 1979 in one major city, Port Elizabeth, which prefigured the growth of mass, organized social movements countrywide in the 1980s. Events there revealed how the new political situation would be defined by the persistence of the networks, elites, and values that had emerged in the BC era, operating within the extra-parliamentary space the movement had created through institutional co-option and mass mobilization. The final chapter returns to the theoretical questions posed in this chapter in the light of the evidence unearthed in this thesis. It begins with a recapitulation of the story of the Black Consciousness Movement and the regime crisis in South Africa, uses the data regarding its development to as a test of the adequacy of the structuralist and discursive theories of regime change, and will briefly examine the applicability of an actor-oriented theory to the emergence of regime crisis in a very different context, that of the rise of Solidarity in Poland.

As we have seen, the differences between structuralist and discursive understandings of political change in South Africa – or other undemocratic regimes – are considerable. The structuralist approach is top-down, stressing elite choices under structural constraint. There is no autonomous role for mass protagonist or agency, because collective action is determined rather than determining. The key to mass mobilization lies in changing economic stresses and political opportunities, not shifts in

values. In contrast, a discursive approach is bottom-up, emphasizing the role of the base in constructing their own social worlds and constraining choices of elites. Collective action in this way becomes a partly independent variable. The key to its emergence is changes in values and identity linked to the development of movement-related institutional and submerged networks. However, if this research is to show whether an actor-centered approach is not just an alternative theory, but a superior theory, it will be necessary to reduce their differences into a set of empirical comparisons. Below are seven important differences in the theories' predictions with observable implications. These hypotheses will lay the groundwork for comparisons based upon the chapters ahead.¹⁴⁸

Political legitimacy and values: Structuralist approaches posit no legitimacy for authoritarian regimes, independent of instrumental calculation. Accordingly, they also anticipate no major changes in political values or identity in the development of a regime crisis. A discursive approach, in contrast, would posit some degree of social legitimacy even for undemocratic regimes. It would therefore predict significant changes in political values as a regime crisis approaches, including declining legitimacy, stronger notions of citizenship, and new political and social identities.

Social organization among dominated groups: Structuralist approaches would focus on the development of institutional networks. An actor-oriented theory would also emphasize the emergence of submerged networks based on shared experience and discourse within functional spaces in civil society.

Explanations of mobilization: Structuralist theories of mass mobilization often present increasing economic strain as a trigger. Collective action is the aggregate of individual calculation, based on perceptions of rising opportunities, bounded rationality, or selective incentives. The foci of mobilization are movement organizations and institutional networks. Divisions in the regime elite and liberalizing steps which increase political opportunities precede mass mobilization. A discursive approach would not require immiseration to explain collective action. It would focus instead on solidarity based upon the collective identity of submerged networks that share discourses, along with institutional

148. The reader will recognize here my debt to the tests set out in McAdam, Political Process and Black Insurgency, *op. cit.*, pp.60-63.

and movement linkages. Elite divisions and liberalization would follow the movement's development, seeking to compete with or defuse it.

Movement discourse and practice: At most structuralist approaches to regime change would suggest that the development of opposition movements can alter mass perceptions of political opportunities. Actor-oriented theory would expect movement activity to frame new collective identities and values as well.

Development of social explosions: Given the utilitarian assumptions of the structuralist perspective, the motive force would be the bandwagon effect (changing estimates of likely gains as mass involvement develops). Repression, in turn, would increase costs and reduce participation. Protest targets would be also determined by cost (vulnerability) and gains (looting, etc.). A discursive approach would see the trigger as an event which creates a simulacrum in a highly politicized environment, emphasizing outraged values more than rational calculation. In this environment, repression does not reduce and may increase participation. Targets of protest tend to be value-based (offenses against community norms).

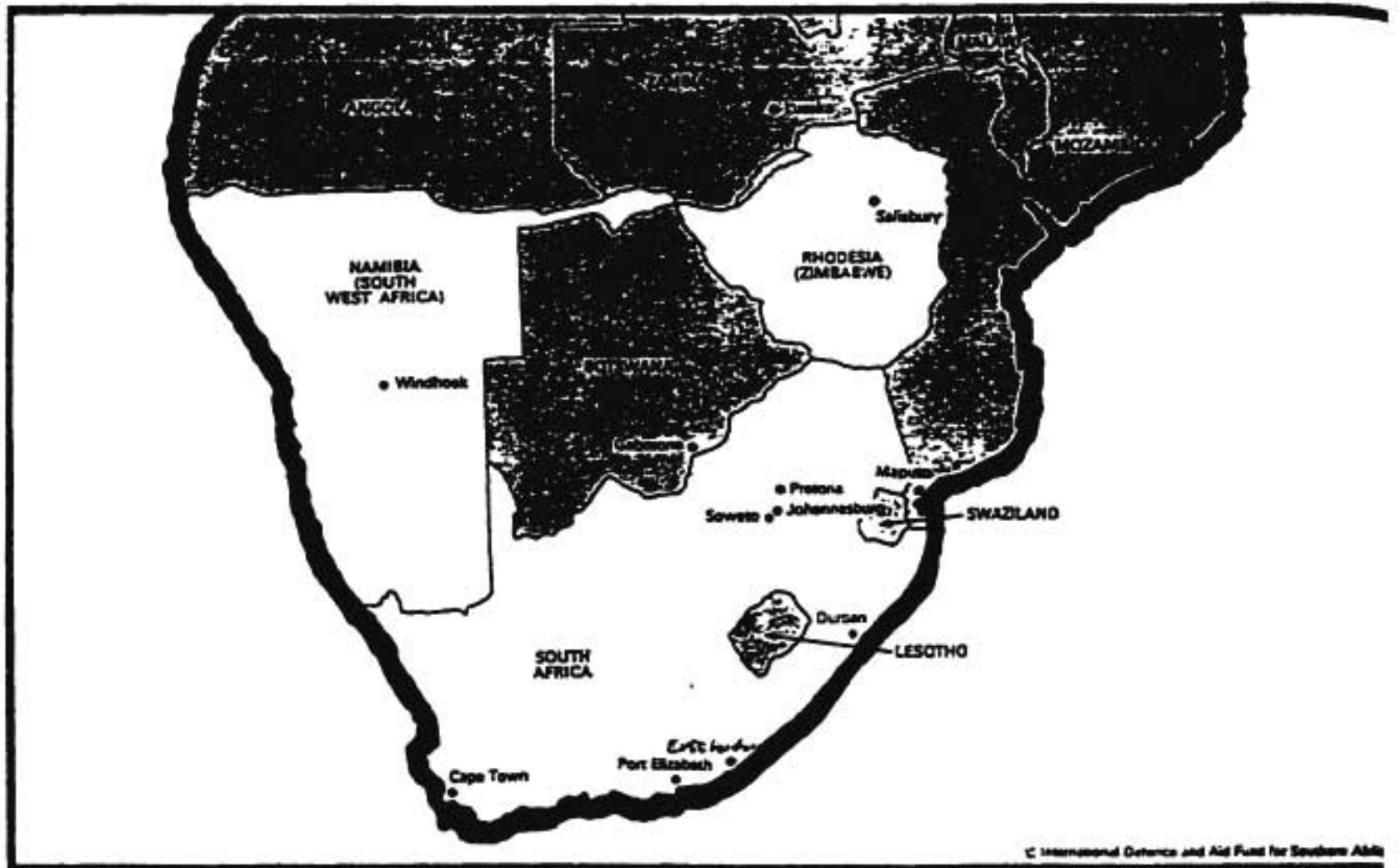
Values and identity: Structuralist approaches would not anticipate permanent changes in values as a result of mass mobilizations, although changes in the perception of political opportunities would be possible. Actor-oriented theory would expect rapid and lasting changes in social identity and understandings of citizenship.

Subsequent political situation: From a structuralist perspective, the results of a regime crisis are defined by structural forces in the state and economy and by struggles within state and opposition elites. For an actor-oriented approach, they would likelier result from the transformation of political space (the reconstitution of a public sphere) and the establishment of networks and values which can form the bases for subsequent mobilization.

Of course, no research project dealing with a single case, using the fallible and imprecise data which emerge from interview and archival research, can pretend to offer a rigorous "test" or "proof" of its theory. At best, it will be possible to give a rough assessment of the "fit" between the expectations of the theory and the image of the movement which can be constructed through the data. Hopefully these indicators will allow some conclusions regarding the empirical adequacy of the two contending theories, as well as help us in our attempt to develop new insights into South African

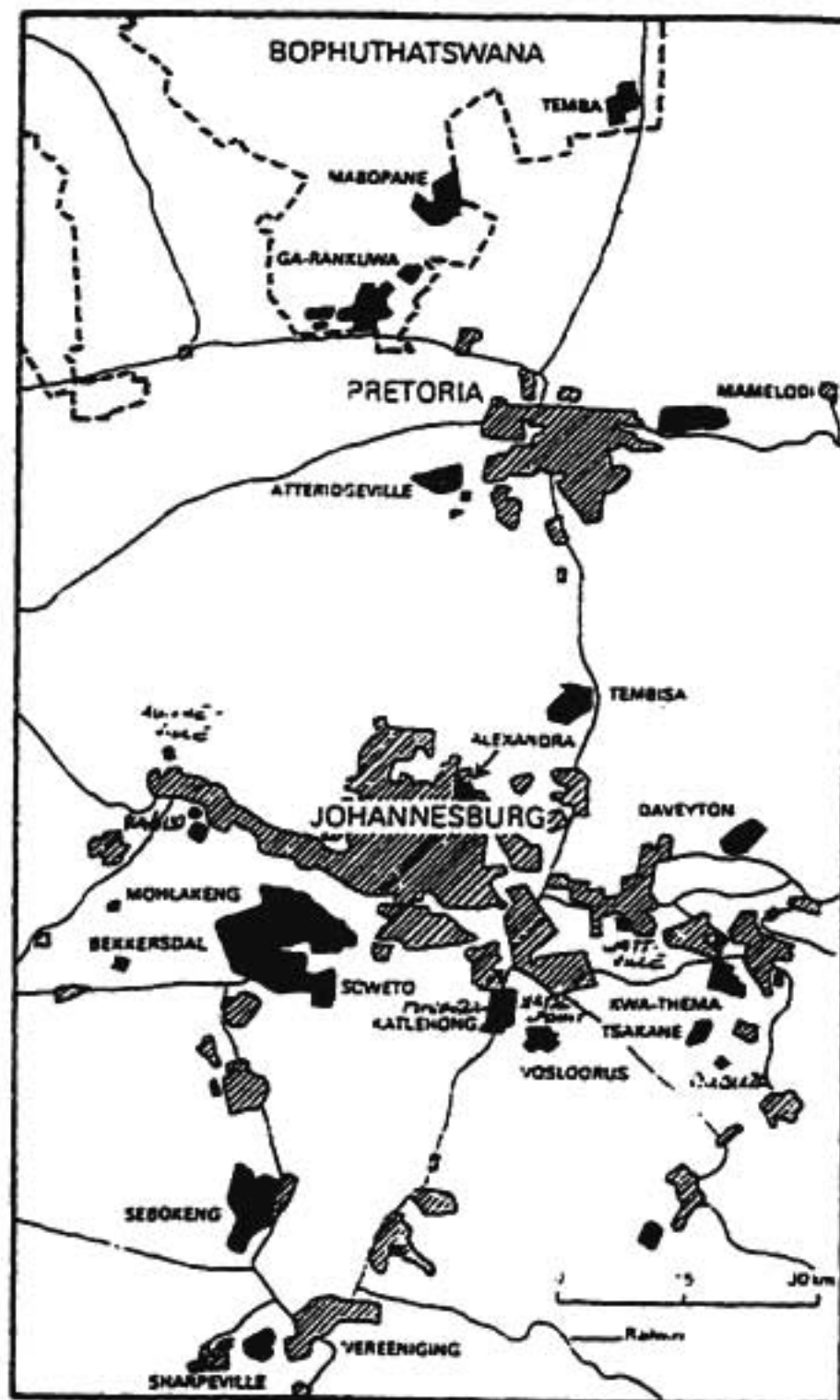
political history. In order to begin our test of these theories, it is to the political background to the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement that we now turn.

Map 2.1: Southern Africa



Source: Alan Brooks and Jeremy Brickhill, Whirlwind Before the Storm: The Origins and Development of the Uprising in Soweto and the rest of South Africa from June to December 1976 (London, International Defense and Aid Fund: 1979)

2.2: African Townships in the Pretoria, Witwatersrand, and Vaal area



*African townships in the Pretoria, Witwatersrand and Vaal area.**

• Areas shaded in black.

Source: South African Institute of Race Relations, A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa (Johannesburg, 1977), p.400.

Chapter Two

A WORLD OF NETWORKS: Power, Political Culture, and Collective Action in Black South African Communities, 1945-1965

On March 30, 1960, some 30,000 Africans marched, "twelve abreast, dressed in their workmen's shirts, trousers, and coats," filling the four-lane highway curving around Table Mountain, down towards central Cape Town and South Africa's seat of government. They looked "exactly like some sentimental leftist painting, 'The Peasants Revolt' – but this was real." When the throng assembled in Caledon Square, outside the main police station, the police did not intervene, and their leader, Philip Kgosana, was promised a meeting with the Minister of Justice before the crowd dispersed. Over the next four days, a general strike continued in Cape Town, and thousands of Africans tried to march into Durban as well, as a work stay-away began there, too. That week, many South Africans thought they were witnessing the start of a revolution. Yet two weeks later, it was all over.¹

To understand why black protest in South Africa before 1965 was impressive at moments but limited in duration and extent, and why the social movement which emerged subsequently was so different in scope and power, it is necessary to take a close look at black politics in South Africa in that era. This chapter will therefore look at the workings of the state and the nature of opposition movements in black communities,

¹ Gail Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1978), p.244

focusing on the years from 1945 to 1965. It will successively consider state-society relations, the character of the public sphere, the values and practices of organized opposition, the prevalent patterns of political culture, and the dynamics of collective action which they produced. The result is an image of black politics in South Africa quite different from previous accounts.^{1a}

The argument here is that black politics before 1965 centered on the exercise of patrimonial power in black communities, which left black elites and their followers compromised with the regime, while giving the state a significant degree of legitimacy. The South African state had a weak center and strong periphery, where the lines between public and private were blurred in local networks of influence. These networks formed part of the active, complex social and political life of black communities, in which local elites wielded power through webs of clientelist relations. Cliques within the elites competed through these networks, based on control over resources and decisions in local government and civil society. But power also flowed from below, through the networks ordinary people established in their neighborhoods, hostels, and workplaces to get on with and make sense of their lives. Their members constantly negotiated with the elite over interests and identities. The professional middle classes, for their part, had corporatist bodies, which increasingly identified with popular causes. The whole set of personalized and particularist relationships was underpinned by the narrow character of the public sphere, in which only a small, literate minority participated fully.

^{1a} By "black," we refer to all South Africans who are not white, e.g., the African majority and the colored and Indian minorities. This usage has been common in the country since the 1970s.

Organized opposition, principally the African National Congress (ANC), was marked by the same relationships and culture influencing the local state. With opposition politics only a small part of community life, even members of resistance groups stood in an ambiguous relation to authority, frequently participating in government-created institutions. As a whole, black political culture was fragmentary, assimilationist, and parochial, and marked by race, class, and ethnicity, with a weak sense of national identity. In this setting, although the socio-political order was undemocratic and repressive, it possessed significant legitimacy, both indirectly through the followings of local leaders and directly through the acceptance of Western values. Even resistance often mobilized through collaborative channels and patrimonial networks. This approach draws on writers on social movements in semi-industrialized societies who explain collective action through community and identity more than interest or structure.²

The nature of power in black communities in South Africa thus offer an illustration of the complex workings of power and legitimation in undemocratic states, particularly in semi-industrialized ones prior to the 1960s. (In the South African case, they are made more complicated still by the colonial characteristics of state and society.)

Society was highly dependent on, and intimately tied to, the state, through a complex web of clientelist and corporatist practices and discourses linking the public and private sphere. Efforts to build alliances, win support, and bolster the regime's legitimacy were constant features of political life, in which even the elites of subordinate groups played

2. The most influential works here have been Alain Touraine, La Parole et le Sang: Politique et Violence en Amerique Latine (Paris, Editions Odile Jacob: 1988) and Sonia Alvarez and Arturo Escobar, The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy (Boulder, Westview Press: 1992)

an important if ambiguous role. A narrow public sphere kept political and national consciousness weak (and in the African context, tribalism and other traditionalist particularisms strong). Political protest also was entangled in the same social relations that created the foundations of the regime, as protest action tended to be led by patrons themselves, around relatively parochial causes. Although increasing authoritarianism and populist protest increased tension within the political system, in these circumstances the regime still had the resources needed to contain, manage, and absorb the resistance which dominated groups were capable of offering.

I. BLURRED BOUNDARIES: PUBLIC AUTHORITY, PRIVATE POWER, AND PATRIMONIAL RELATIONS

The overlap of public and private power shaped the social life of postwar black South Africa. It was founded upon linkages between traditional social relations and those of the capitalist economy and colonial state. The expansion of capitalist relations and state authority allowed the extension of patrimonial forms of relations with new resources. This was the origin of the clientelist state in South Africa, as in other Third World societies, where a weak center is linked to the periphery via local middlemen. Despite black elites' exclusion from the central political system, positions of influence in the local state and civil society provided bases for patronage power in their communities. Of course, the existence of such local power structures did not negate racial discrimination at the national level, which the apartheid laws tightened after 1948.

Yet neither did an authoritarian racial oligarchy obliterate the vitality of black communities, expressed through formally "apolitical" institutions as well as official bodies. Rather, at the local level the South African state was to a considerable extent colonized by a strong black civil society, a relationship that let it function and enjoy some legitimacy.

By 1945, black South Africa was a complex, highly networked society in which the line between public and private relations was blurry indeed. Ties of family, kin, neighborhood, and ethnicity held wide sway. In the tribal reserves (later called bantustans), where two-thirds of the African population lived, chiefs and headmen possessed economic, political, judicial, and religious power. In the industrializing towns, where most Africans were temporary migrant workers or newcomers, homeboy networks linked them to their distant homes, while those settled in town formed new bonds with neighbors and workmates without forgetting older loyalties.³ Squatter camps, mushrooming as the crowded "townships" reserved for Africans overflowed, were led by men who claimed chief-like powers over their residents. In the permanent urban black neighborhoods, an intertwined elite controlled political, religious, sporting, youth, women's, and welfare groups, whose followings often overlapped. Observing this situation in a township outside Durban, the country's second-largest city, Magubane

3. In 1946, only one-fourth of the 201,000 Africans legally in Johannesburg, the largest city and industrial center, were permanently settled there. Even in 1955, 86% of the Africans in East London, an Eastern Cape regional center, had not been born there. L.I. Venables, "The Relations of a Municipality with Its African People," *Race Relations Journal*, 1946, p.51; Beryl Pauw, *The Second Generation* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press: 2nd ed. 1973), p.xvi.

commented that "the line between the political and the non-political is not easily drawn."⁴

Historically, the overlap between the public and private spheres in South Africa originated in the articulation of market and pre-capitalist social relations under a colonial regime of indirect rule. Conquest, taxation, competition, and conversion knitted together the capitalist and lineage orders. Chiefs and male elders dominated pre-colonial domestic or lineage society – the economy of the extended family. They received the product and obedience of women and young men in return for land, mates, and ancestral wisdom.⁵ Larger clan and ethnic units were composed of pyramids of lineage segments. After white settlers conquered the South African interior during the nineteenth century, this way of life largely persisted in the reserves, though growing numbers of Africans worked on white farms. With the establishment of the world's greatest diamond and gold mines in the late 19th century, and surges of growth during the World Wars and Depression that pushed manufacturing ahead of mining, South Africa developed a semi-industrialized economy, on a par with Brazil or Argentina by the post-World War II era. As this occurred, labor for industry came to dominate the productive lives of Africans, when taxation and overcrowding pushed men out of increasingly impoverished reserves to the mines and factories. But their reproduction remained organized on lineage-type lines, even though new resources were being distributed through extended and redefined networks. In addition, Christianity became

4. R.D. Coertze, Atteridgeville: 'n Stedelike Bantoewoonbuurt (Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council: 1969), p.332; Bernard Magubane, Sport and Politics in an Urban African Community: A Case Study of African Voluntary Organizations, MA Thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1963, p.viii.

5. Claude Meillassoux, Maidens, Meals, and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1981), Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labor Power in South Africa," Economy and Society, vol.I (1972).

an important part of the spiritual lives of communities formerly dedicated to ancestor worship.

The extension of lineage-type networks with industrialization expanded the nexus between public and private power, as did their absorption into the state and through indirect rule. Most laborers' families remained in the reserves (13% of the land). They became increasingly dependent on wages remitted from town while living under chiefs holding administrative as well as ritual positions.⁶ Migrants to town re-established the familiar rural order through homeboy networks, while chiefs' relatives were prominent in the new urban middle class, since they could afford secondary schooling. Town dwellers sought houses, jobs, and other favors from such township "big men" with the ear of state or church authorities. As apartheid was implemented, the Africanization of township and bantustan bureaucracies extended the reach of their networks. Moreover, since most blacks were denied the parliamentary franchise, political competition among them was largely displaced into local, often formally private, arenas. Consequently, an elite of male elders, chiefs, and members of the middle class came to allocate both traditional means of subsistence and modern largesse on patrimonial lines. (In such relations, kinship could be real, fictitious, or metaphorical, as in the case of ethnic, religious, and neighborhood groups). As Bayart notes, rather than disappearing as industry and cities grew, capitalism's expansion led to the expanded reproduction of lineage-type relations.⁷

6. Nancy Charton, "Black Elites in the Transkei," *Politikon*, vol.3 (1976) and Philip Mayer, "The Origins and Decline of Two Rural Resistance Ideologies," in Philip Mayer, ed. *Black Villagers in an Industrial Society* (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1980), p.42.

7. "If it is obvious that the capitalist mode of production and its political expression, the authoritarian state, have subordinated pre-existing modes of production and organization in order to function, it is no less true that historical systems of inequality and domination have in turn assimilated to the capitalist mode

As in other Third World societies, the networks linking public and private made South Africa a clientelist state: one in which clientelism was the principal means of administration, participation, and legitimation. In clientelist relations, personal dependency is based on the exchange of goods or protection from the patron for obedience or labor from a client connected by ascription or affection.⁸ In a poor, unequal state, the meager resources left subordinate groups and the state's limited institutional capacity oblige it to deal with dominated groups via local-level elites who play the role of brokers between the center and their clienteles. Thus, Hofmeyr writes that in rural South Africa, "the Native Affairs Department could never properly institute the full exercise of depersonalized and distant control that a centralized, literate bureaucracy implies. The areas to be controlled were simply too huge, the people in these areas too numerous and too unwilling to be governed." Inevitably, chiefs and headmen possessed considerable power. Even in the townships, administration worked not just by laws and regulations but by informal understandings, often contrary to the rules. (For example, the brewing or use of alcoholic drinks was banned, but tolerated.) The discretion of white officials was thus considerable, providing leverage to black elite members with influence over them.⁹

of production and its political expressions, and through them have been reproduced in renovated and widened forms." Jean-Francois Bayart, "Clientelism, Elections and Systems of Inequality and Domination in Cameroon," in Guy Hermet *et. al.*, eds., *Elections Without Choice* (London, Macmillan: 1978), p.82.

8. Roquie defines clientelism as "a relationship between two parties of unequal status, an exchange of non-homogeneous goods and services, and an interpersonal relationship based upon particularistic criteria regulating this exchange." Pitt-Rivers termed it a "lopsided friendship": inequality and reciprocity are both present, within a discourse justifying each. Alain Roquie, "Clientelist Control and Authoritarian Contexts," in Hermet *et. al.*, *op. cit.*, p.23. See also Jonathan Powell, "Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics," *American Political Science Review*, vol.64 (1970) and Peter Flynn, "Class, Clientelism, and Coercion," *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, vol.12 (1974).

9. Isabel Hofmeyr, "The Spoken Word and the Barbed Wire: Oral Chiefdoms versus Literate Bureaucracies," Unpublished Paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1992, p.3; Coertze, *Atteridgeville*, *op. cit.*, p.302.

A clientelist state is a "soft state," with a weak center and strong periphery, reflecting a balance of authority favoring local patrons over a centralized, rule-governed bureaucracy.¹⁰ The power of middlemen resides in their control over resource allocation at the local level, making them indispensable to their communities and the state. They describe their relation to their clients through traditionalist discourses (in Africa, in lineage-type terms) and their clients respond in kind seeking their help (accepting degrees their claims to varying degrees). Such a state, based on paternalism, reciprocity, and redistribution, recalls Weber's idea of the "patrimonial state".¹¹ Individuals' ties to the state derive indirectly from their positions as clients of their patrons, rather than directly as citizens. Political loyalty and participation is based on clan, tribe, area, or patron. Legitimation occurs through these subordinated social relations as much or more as through discourses of modernity and capitalism (freedom and equal exchange). To survive, weak states need strong foundations in civil society giving local elites bargaining power with the state.¹²

10. On this point, see Joel Migdal, Strong Societies, Weak States (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1989) and Christian Coulon, "Systeme politique et societe dans les Etats d'Afrique Noire," Revue Francaise de Science Politique, vol.22 (1972). Case studies include Donal Cruise O'Brien, "Clans, Clienteles, and Communities," in Saints and Politicians: The Making of a Senegalese Peasant Society (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1975), Joel Barkan and John J. Okuma, eds. Politics and Public Policy in Kenya and Tanzania (New York, Praeger: 1979).

11. "Patrimonial domination is thus a special case of patriarchal domination – domestic authority decentralized through assignment of land and sometimes of equipment to sons of the house and other dependents. ... We shall speak of a patrimonial state when the prince organizes his political power over extrapatrimonial areas and political subjects – which is not discretionary and not enforced by political coercion – just like the exercise of his patriarchal power." Max Weber, Economy and Society, vol.3, (New York, Bedminster: 1968), pp.1011, 1013. On clientelist legitimation in Africa, see Craig Charney, "Political Power and Social Class in the Neo-Colonial African State," Review of African Political Economy, no.38 (1987), p.49ff.

12. "Just as the structures of the state in a concrete formation present, under the domination of one type of state, structures which come from other types, these structures often participate, under the domination of one type of legitimation, in other types of legitimation; specifically, in previous dominant ideologies, corresponding to classes which are no longer the politically dominant classes. ... The gap between a type of state and the dominant legitimacy in a form – corresponding to different political forms – is particularly striking in the case of developing or decolonizing countries, in Africa for example, where the establishment

Yet while the roots of clientelism lay in civil society, the political positions black South Africans held, though subordinate, influenced the allocation of goods and the exercise of discretion enough to be power sources. In the reserves, chiefs, headmen, and councils of male household heads combined local economic, political, judicial, and religious authority.¹³ They distributed land, increasingly scarce, enforced laws (or allowed violations), and decided disputes. They also rendered important services: aid in getting pension or disability payments, permission to seek work in town, or help for young men to obtain *lobola* (bridewealth) and marry according to custom. Religious roles included sacrifices and other rituals to the ancestors, who had the clan's land, and sometimes witchcraft, too. Many chiefs were well-liked, but there was no mistaking the dependency of their subordinates. Kotze noted, "The structure of traditional social norms and patterns of behavior is still widely applied in tribal areas, and the chief, who is at the apex of this structure, still exercises large influence."¹⁴

Official township political institutions were modernized analogs of the patrimonial forms of rural society.¹⁵ Mimicking traditional institutions, Advisory Boards consisted of older, well-off men, elected by township leaseholders (male

of 'modern' states is constantly dominated by traditional ideologies." Nikos Poulantzas, Pouvoir Politique et Classes Sociales (Maspero, Paris: 1968), p.242 (my translation).

13. D.A. Kotze, Traditionalism in African Local Government: With Special Reference to the Transkei and Lesotho, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, 1968, pp.275-8. See also Jeff Peires, "Continuity and Change in Ciskei Chiefship," Seminar Paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1977, pp.17-18.

14. Kotze, Traditionalism, *op. cit.*, p.277.

15. Doreen Atkinson terms the philosophy of township administration "patriarchal," and the term certainly fits the elected township Advisory Board (AB). Cities and Citizenship: Towards a Normative Analysis of the Urban Order in South Africa, with Special Reference to East London, 1950-1986, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1991, p.105ff and 164ff. The analogy between township and traditional institutions is also noted in Coertze, Atteridgeville, *op. cit.*, p.367.

household heads).¹⁶ Like urban headmen, the boards allocated resources vital to residents: houses (in short supply), trading sites (the sole legal business premises), secondary school bursaries (gateways to the middle class) and access to municipal sport grounds (the only sites for clubs to play).¹⁷ They also helped residents negotiate the maze of over 100 permits and rules imposed by the white authorities, including those requiring passes (internal passports granting the right to live in town), and lodgers permits. They could urge officials to tolerate or crack down on shebeens (illegal speakeasies) or home brewing of corn beer (migrant workers' preferred drink). They could report or ignore rent defaulters, numerous in poor communities. From the late 1940s, the ABs organized "civic guards" (anti-crime vigilantes). Most white local governments required residents to submit complaints and requests via the Boards, making them the sold channel for their concerns. And they advised the white councils on township development and rules. Studies of Advisory Boards termed them "brokers" and "go-betweens," the language of the literature on clientelism.¹⁸ Baines' work on Port Elizabeth made the point explicitly: "The highly personalized nature of administration

16. In Johannesburg in 1946, the AB voters' roll comprised one-fourth of the permanently urbanized African adults, and 6% of the total adult African population. Venables, "The Relations of a Municipality with Its African People," *op. cit.*, p.51.

17. On the roles of the ABs, see Coertze, *Atteridgeville*, *op. cit.*, pp.294ff, Michael de Jongh, *Interaction and Transaction: A Study of Conciliatory Behavior in a Black South African Township*, Ph.D. Thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1979, pp.73-4, Lawrence Reyburn, *The Urban African in Local Government* (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations: 1960). Magubane, *Sport and Politics*, *op. cit.*, p.18, and Clive Glaser, "Public Enemy Number One: Crime and Policing in the Era of High Apartheid," Seminar Paper, Post-Graduate Seminar, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1992.

18. See, for example, de Jongh, *Interaction and Transaction*, *op. cit.*, p.103, and Coertze, *Atteridgeville*, *op. cit.*, p.295.

of New Brighton facilitated the operation of a system of patronage and clientelism for the Advisory Board and their supporters."¹⁹

Local black elites could thus dispense patronage, despite their limited formal power, because they had influence. In rural areas, Mayer noted, "Much of the day-to-day administration ... fell to the headmen and sub-headmen, who tended to rely on the support of influential elders in their area." Much the same was true in urban areas. Atkinson reported that in East London, "board members could significantly influence the fate of black residents by offering advice to white officials." Coertze recounts that in Atteridgeville, outside Pretoria, applications for housing and trading sites were screened by AB members, then rubber-stamped by white officials. Nor were these cases unusual: Reyburn describes similar ones in Germiston, Benoni, and Springs, as well as Pretoria.²⁰

Of course, although black South Africans possessed some power, they were still oppressed, for whites had exclusive control of the central state and capital. After the National Party (NP) won the 1948 white election, racial segregation was tightened under its policy of apartheid. The NP was then supported almost exclusively by Afrikaners, descendants of Dutch settlers who formed three-fifths of the white population. Its base,

19. Gary Baines, "The Contradictions of Community Politics: The African Petty Bourgeoisie and the New Brighton Advisory Board, 1923-1952," Unpublished paper, History Department, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, n.d., p.11.

20. Kotze stressed the difference between chiefs' formal and real authority: "Although traditional leaders have only subordinate and delegated administrative powers they are in closer physical proximity to the majority of the population than any local and central government institution. This fact, together with the religious, judicial, and quasi-judicial duties, and decision-making powers in domestic tribal matters attached to chieftainship, and traditional leaders' powers of land allocation, increased the administrative authority of traditional leaders above the level to which they had been assigned administratively." Kotze, *Traditionalism*, *op. cit.*, p.275. Similar points were made about township administration by Coertze, *Atteridgeville*, *op. cit.*, p.356, Atkinson, *Cities and Citizenship*, *op. cit.*, p.159. Reyburn, *The Urban African*, *op. cit.*

predominantly white farmers, workers, and fledgling capitalists who shared their hostility to blacks, differed sharply in class and ethnic terms with that of the outgoing United Party (UP). The UP largely represented the less overtly racist English speaking minority of whites, including the bulk of the middle classes, and leading mining and manufacturing interests.²¹ NP discourse was marked by a crude white supremacism, contrasting with the UP's more urbane segregationism.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, the NP government passed laws to tighten segregation, ensure a supply of cheap, unskilled black labor, despoil the black middle classes, and control dissent. Apartheid's pillars included the Population Registration Act, which required a record of every citizen's race, and the Immorality and the Mixed Marriages Acts, which extended bans on whites having sex with or marrying Africans to coloreds and Indians as well. The Group Areas Act required each race to live and trade in separate areas and mandated removal of blacks from "white" areas. The "pass" laws, requiring African men to have internal passports stamped with approval before moving to town, were also applied to African women, extended to more cities, and enforced more strictly. Under the Bantu Education Act, the state took over the mission schools, the main source of education for Africans, expanding schooling but lowering standards. "Betterment" schemes to control overstocking in the reserves cost peasants cattle, needed for plowing and *lobola*, while restrictions on black businesses, artisans, and professionals in the cities grew. The parliamentary franchise of better-off colored men on the white voters' roll, and the separate roll letting middle-class African men elect two

21. Dan O'Meara, Volkscapitalism: Class, Capital, and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1983), ch.15, and Rene de Villiers, "Afrikaner Nationalism," in Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, eds., The Oxford History of South Africa, vol. 2 (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1971), ch.8.

members of Parliament, were abolished. The Suppression of Communism Act outlawed the Communist Party and let government restrict individuals and publications. The policies of discrimination, dispossession, and disfranchisement applied against the black four-fifths of the population deepened poverty, restricted social mobility, made official harassment a daily nightmare, and perpetuated a rigid political order more like a colony than an industrializing state. All this could not be effectively opposed by black South Africans in official political structures.

Nonetheless, despite their exclusion from the central state and the expansion of discrimination, black South Africans were not "powerless," even under the apartheid regime. The situation of South Africa's black elite was like that of the subordinate black elite in Hunter's "Regional City" (Atlanta), a fairly weak interest relative to the dominant white group, yet in a position of strength in its own community.²² In black communities, the local state thus represented both an object whose resources existing cliques coveted and a set of positions of power and influence allowing the formation or reinforcement of networks. By privatizing bits of public authority, black notables complemented the sources of power open in civil society and formed power bases at local level.

22. Floyd Hunter, Community Power Structure (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press: 1953), ch.4.

II. BETWEEN COMPROMISE AND RESISTANCE: CLIENTELISM AND CORPORATISM IN BLACK COMMUNITIES

In the context of clientelism, political and social life in black communities in the 1940s and 1950s looked largely inwards, centering on factional competition within local elites more than the struggle between black and white. Black politics was usually not oppositional; rather it involved working within state-established channels and civil society. It was based on the social networks linking leaders and followers, through which support was organized, interests expressed, and identities defined. In machine fashion, elites drew support from clienteles, drawing on both public and private resources. These relationships generated loyalty as well as support when the elite identified with the social networks that the rank and file had constituted in their own lives. The politics of the small but growing professional section of the black middle class contrasted, however. They, too, sought to privatize public power, but through corporate claims to equality, whose denial by apartheid encouraged them to identify with the nationalist cause. In general, the era was marked by a politics of ambiguity and unstable alliances, involving compromise more often than confrontation, focusing more on bread and butter issues than abstract legal principles.

The black elite's mediating role was established through various inter-racial relationships, but apartheid put these accommodations under growing strain. The "bonds in the color bar," as Gluckman called them, included the economy, Christianity,

schooling, friendship, and political alliance.²³ After 1948, the tightening of segregation and total exclusion of blacks from the central state frayed many of the links between white and black elites. Understandings gave way to bitterness among black notables and professionals. (Presciently, Gluckman wrote, "If these sorts of links are eliminated, black will deal with white only as authoritarian ruler and employer, always as an enemy, and never as an ally.")²⁴

Yet the networks honeycombing black communities were not simple instruments of domination from above. Crossing older values with new resources produced syncretic political relations and language, through which both elites and masses understood themselves. Beinart describes this in the rural areas:

"Chieftaincy provided the kind of institution and set of symbols behind which rural people could unite at a local level and stake claims to land and communal rights. Such political and social expressions were of course traditionalist, rather than 'traditional,' their content was constantly shifting. Although rural consciousness took some of its referents from the past, it was shaped by, and sensitive to the new context of colonial rule and administration."²⁵

The same held for the urban elite. The result was to put black elites in an ambiguous position, permanently between compromise with and resistance to the white authorities.

The consequence was an ever-shifting set of coalitions among sections of the elite, the black masses, and the administration.²⁶

23. Max Gluckman, "The Bonds in the Color Bar," in Custom and Conflict in Africa (Oxford, Blackwell: 1956), pp.138-9.

24. ibid., p.165.

25. William Beinart, "Chieftaincy and the Concept of Articulation: South Africa, ca.1900-1950," Canadian Journal of African Studies, vol.19 (1985), p.94.

26. Gluckman, "The Bonds," op. cit., 154-9.

Within black communities, political conflict was both shaped and moderated by the interlocking nature and shared backgrounds of the black elite. Studies show that a small upper middle class of businessmen, ministers, politicians, nurses, and independent professionals dominated township organizational life. The same people often led political groups as well as sporting, church, educational, and welfare organizations, the key groups in civil society.²⁷ For instance, Magubane presents a table displaying the links and organizational affiliations among Durban's African elite. Of 31 executive members of the Durban and District African Football Association, 14 sat on the local Advisory Board, 6 were active in the ANC (including its future President, Albert Luthuli) and 3 of them sat on the AB, 6 belonged to school committees, 2 were leaders of teachers' unions, and 4 were in other local organizations.²⁸ A typical middle-class leader mentioned by Pauw, Mr. X of East London, was a member of the Advisory Board and the school committee, an official of two sports clubs, a regular churchgoer, and had close friends in both the local ANC and the local chief's court.²⁹ (Among the Indian elite, Kuper reported members could play the role of "sponsors" or "patrons" in as many as 20 associations.³⁰)

27. Among these, see Leo Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie* (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1965), p.101, Monica Wilson and Archie Mafeje, *Langa* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press: 1963), H.J. Swanepoel, *Die Andeel van Bantoe aan Stedelike Bantoeadministrasie in Johannesburg*, M.A. Thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1973, pp.133, 199, Mia Brandel-Syrier, *Reeftown Elite: A Study of Social Mobility in a Modern African Community of the Reef* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul: 1971), Thomas Nyquist, *African Middle Class Elite* (Grahamstown, South African Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University: 1983), p.93.

28. Magubane, *Sport and Politics*, *op. cit.*, pp.22-3, 29.

29. Pauw, *The Second Generation*, *op. cit.*, p.187.

30. Hilda Kuper, *Indian People in Natal* (Durban, University of Natal Press: 1960), pp.90-1.

The strong links within the black elite reflected a variety of connections. These included social ties, common backgrounds and schooling, and ethnicity, as well as organizational, professional, and religious associations.³¹ Family and social connections also linked the rural and urban elites. "Nowhere was there a major clash between the tribal and educated elite," wrote Mayer of the Transkei. "What was typical were the various forms of alliances between them in the various districts."³²

While black-white tensions were present in the background, organized political life in black communities turned on factional competition within the local elite. Research on urban black communities documents how associational life was riven with conflict between middle class cliques. Nyquist writes of "intense competition within voluntary associations among members of the upper stratum." Of 42 clubs he studied during a year in Grahamstown, four collapsed due to factional clashes, while two-thirds of the rest suffered serious internal conflict.³³ Factional divisions were usually based on personal bonds and competition for resources, not political lines.³⁴ In New Brighton township society, for example, the dominant force was a set of leaders active in the AB, the ANC, and the local Rugby Board. Personal rivalries led to a breakaway from the

31. de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*, p.72.

32. Philip Mayer, "The Tribal Elite and the Transkei Elections of 1963," in P.C. Lloyd, ed., The New Elites of Tropical Africa (New York, Oxford University Press: 1966), p.301. For example, five of eight factional leaders on the Atteridgeville AB were close relatives of chiefs (as well as connected to the ANC). Coertze, Atteridgeville, *op. cit.*, p.369. See also William Beinart, The Political Economy of Pondoland (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1982), p.137ff, Brandel-Syrier, Reefdown Elite, *op. cit.*, p.97, and Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, *op. cit.*, pp.76-7.

33. Nyquist, African Middle Class Elite, *op. cit.*, p.205. See also Magubane, Sport and Politics, *op. cit.*, pp.26-35, Brandel-Syrier, Reefdown Elite, *op. cit.*, pp.105-9, Pauw, The Second Generation, *op. cit.*, p.175, Martin West, Bishops and Prophets in a Black City: African Independent Churches in Soweto, Johannesburg (Cape Town, David Philip: 1975), ch.5, and Kuper, Indian People, *op. cit.*, p.85.

34. Thus in Atteridgeville, an informant told Coertze that "the two [AB] parties call for the same things, just the improvement of conditions in the locations – that's all." He attributed the division between them to personal rivalries between leaders. Atteridgeville, *op. cit.*, p.315.

Rugby Board in 1956-58, healed only after the AB chair intervened.³⁵ The popular bases for elite competition were constructed upon patronage relations, although these ties were neo-traditional rather than strictly traditional. Though membership in the dominant group was based upon middle class position as well as traditional criteria of age, gender, and lineage, those on the bottom included workers, the poor, and squatters as well as women, younger men, and commoners. Moreover, status was not linked just to occupation but to participation in communal and redistributive activities.³⁶ While older forms governed the seeking of favors, the substance of such transactions involved the resources of the local state and organizations in civil society under the control of local elites. Yet the relations often were not the simple purchase of support; ties of clientage were also associated with genuine and even enthusiastic followings when they connected with the neighborhood networks residents had forged in everyday life. Examples included James "Sofazonke" Mpanza, beloved in Soweto from his rise as a squatter leader in the 1940s to his death in 1970, and George Thabe, Sharpeville's political and football supremo.³⁷

The most detailed study of the workings of township patronage and political institutions in this era is Coertze's work on Atteridgeville. He found that the most

35. de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*, p.221. Many of the same individuals would be involved in another split in the 1970s that played a key role in the growth of militant opposition politics there through the formation of the KwaZakhele Rugby Union (KWARU). See Chapter Five of this thesis.

36. An East London resident defined a "big name" (*amagama amakhulu*) in the township as "a man who knows how to maintain discipline, who assists every person who is in difficulty, who works hard." Parw, The Second Generation, *op. cit.*, p.178. See also Brandel-Syrier, Reef town Elite, *op. cit.*, p.53.

37. Alf Stadler, "Birds in the Cornfields," in Doug Hindson, ed., Working Papers in Southern African Studies, vol.3 (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1983) and Ian Jeffrey, Cultural Trends and Community Formation in a South African Township: Sharpeville, 1943-1985 (MA Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1985).

common patronage practice was promising houses for AB votes.³⁸ Supporters of opposing factions were also rewarded or punished through the allocation of beer brewing permits, vital income sources. (Housewives were asked, "Why did you vote for fools? You must promise now that you will vote for us next time, otherwise we shall not give you the recommendation paper" for beer brewing.) Shopkeepers supporting one group withheld scarce goods from opponents' supporters at election time, giving their own free sugar and corn. The differing factions had their own burial societies, youth clubs, and women's associations. Intimidation also played a part: civic guards, appointed among supporters of the AB members, were accused of harsh action against backers of the "outs."³⁹ The effect of the various types of power AB members had was described by an interviewee:

"What the resident knows to be a fact is that it does not matter what reasonable request he may have to make from the Administration. If he is not 'in' with the Board, his case never receives consideration. Board members get anything they want in the nature of houses for themselves and their friends and relatives and followers."⁴⁰

Turnouts in Advisory Board elections were generally not very high, reflecting the low-participation, clique-based nature of the institution. In Atteridgeville, around 30% of eligible householders voted in elections for the Advisory Board in the early 1950s. Turnout jumped to 65% in 1955 and 79% later in the decade when elections were fought on contentious local issues.⁴¹ Similar levels of participation were reported on the East Rand. In the big cities with the largest politicized African middle classes —

38. Coertze, *Atteridgeville, op. cit.*, p.324. Reyburn also mentions widespread threats by Advisory Board members to evict rent defaulters who did not support them, *The Urban African, op. cit.*, p.10.

39. Coertze, *Atteridgeville, op. cit.*, pp.357, 345, 332, 324.

40. *ibid.*, p.357.

Johannesburg, Durban, and Port Elizabeth – turnout ran 10% or less, though there, too, hot local issues could push it up.⁴² Support was the result of personal ties to candidates.⁴³ But clienteles stretched well beyond the few qualified to vote for the AB, including household members and those linked to the elite by other ties. (Thus, in Port Elizabeth and on the East Rand, Advisory Board members chaired political bodies for those who could not vote for ABs.⁴⁴)

Sports clubs, the organizations with the largest followings (after churches) in black communities, illustrate how township patronage reached beyond the AB electorate into civil society. "Big men" of the community elite linked sport, patronage, and politics. The middle-class "patron-managers" funded clubs, offered transport, and obtained grounds, receiving in return a retinue of muscular young men, neighborhood prestige, and political support. Club members also helped players find jobs, board, and lodging. Thus, in Port Elizabeth:

"Sport clubs centered around members of the middle-class township elite, particularly Advisory Board members. These men had resources – economic, political, and prestige – to help the clubs. In turn they benefited from their ties. They were influential, respected figures, both for their power and their sporting prowess in their younger days, despite the fact that there were low turnouts in AB elections."⁴⁵

41. *ibid.*, p.343.

42. Reyburn, *The Urban African*, *op. cit.*

43. Those who voted tended to be more recently arrived from the rural areas and more traditionally oriented, seeing the Board as analogous to the rural chief's council. Coertze, *Atteridgeville*, *op. cit.*, pp.323, 344.

44. These included "vigilance associations" and committees which organized mass meetings. See Baines, "The Contradictions of Community Politics," *op. cit.*, and Hilary Sapire, "African Political Mobilization in Brakpan in the 1950s," Seminar Paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1989.

45. Interview, Mike Xego, Port Elizabeth, May 19, 1992. This was confirmed by former KWARU President Mono Badela, Interview No.2, Johannesburg, June 8, 1992. See also Jeffrey, *Cultural Trends*, *op. cit.*, pp.211-2, Wilson and Mafeje, *Langa*, *op. cit.*, and Magubane, *Sport and Politics*, *op. cit.*, p.53.

The same principle applied to other bodies, including religious, educational, and welfare groups.

The key to the strength of elite networks lay in their connections to neighborhood networks of relationships in daily life. Within each area, intense, personal relations emerged from street life. As Jeffrey puts it:

""Township dwellers in South Africa, residing in identical 'matchbox' houses, on tiny plots of land, have been forced to spend a good deal of their daily lives in the dusty streets. Children begin playing in the streets from a very young age. Football matches and games of hopscotch are regular occurrences. Adults traverse the streets on their way to and from bus shelters and taxi ranks, visiting friends and relatives, and going to church services and football matches. Township street life has always been both vibrant and culturally important."⁴⁶

Neighborhood cohesion was reinforced by the tendency of people of the same clan, ethnic, linguistic, or religious group to settle near each other.⁴⁷ Urban youth had their own area networks, based upon school for the educated minority and neighborhood gangs for the majority of adolescent drop-outs.⁴⁸

How these neighborhood networks linked up with elite networks can again be seen through the case of sport. The best players in several streets would form a team, manifesting area rivalry. These teams were rooted in their areas as both neighbors and representatives, bringing prestige to their area as well as themselves.⁴⁹ Frequently they also had a tribal or regional coloration, reflecting the common origin of team

46. ibid., p.69.

47. ibid., pp.64-6, Cecil Manona, "Small Town Urbanization in South Africa: A Case Study," African Studies Review, vol.31 (1988), p.103, Kuper, Indian People, op. cit., p.102.

48. Jeffrey, Cultural Trends, op. cit., and Clive Glaser, Anti-Social Bandits: Juvenile Delinquency and the Tsotsi Youth Gang Subculture on the Witwatersrand 1935-1960, MA Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1990, ch.5.

49. Jeffrey, Cultural Trends, op. cit., pp.111-20.

members.⁵⁰ They would seek out the aid of a well-heeled local patron. The result was sporting networks united by shared identity and dependency on members of the local elite, in personal, informal relationships.

In contrast to the clientelist links between notables and the masses, during the 1940s and 1950s the growing professional strata of the black middle classes advanced aggressively modern, corporatist claims. Urbanization, industrialization, and popular struggles led to the bureaucratization of the reproduction of the fast-growing African proletariat, as state intervention in education, health, housing, and welfare increased. Within the large institutions that resulted, the numbers and hierarchy of African professionals increased, while their discretion and influence declined. (As one-roomed schoolhouses gave way to large educational institutions with sizeable staffs, the status of ordinary teachers sank, while only principals and senior teachers remained notables.) The new African petite bourgeoisie justified its status-seeking through its collective function in the community, based on training and knowledge, rather than individual patronage, for which its members usually lacked means.⁵¹ Educated and articulate, some younger members of this group, especially teachers, made up for their lack of social standing with intellectual vision and political activism. They formulated the Africanist vision: a society reinvigorated by a synthesis of modernity and tradition they would realize. They also advanced vigorous professional claims. Black professionals' salaries had been cut during the Depression and squeezed by inflation during and after

50. Thus the Amazulu football club was linked with rural Zululand, while Bush Bucks players and fans were from Pondoland in the Xhosa-speaking Transkei. Magubane, *Sport and Politics*, *op. cit.*, p.28, and Pauw, *The Second Generation*, *op. cit.*, p.72, describes similar phenomena.

51. Of course, individuals often participated in patrimonial relations with obligations to their families or neighbors, in addition to their corporatist roles. On these issues generally see Craig Charney, "Janus in Blackface: The African Petite Bourgeoisie in South Africa," *Con-Text*, vol.1 (1988), pp.14-20.

World War II, while large classes, poor facilities, and white control also produced frustration. The result was a corporate willingness to fight for professional status, along with a populist demand for recognition of Africans' political rights and cultural worth.

During the 1940s, the two largest professional categories, teachers and nurses, displayed militancy unprecedented for a middle class obsessed with respectability. Led by David Bopape, an East Rand Communist, and A.P. Mda, the future Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) leader, the Transvaal African Teachers Association campaigned for salary raises. The climax was a march of 12,000 teachers, parents, and students through downtown Johannesburg on May 12, 1944, winning significant gains. In Umtata, the largest town in the Transkei, student nurses struck in 1941. Fears of repetitions led to the inclusion of black nurses in the national nurses association (albeit on a minority basis).⁵²

After the NP came to power, the black middle classes faced a government bent on intensifying racial restrictions, while their working conditions deteriorated. As the only classes of Africans able to compete or socialize with whites, they were the principal victims of measures intended to restrict black professionals, repress black political activity, and exclude blacks from contact with whites outside the workplace. Despite this, the numbers of the new petite bourgeoisie swelled rapidly in these years. Between 1946 and 1960, the total number of black professionals rose from 31,400 to 65,700, when it included half the country's teachers and one-third of its medical personnel.⁵³ Yet teacher pay scales remained frozen, while their working conditions deteriorated

52. Jonathan Hyslop, "Teachers and Trade Unions," *South African Labor Bulletin*, vol.11 (1986), pp.91-92, Shula Marks, paper on nurses in South Africa, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, 1986, pp.15-18.

53. Union of South Africa, *Population Census* (Pretoria, Government Printer), 1946, 1960.

under Bantu Education policy of larger classes loads. Many also chafed under white authority, reflected in a syllabus considered racist, an all-white school inspectorate, and pay discrimination.⁵⁴ Black nurses also suffered from lower salaries, inferior training facilities, and the segregation of the Nursing Association.⁵⁵ Students faced crowded classrooms, poor food, and dormitories with no privacy, as rapid growth overstretched school resources, and tension with paternalistic whites in charge.⁵⁶ Traders and independent professionals lost premises in city centers under the Group Areas Act. If apartheid provoked anger generally among blacks, it was worst among young professionals.⁵⁷

In this context, it is hardly surprising that the corporate struggles of black professionals converged with political struggles for nationalist ends. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, teacher groups were politicized by young, militant leaders such as Bopape and Zeph Mothopeng, another future PAC figure. They campaigned against Bantu Education, and many were also ANC activists.⁵⁸ When the Nursing Act was amended in 1957 to segregate nursing bodies, African nurses demonstrated.⁵⁹ African high school pupils developed a new protest repertoire in their rural boarding schools.

54. Hyslop, "Teachers," *op. cit.*, and Philip Vilardo, "Contemporary Conflict in Black Teacher Politics: The Role of the Africanization of the Apartheid Education Structure, 1940-1992," Seminar Paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1992, pp.4-9.

55. Marks, paper on nurses in South Africa, *op. cit.*

56. Jonathan Hyslop, "Food, Authority, and Politics: Student Riots in South African Schools, 1945-76," in Stephen Clingman, ed, Regions and Repertoires: Topics in South African Politics and Culture (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1991), pp.91-97.

57. Brandel-Syrier, Reefdown Elite, *op. cit.*, p.163.

58. Hyslop, "Teachers," *op. cit.*, pp.92-3, and Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, *op.cit.*, pp.101-103.

59. Marks, paper on nurses in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.25, and Tom Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945 (London, Longman's: 1982), p.145.

including class boycotts, arson, and attacks on teachers.⁶⁰ Black university students protested poor conditions and the imposition of segregation at Fort Hare, the only black-oriented university, and became a key source of ANC leaders through the Youth League.⁶¹ Indeed, the new African middle class rose to the fore in nationalist organizations, elbowing the notables aside. (Among the accused in the main political trials of the 1950s and early 1960s, salaried professionals and white-collar workers considerably outnumbered independent professionals and traders, the core of the old elite.)⁶²

The corporate coherence and national-mindedness of many in the professional strata contrasted with the weakness of organization and action in the black working classes. At their peak, black trade unions organized 40% of the African industrial workforce in the mid-1940s, and the greatest strike till then in South Africa occurred in 1946, when 70,000 black miners briefly walked out.⁶³ But black unions declined rapidly after the miners' strike was crushed and the white-led labor movement accommodated itself to apartheid. In any event, even at their peak, the membership of the African unions represented only a small minority of the entire industrial workforce. In the 1950s, the ANC-aligned South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) never

60. Hyslop, "Food, Authority, and Politics," *op. cit.*, p.86.

61. Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie*, *op. cit.*, p.103.

62. *ibid.*, pp.101, 104, and Gail Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, *op. cit.* p.391.

63. Ken Luckhart and Brenda Wall, *Organize or Starve: The History of the South African Congress of Trade Unions* (London, Lawrence and Wishart: 1980).

claimed more than 50,000 members. Even among unionized African workers, neo-traditional homeboy networks remained the building-blocks of organization.⁶⁴

Indeed, in the postwar era, the limited extent of class accommodation and corporatism distinguished South Africa from other African and new industrial countries.⁶⁵ In non-settler African colonies, the indigenous petite bourgeoisie was incorporated into the dominant alliance. In newly-industrialized countries such as Argentina or Brazil, populist regimes gave a prominent role to urban middle classes and incorporated the unskilled working class into parties and unions. In South Africa, the black middle classes' position worsened after 1948, while working-class incorporation was limited to whites and the small minorities of skilled colored and Asian workers allowed into their unions under the Industrial Conciliation Act. Liberalizing measures like those elsewhere were considered in South Africa during and just after the war.⁶⁶ But while it is debatable whether Smuts's United Party, itself severely compromised with segregation, would have implemented such measures, the NP's victory in 1948 put an end to their discussion. Without the state-aided corporatist structures that marked populist regimes elsewhere, black workers remained fragmented and parochial in

64. Beinart writes that "such forms of consciousness, and networks, were the very means by which workers organized themselves and were intrinsic to the development of worker consciousness." William Beinart, "Worker Consciousness, Ethnic Particularism, and Nationalism: the Experiences of a South African Migrant, 1930-1960," in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, The Politics of Race, Class, and Nationalism in South Africa (Longmans, London: 1987), pp.298 and 306. See also T. Dunbar Moodie, "The Moral Economy of the 1946 African Miners Strike," Journal of Southern African Studies, vol.13 (1986).

65. See Guillermo O'Donnell, "Corporatism and the Question of the State," in James Malloy, ed., Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press: 1977).

66. Prime Minister Jan Smuts and his deputy, Jan Hofmeyr, promoted the position of the black middle class, and spoke of black representation in Parliament. Official recognition of black trade unions was also proposed by the Fagan Commission.

outlook, leaving patrimonial politics more influential in South Africa than in other semi-industrialized countries.

III. THE NARROW NATURE OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The patron-client networks running through black society were both causes and consequences of the fragmentary nature of the public sphere in South Africa. The narrowness of the public sphere, limiting the vigor of public opinion and political participation, is an important aspect of the South African polity in this period. Habermas defines the public sphere as the space where public discussion and criticism of government can occur.⁶⁷ The literature suggests that the strength of public opinion depends on literacy (the capacity to communicate beyond personal contacts), communicative competence (understanding politics) and liberty (free communications institutions such as the press, church, theatres, pubs, etc.)⁶⁸ Public opinion is formed in the public sphere. A narrow public sphere means that public opinion involves few, and that the pressure on government and mobilizing capacity that public opinion represents is weak.

67. Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere," in Steven Seidman, ed., Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics (Boston, Beacon Press: 1989).

68. See Kenneth Baker, "Public Opinion as Political Invention," in Inventing the French Revolution (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1990), pp.169ff, Elizabeth Eisenstein, article in American Historical Review, 1968 COMPLETE CITATION and Jürgen Habermas, Communications and the Evolution of Society (Boston, Beacon Press: 1979), pp.116-29.

When society is honeycombed with particularisms by illiteracy and parochial social ties, as South Africa was, the public space is narrow. Before the 1950s, two-thirds of African children in South Africa received no schooling at all. In rural areas, where most lived, pagan parents often opposed schooling because Christian missions offered it. Instead, education there centered on age groups, initiation, and traditional gender roles.⁶⁹ In 1951, only around 700,000 of the country's adult Africans could read English, drastically limiting the opportunities of the rest to learn about or discuss the broader society.⁷⁰ As Touraine puts it, "Rural isolation, illiteracy, urban marginality, and the strength of networks of personal and family relations limit participation in public life."⁷¹

Reflecting the low level of literacy, newspaper readership in black communities in South Africa was quite limited before the mid-1960s. As late as 1962, only 7% of African adults read a daily paper.⁷² More than eight out of ten read no newspapers at all. Almost all those who did lived in cities, especially Johannesburg, drawn from the narrow stratum of middle-class men. In the bantustans, small towns, and white farms where most Africans lived, newspapers were rare, except in the hands of the occasional teacher, preacher, lawyer, or clerk. In Natal, for example, only one African in 25 read The Daily News, Durban's largest paper, in 1962, while the Zulu-language Ilanga

69. Mayer, "Origins and Decline," *op. cit.*, and Peter Delius, "Migrants, Comrades, and Rural Revolt: Sekhukuneland 1950-1987," Transformation, no. 13 (1990), p.13.

70. Union of South Africa, Population Census (Pretoria, Government Printer: 1951).

71. Touraine, La Parole et le Sang, *op. cit.*, p.125.

72. National Readership Survey (Johannesburg, Market Research Africa: 1962).

reached just one in 20.⁷³ Even amid the rows of brick houses and long, low migrant hostels stretching through the townships, only one adult in five read an English-language daily. Nor was the gap filled by electronic media: only 12% of African homes had radios in 1962, usually amid the neat curtains and lounge sets of the urban middle class, while South Africa had no television until 1976. The same patterns prevailed in colored communities, where seven in ten did not read a daily paper and those who did were concentrated in the cities and upper-income groups.

Instead, communication in black areas was marked by the predominance of the oral and vernacular, reinforcing the importance of direct, personal relationships and networks. It was a culture of face-to-face discussions – between family members, neighbors, and notables in township yards, streets, and shebeens, between clan members, migrants, and chiefs in rural homesteads, between workmates in factories, busses, and farms, between home-boys and *indunas* in hostels and mine compounds.

Describing a Transkeian village in the early 1960s, Beryl Pauw writes:

"News from the world outside comes through visits to town or from visitors or migrants returning from more distant centers. Local persons representing links with the larger society are the headman, who serves as his people's link with the government, the Methodist minister, school teachers, most of them not permanently resident at Mlanjeni, and the white trader."⁷⁴

Even in the towns, the bulk of black people were dependent on the "township telegraph" – gossip and rumor – for most of their news. "Mass" communications were also largely oral: political meetings, church services, chiefly courts and assemblies, story-tellers and

73. *ibid.* Thus Coertze writes that in 1950s Atteridgeville, "only The Bantu World (then a bi-weekly) could count on a regular and persistent readership. Purchases of the other papers were largely limited to people who were teachers, did clerical work, or had received enough education that reading them posed no problem." Atteridgeville, *op. cit.*, p.370.

74. Beryl Pauw, Report of Research Concerning Bantu Christians and Their Churches in the Eastern Cape and Transkei, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1969, p.34.

praise-singers, or the reading aloud of newspapers to the illiterate. These parochial information flows helped underpin the patrimonial character of state and society.

The urban mainline churches, the outgrowth of European missionary efforts, were also relatively weak in the decades before the 1960s. Cite census data here: the low percentage of the black population in urban mainstream churches, and the low proportion of churches in urban areas. This had a two-fold significance for the constitution of the public sphere. Urban mainline churches had far greater resources than either rural or separatist institutions. They were also broader in their orientation: urban congregations tended to be multi-ethnic or tribal, while the cult itself was more universalistic in outlook.⁷⁵ The contrast with the rural church was striking. A research report from a Ciskeian village, Gobošana, told how the two churches lacked regular ministers, and one lacked a building. Another, from the Transkei, tells how religion reinforced particularism: church, village, and kinship boundaries all overlapped.⁷⁶

The result of these social and institutional characteristics was the weakness of public opinion, understood as a process of public discussion and criticism of government. For reasons of language and education, urban political meetings were incomprehensible to most rural people or illiterate migrants. As ANC and Communist Party veteran Elias Motsoaledi noted, "They spoke in English – but English was not the

75. The argument on the institutional resources of the urban church follows Doug McAdam, Political Process and Black Insurgency (Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 1982), ch.6.

76. Gordon kaTyakwadi, The Development of the Political Party System in the Ciskei, M.A. Thesis, Rhodes University, 1978, pp.177-8, and Pauw, Report, op. cit.

language of the people."⁷⁷ Coertze linked limited media exposure in Atteridgeville in the 1950s to low political awareness:

"[O]nly a few individuals with whom we came into contact tried to keep up with the most important world events or could discuss the contents of important political speeches. Along with the comments of our informants, it was also our own independent conclusion that very few of the residents tried to keep up with or had a good knowledge of what was described to us as "higher politics": the successes and failures of leading figures among the Bantu in urban areas in their efforts to attain integration with whites. ... The influence of the above-mentioned publications still left the readers as spectators on the sidelines of the political arena."⁷⁸

Likewise, Gerhart notes, "Most rural born workers, having little or no formal education, found the workings of a modern economic system far beyond comprehension." She quotes East Rand activist Bopape: "It is regrettable to note that the African people as a whole do not understand the laws that contain the principles of color bar."⁷⁹

Isolation from the wider world was often partly the result of the quest for autonomy by small communities, and the intimacy of bonds within them. Hofmeyr tells how chiefs tried to "oralize" written documents from the white administration. "Such oralizing can be seen in things like an insistence on oral messenger and oral memory, as well as an attempt to subordinate literacy as the medium of ruling to institutions of public assembly, face-to-face assembly, and personal audience."⁸⁰ Similar effects resulted in urban areas from the inward-looking focus of churches and other township groups.⁸¹ Thus, despite problems such as police harassment, low pay, and day-to-day

77. Peter Delius, "Sebatakomo and the Zoutpansberg Balemi Association: the ANC, the Communist Party, and rural Organization, 19339-55," *Journal of African History*, vol. 34 (1993), p.308.

78. Coertze, *Atteridgeville*, *op. cit.*, p.370 (my translation for this and all other quotes from this source).

79. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, *op. cit.*, p.29.

80. Hofmeyr, "The Spoken Word," *op.cit.*, p.2.

81. Pauw, *The Second Generation*, *op. cit.*, p.175.

discrimination, for most blacks, there were few chances to learn about or act on the ties between the broader political world and their own lives before the mid-1960s. Rather, political thought and action centered more on strong personalities and local grievances than ideological themes.

IV. AMBIGUOUS OPPOSITION: BLACK POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

The character of organized black opposition in postwar South Africa reflected the relations prevailing within society and state, as well as activists' ideas and experiences. Despite the widespread impression of the ANC as a mass juggernaut in the 1950s, it was largely an alliance of local-level elites, much like other African and Latin American political movements. Involved in patrimonial politics and official structures even as it increasingly confronted the regime, its organization was localist and uneven, often paralyzed by role conflict. Colored politics centered on the franchise and local patronage, while small groups of intellectuals quarreled, ignored by the masses. Indian politics, too, mixed patronage with militancy.

The ANC, the principal African political organization, was the main national network of the African elite through the 1950s. It was established in 1912, two years after the white-ruled Union of South Africa was formed from four provinces: two former British colonies, the Cape of Good Hope and Natal, and two former Afrikaner republics, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. (Ironically, the ANC was created two years before the National Party, which would become its great antagonist.) In its

first decades, the ANC represented the educated middle class and the chiefs. The ANC practiced a politics of dignified petition and protest. Brief exceptions occurred when the Transvaal ANC leadership was caught up in social unrest on the Rand in 1920, and from 1926 to 1928 during the presidency of Josiah Gumede, who was close to the Communist Party.⁸² It reached its nadir in 1936, when it failed to resist the removal of Africans from the voters roll shared with white and colored in the Cape. The ANC was patiently revived in the 1940s by Dr. A.B. Xuma, though it remained essentially urban and elitist.⁸³

The ANC set a new course after the NP won the 1948 white election. Apartheid put the older notables on the defensive, while the militant ANC Youth League and Communist Party grew in influence, led by teachers and professionals, including Anton Lembede, A.P Mda, Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, and Nelson Mandela. Youth League-backed candidates won the movement's leadership at the 1949 ANC conference. They also pushed through a Program of Action calling for strikes and civil disobedience against apartheid and favoring African nationalism. During the 1950s, the ANC led protests and worked closely with the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) and the white Congress of Democrats. Activists of the banned South African Communist Party (SACP) were prominent in those groups, and to a lesser extent in the ANC.

Yet while the ANC developed a new protest repertoire and allies during the 1950s, its values and aims changed remarkably little. Both the younger white-collar and older

82. Philip Bonner, "The Transvaal Native Congress, 1917-1920: The Radicalization of the Petty Bourgeoisie on the Rand," in Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone, Industrialization and Social Change in South Africa (London, Longmans: 1982).

83. For instance, in Durban in 1946, the ANC still had under 200 members, most middle class. Iain Edwards, "Swing the Assegai Peacefully," Seminar Paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand.

notable segments of the elite were products of mission schooling and relatively privileged backgrounds. Christian values informed their political thinking and practices. As Glaser notes, "Although organizations such as the ANC and the Congress Youth League challenged hegemonic cultural notions of racial domination and supremacy, they simultaneously embraced most of the values of the dominant Western culture throughout the 1940s and 1950s: patriarchal family structures; reverence of education; disapproval of drugs, alcohol, and promiscuity; adherence to the law; respect for private property (though of course this did not apply to the Communists who had penetrated these organizations); revulsion of violence; a sense of living for the future rather than for the here-and-now; the work ethic."⁸⁴

Albert Luthuli, ANC President from 1950 to 1967, declared that he sought power-sharing with whites, not black rule. While he favored peaceful protest, this was more for the moral impact of suffering for a cause than its significance in power politics.⁸⁵ His view – "the road to freedom is through the cross" – was widely shared. Content analysis of speeches by national and branch ANC leaders during the 1950s showed that language extolling "a martyr-like passive-resistance demeanor" was the most frequently used. A typical example: "We the oppressed people are prepared to sacrifice with our bodies or blood if freedom should be achieved in that manner."⁸⁶ An

84. Clive Glaser, "Anti-Social Bandits: Culture, Resistance, and the Tsotsi Sub-culture on the Witwatersrand during the 1940s and 1950s," Seminar Paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, 1990, p.1.

85. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, *op. cit.*, p.68.

86. Only 20% used anti-white language, while just 11% suggested overt violence – and this was ANC rhetoric at its toughest. The speeches had been chosen by the government as evidence when it unsuccessfully charged 156 leading ANC figures with treason in 1956. Fatima Meer, "African Nationalism: Some Inhibiting Factors," in Heribert Adam, ed. South Africa: Sociological Perspectives (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1971), pp.141-44.

emphasis on racial partnership also appeared in the movement's program, the Freedom Charter, formulated in 1955. It proposed a democracy with safeguards for minority groups, social democratic policies, land reform, and public ownership of the country's "mineral wealth, banks, and monopoly industries." (Africanists criticized the document, feeling it reflected Communist influence and rejecting its affirmation that South Africa belonged to both black and white).⁸⁷ So despite the ANC's greater activism and programmatic clarity, it is hard to dispute Adam's view that it was more "a pressure group than a revolutionary movement."⁸⁸

Indeed, the ANC could be viewed as the aggregate of the local followings of "big men," more like the anti-colonial and populist movements elsewhere in the 1950s than a Western or Leninist party.⁸⁹ These leaders drew strength from addressing concerns of their followings, rather than broad ideological issues. Thus Lodge writes that "the movement was built on strong personal loyalties rather than bureaucratic control The extent to which the ANC interested itself in questions of everyday life was in the ultimate analysis more important in sustaining its support than its attitudes towards whites, socialism, or the Cold War."⁹⁰ For example, in Brakpan on the East Rand, the Advisory Board was controlled by Communists in the 1940s and the ANC in

87. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, *op. cit.*, pp.69-74.

88. Heribert Adam, Modernizing Racial Domination: South Africa's Political Dynamics (Berkeley, University of California: 1971), p.113.

89. For African examples, see Donal Cruise O'Brien's essay on rise of BDS in Senegal, in Saints and Politicians: Essays on Peasant Society in Senegal (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1975) and William Foltz, "Social Structure and Political Behavior of Senegalese Elites," Occasional Paper, Yale University, 1962. For Latin American ones, see Robert Kaufmann, "Corporatism, Clientelism, and Partisan Conflict," in Malloy, ed., Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America, *op. cit.*, and the discussion of populism in Touraine, La Parole et le Sang, *op. cit.*, Part III, ch.1.

90. Lodge, Black Politics, *op. cit.*, p.76.

the 1950s because of the standing, charisma, and following of school teachers who stood for the Board.⁹¹

In fact, in many places, ANC and SACP leaders sought key positions in the local patronage systems, with the access to resources, prestige, and social networks they offered. Copley pointed to the "great awakening" of Advisory Boards in the 1940s, as a new generation of populist leaders seized the opportunities they presented.⁹² Youth League calls for a boycott of ABs were consistently rejected. During the 1940s and 1950s, ANC and SACP members sat on or controlled Advisory Boards in major cities, including Brakpan, Benoni, and Germiston on the East Rand, Soweto, Atteridgeville, Nelspruit, Port Elizabeth, and East London. "This appeared to be a symptom of their popularity rather than their isolation," as Lodge puts it.⁹³ The figures involved were substantial men in their communities. Soweto AB members included ANC National Executive member and trade unionist Leslie Massina and the respected P.Q. Vundla, Brakpan's prominent activist David Bopape, and New Brighton's leading Communist and unionist Raymond Mhlaba. (Similarly, one of the ANC's rare rural bridgeheads, the North Sotho-speaking Sekhukuniland reserve in the Northern Transvaal, came through control of migrant workers' burial societies, the linchpins connecting homeboy networks

91. Hilary Sapire writes that "their attraction and strength lay not in their overall political program, but in their role as organizers of local opposition to municipal controls and as champions of the fast-eroding rights of location residents." "African Political Mobilization," *op.cit.*, pp.13-4.

92. Cited in Baines, "The Contradictions of Community Politics," *op. cit.*, p.1.

93. Lodge, *Black Politics*, *op. cit.*, p.78. See also Glaser, "Anti-Social Bandits," *op. cit.*, p.11, Sapire, "African Political Mobilization," *op. cit.*, Reyburn, *The Urban African*, *op. cit.*, Atkinson, *Cities and Citizenship*, *op. cit.*, pp.162-3, Baines, "The Contradictions of Community Politics," *op. cit.*, and Coertze, *Atteridgeville*, *op. cit.*

in Johannesburg hostels to clans in the villages.⁹⁴) Some activists combined help to individuals case-by-case with mass protest, like populists elsewhere.

The institutional and ANC elites not only overlapped; they also shared the political culture of the clientelist state. Noting "the ambiguous character of African opposition during the 1950s," Atkinson's study of East London points out that "both groups were products of patriarchalism, and hence their style of politics were often similar." She adds, "Significantly, there were important points of agreement between 'radical' political organizations (such as the ANC) and Advisory Boards. The implication of this is that the cleavage between the Boards and popular organizations was not unbridgeable (in contrast to the situation of the Black Local Authorities during the 1980s)."⁹⁵ Delius paints a similar picture of rural politics in this era. He cites the case of Moretsele, a chief's son from Sekhukuniland, Transvaal ANC treasurer, and the owner of a Johannesburg café where political meetings took place, cumulating traditional authority, political prestige, and modern resources. He also notes that as Sebatakomo, the rural protest movement in Sekhukuniland, grew in the 1950s by linking into village relationships, it became increasingly North Sotho-oriented in "political focus and flavor," representing less the communization of the countryside than the patrimonialization of the Party.⁹⁶

Organizationally, the ANC, too, had a weak center and strong periphery, like the South African state. With over 300 branches thinly spread over a country the size of the

94. See Delius, "Sebatakomo," *op. cit.*, pp.293-4, and "Migrants, Comrades, and Rural Revolt," *op. cit.*, p.9.

95. Atkinson, *Cities and Citizenship*, *op. cit.*, pp.175, 173.

96. Delius, "Migrants, Comrades, and Rural Revolt," *op. cit.*, pp.7,9, and "Sebatakomo," *op. cit.*, p.298.

U.S. east of the Mississippi, communicating mostly by mail, contact with local leaders was irregular and infrequent. The most detailed analysis of ANC structure in the 1950s, by Feit, concluded:

"Everything encouraged branch autonomy. Control by the higher bodies was largely lacking, and the paths followed by individual branches seem to have been left in the hands of individual branch committees. This meant, in effect, that where branches had a determined and able leadership they were active, whereas branches without such advantages were stagnant, sporadic, or else vanished entirely. ... The extent to which national policy was implemented depended, therefore, upon how well branch leaders understood that policy, and to the extent that it suited what they felt were their local needs."⁹⁷

Delius recently reached virtually identical conclusions. "Many of the rural branches appear to have rested heavily on the initiatives and interests of individual founding members."⁹⁸ The dominance of local leaders reinforced patrimonial politics, as Atkinson notes. "The role of the Advisory Board was strengthened by the distinctly localistic color of African populism during the 1950s. ... On the one hand, the emphasis on local grievances and goals suited the political style of the Advisory Board and strengthened its links with the ANC; on the other hand, this localism unintentionally sustained the ethos of patriarchy in the cities."⁹⁹

Impatience with the politics of accommodation led to the break-away of the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) from the ANC in April 1959.¹⁰⁰ Its leader was Robert Sobukwe, a 35-year-old African languages lecturer at Johannesburg's University of the

97. Edward Feit, Conflict and Communication: An Analysis of the Western Areas and Bantu Education Campaigns of the African National Congress, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Michigan, 1965, p.71.

98. Delius, "Sebatakgomo," op. cit., p.299.

99. Atkinson, Cities and Citizenship, op. cit., p.179.

100. This account is based on Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa, op. cit., ch.8., Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, op. cit., ch.9, Glaser, Anti-Social Bandits, op. cit., ch.5, and Muriel Horrell, Days of Crisis in South Africa (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations: 1960).

Witwatersrand. The PAC attracted those the ANC had neglected: youth, migrant workers, and poorly organized areas. At least in town: at every level, PAC members were ten years younger than their ANC counterparts. It was popular among younger African teachers, and through them connected to school pupil networks, particularly in the PWV and Cape Town regions.¹⁰¹ It won a much larger, informal following among *tsotsis*, the gangs of school dropouts, who were drawn to politics for the first time. Africanism's appeal to migrant laborers derived from rhetoric and social networks familiar to them, while the ANC was largely rooted in the ties and outlooks of permanently urbanized Africans. In other words, the PAC appealed to males on the lower rungs of the traditional and capitalist orders. Openings for the PAC were greatest in the Western Cape and the Vaal Triangle, with weak ANC structures, masses of jobless youth on the streets and a substantial migrant workforce. Migrant workers also spread PAC influence back from Cape Town to their Transkei homesteads.

The movement's leaders preached an exclusive African nationalism. Like Sobukwe, they were drawn from the Africanist faction in the ANC, hostile to the whites, Indians, and Communists in the Congress Alliance. The PAC's message was blunt: "If a white man will not obey an African, he must pack and go. African is for Africans alone."¹⁰² Its popularity reflected frustration with the ANC's moderation and non-violence. Sobukwe and his colleagues had long thought the masses so angry that only heroic leadership was needed for repressed rage to explode into mass uprising, and they

101. Their militant political attitudes were displayed in a survey by Edward Brett in 1960 of African students and young professionals. They preferred the PAC to the ANC (most strongly among school pupils) and felt violence to be both inevitable and likely to succeed. *African Attitudes* (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations: 1963), pp.57-62.

102. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, op. cit., p.218.

promised "freedom by 1963." For hot-blooded young men, unable to attain the work or status of adults, anti-white discourse and calls for action had a powerful attraction. "What the PAC was actually saying, or not saying," writes Gerhart, "was less important than the 'language' it was speaking, a language attuned to the mood of youth, in contrast to the more restrained accents of the ANC, 'an organization,' as one PAC man put it, 'of our fathers and mothers.'"¹⁰³ The same held for migrants, trapped by poverty and passes, and intellectuals attracted for more sophisticated reasons to the movement's romantic evocation of the African past.

While African politics was marked by exclusion from the central political system, the politics of the colored (mixed-race) minority (10% of the population in 1950) had revolved around it. In the Cape, where most of the colored population lived, colored men could vote for parliament under a qualified franchise and serve on provincial and municipal councils. Until the 1950s, in fact, the strongest force in colored politics was not the extra-parliamentary movements, but Smuts's old United Party, which consistently won solid colored support at the polls. Soon after taking power, the NP announced plans to remove the coloreds from the common voters roll, and did so in 1956. The years from 1948 to 1951 saw a wave of protest in the colored community of Cape Town against the tightening of segregation and the threat to the franchise, but resistance fizzled out in quarrels between the narrow circles of colored activists in the Communist Party, the African People's Organization (a decades-old and largely spent force), and the Unity Movement.¹⁰⁴

103. *ibid.*, p.222.

104. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945*, *op. cit.*, pp.39-40.

The Unity Movement was the most important extra-parliamentary group in the colored community.¹⁰⁵ Its principal bases included a section of the teachers – highly influential in the colored community – organized in the Teachers League of SA, along with colored sport administrators (often the same people, due to the role of schools as sport centers). Organized around Marxist educational and cultural activities, it preached boycotting all government-created representative bodies and segregated institutions. Yet while the UM was the most important force among the colored intelligentsia, and enjoyed some support among Cape African teachers, it was largely isolated from the masses by its elitism and rigid boycott position. At the local level, colored politics centered on non-partisan Ratepayers Associations, which acted as support-building patronage organizations for politicians standing for city councils, connecting with other local groups and clan networks within their neighborhoods.¹⁰⁶

The politics of the Indian minority, 4% of the population in 1960, differed somewhat from that of the coloreds in direction and militancy. Concentrated in Natal province, it included a Hindu majority mostly descended from indentured cane-cutters who had immigrated in the 19th century, and a Moslem minority who came as traders, along with a small but fast-growing professional stratum drawn from both groups. Political organization among Indians began in 1896, when the future Mahatma Gandhi founded the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) to struggle against discriminatory measures imposed by Natal's white minority government. After Gandhi's return to India in 1923, communal life was dominated by the conservative, ethnically-oriented trader segment of

105. Linda Chisholm, "Education, Politics, and Organization: The Educational Traditions and Legacies of the Non-European Unity Movement, 1943-86," *Transformation*, no. 15 (1991).

106. I owe this point to Jeremy Seekings.

the elite, which formed the Natal Indian Organization. However, in 1945, a revitalized and radicalized NIC, led by Communists and Gandhians, waged a passive resistance campaign against anti-Indian legislation, which helped inspire the ANC's Defiance Campaign. When government offered Indians two MPs on a separate voters' roll in the 1948 elections, the NIC also organized a successful boycott of the polls. The 1947 "Doctors Pact" between ANC and NIC leaders signaled a convergence between the two groups, formalized in the Congress Alliance of the 1950s. However, while the NIC dominated organized politics, many Indians remained poised between its commitment to non-racialism and the ethnocentrism of the trader/religious elite. Racial tensions were deepened by the legacy of the days when Africans rioted in some Indian sections of Durban in 1949.

The major organized opposition movements, thus, were marked by the same clientelism, elitism, and localism that characterized the state and political society generally. These factors were connected to the ambivalence in the leadership of such movements, opposing government policy yet without aspiring to topple the regime, much less their own position as community pillars. The involvement of ANC (and other) figures in patrimonial relations was the great unmentionable, a hidden transcript jarring with their resolutely modern public discourse, yet it was also the secret that largely animated the movement. In other words, ambiguity in black politics was a consequence both of structures and of values existing within the black communities. The exceptions – notably the PAC – sought to rally those excluded by the accommodations and the overlapping systems of authority that ordered black communities, but still operated within the same polarities and universe of discourse.

V. POLITICAL CULTURE IN A SYNCRETIC SOCIETY

Together, the public-private relation, the nature of the public sphere, and the values and practices of opposition all help mould the political culture of dominated groups. They influence the content of the hidden transcripts that circulate among them, the submerged networks through which these flow to define sub-cultures, and the shape of the free spaces that allow public interaction.¹⁰⁷ The resulting identities and understandings of community frame the possibilities of collective action. In South Africa, linkages between the public and private spheres were mediated by notable-run clientelism and professional corporatism; a narrow public sphere, largely limited to the middle classes, was associated with weak public opinion; and the values and practices of the opposition were liberalism, patronage, and populism. The black middle class constructed a political identity that reflected its ambivalent self-understanding. This involved assimilationism and shame about its own adhesion to traditional values. The black popular classes built their own political culture based on patrimonialism and localism, a mix of vibrant local identities, ethnic and racial stereotypes, and a sense of inferiority before whites. The social order enjoyed considerable legitimacy thanks to the synthesis of patrimonial and market discourses. Conceptions of citizenship also

¹⁰⁷. These themes are discussed in detail in Chapter One.

remained distinct, the middle classes' remaining narrow and oriented towards power-sharing with whites, the popular classes' parochially focused on local communities.

The best-known trait of the political culture of South Africa's black middle classes until the mid-1960s was their desire for assimilation into white society. They blamed the vanquished status of Africans on popular folkways, seeking freedom and power in European culture and techniques.¹⁰⁸ The values of middle-class Africans were deeply marked by faith in gradual change through co-operation with white liberals, reflecting the teachings of English-speaking mission churches and church school education. The hegemony of Western values and the legitimacy of the social order in this group were strikingly demonstrated by a study conducted between 1939 and 1956, which involved over 1,000 educated Africans. Asked how they would react to various conflicts, they overwhelmingly favored Western ethical, legal, and Christian norms, repudiating tribal attitudes, compliance through fear, or non-compliance. Biesheuvel, the investigator, wrote, "On the whole, one finds remarkably little conflict in the minds of educated Africans concerning Western values, and except in the cases [of racial discrimination], no unwillingness to accept these values as the basis for individual conduct, nor to accept the machinery of law as indispensable to social order and good government." Indian intellectuals also identified with Europeans (though they, too, resented segregation).¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the powerful attraction which the dominant white group held for the black middle class was underlined by their view of whites as a reference group. White fashions and houses were in vogue among them; so were hair straighteners and skin-lighteners. In middle-class homes, it was a severe reproach to

108. Meer, "African Nationalism," *op. cit.*

109. Kuper, *Indian People*, *op. cit.*, p.72.

say, "Whites don't do that." Among the elite of one Reef township in this era, only two lecture topics drew full houses: politics – and white manners.¹¹⁰

Middle class striving for whiteness was linked to a sense of class distinction. Mayer reported that "the better-off element in Soweto ... did not identify with the working masses (except for a few politically motivated intellectuals)." A 35-year-old teacher told him, "There is a class distinction between the rich and the poor. It is automatic."¹¹¹ The friends of African teachers and nurses were generally other professionals. Members of the petite bourgeoisie were horrified at being treated like "ordinary folk" when police raided rent defaulters. African nurses were reported to be more hostile to working-class Africans than to whites, while African social workers preferred socializing with white supervisors to African workers. "We feel out of place with the ordinary laborer," one said.¹¹²

The middle classes' rigid class attitudes were probably related to the limited social mobility prevalent before the 1960s. Some 55 of 60 members of Brandel-Syrier's "Reeftown Elite" had professional, salesman, clerk, or businessman fathers. Likewise, Kuper reported that members of the African petite bourgeoisie in Durban were ten to thirty times likelier to have had professional fathers than the African population at large.¹¹³ Most of the few blacks who got to secondary school or university up to the

110. Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, *op. cit.*, pp.113, 227, Brandel-Syrier, Reeftown Elite, *op. cit.*, p.101, 51, and Wilson and Mafeje, Langa, *op. cit.*, p.145.

111. Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes (Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council: 1979), pp.33, 92-3.

112. Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, *op. cit.*, pp. 107,223, and Brandel-Syrier, Reeftown Elite, *op. cit.*, pp.96,58.

113. Brandel-Syrier, Reeftown Elite, *op. cit.*, p.96 and Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, *op. cit.*, pp.430-31.

1960s also came from middle class families.¹¹⁴ The closed character of the middle classes was shown in marriage, too: their spouses were also middle class.¹¹⁵

The outlook of middle-class youth reflected in part the middle-class subculture of which they were a part. Church and rural mission schools kept them under white control and off the streets. Like their parents, if they became politically involved, it was in the ANC, though its Youth League.¹¹⁶ However, they were also subject to many cultural currents touching other township youth – in dress, the mass media, etc – and they, too, shared the *tsotsis'* anger and impatience with the status quo. In consequence, middle-class youth balanced between two sub-cultures: the respectable world of their parents, and the *tsotsi* world of their age-mates.

Yet despite class exclusivity, the middle classes were bound to others by kin, ethnic, and patrimonial ties. The middle classes made exceptions to their snobbery for lower-class kin and homeboys. Relationships with them were reinforced by the contact ensured between the middle and working classes by legal racial segregation.¹¹⁷ Even the educated, Westernized, white-collar group also practiced traditional male initiation and *lobola*, and they were as likely as the uneducated to believe in the power of the ancestors.¹¹⁸

114. See the work of P.A.W. Cook, cited in Peter Kallaway, ed., *Apartheid and Education* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1984).

115. Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie*, *op. cit.*, p.230, and Brandel-Syrier, *Reeftown Elite*, *op. cit.*, pp.83, 241.

116. Clive Glaser. "Students, Tsotsis, and the Congress Youth League," B.A. Honors thesis, Wits University, Johannesburg, 1986.

117. "As for social exclusiveness, family ties were supposed to be immune, and often were. A relative who had risen remained bound to his lower-status kin in the scheme of traditional observances and values. ... But it was also noticed that class did affect social mixing, even among relatives." Mayer, *Soweto People*, *op. cit.*, p.92. See also Pauw, *The Second Generation*, *op. cit.*, p.179.

118. *ibid.*, p.59, and Pauw, *Report on Bantu Christians*, p.206.

Such attitudes were more than vestiges of the past: they reflected patrimonial relations involving major investments of resources and influence in participants' lives. Adolescent initiation involved weeks of traditional education (and frequently, painful circumcision). *Lobola* made grooms pay months or years of savings to their brides' families, allying the two lineages and creating obligations of redistribution to poorer relations. Belief in ancestral spirits formed the apex of the lineage system: ancestors who had lived on land established their descendants' claim to it, while elders' power derived from their position as the closest surviving family members to the ancestors.¹¹⁹ Alongside Christian practice, the middle classes also made ritual sacrifices of expensive animals and followed other customs intended to propitiate ancestors and mark rites of passage. Such relations reflected the traditional networks of obligation in which they participated, and provided models for neo-traditional forms of clientelism. Thus, for example, Sherwood's survey of African government clerks found that they endorsed middle class values of hard work and sobriety, yet departed from the Weberian ideal of impartial civil servants in their favoritism towards kin and lack of impersonality.¹²⁰

Tension between class and community values generated "culture shame" in many middle-class blacks. Mayer wrote:

"There were often traces of 'negative identity' when educated Soweto people spoke about Western civilization. ... Anxiously uncertain whether blacks would ever be able to catch up with whites, people would speak of 'narrowing the gap. ... The educated often referred to their 'inferiority complexes'"

119. On the significance of *lobola* and the ancestor cult, see Meillassoux, Maidens, Meals, and Money, op. cit.

120. Rae Sherwood, "The Bantu Clerk: A Study of Role Expectations," Journal of Social Psychology, vol.47 (1958).

One Sowetan said, "The Europeans have brought [civilization] to us, and therefore, for historical reasons, they are more advanced than us. They are still superior to us in all fields." Another said, "For us to become truly civilized requires the closest imitation of the Western style in manners, morals and values, the abandonment of all superstitions and witchcraft, and of our traditional attire which was nearly nudism."¹²¹ Likewise, Brett found that among educated young Africans, only a small minority of intellectuals viewed tribal custom favorably, largely for nationalist reasons.¹²² Generally, the African middle class viewed African art and culture with disinterest. (Revealingly, writer Nat Nakasa proclaimed he had more to say to a white Afrikaner than a visiting Nigerian.)¹²³

In terms of collective identity, the political culture of the black popular classes was extremely diverse. Within a huge diversity of localized networks, discourses circulated, some patrimonial, some Western-oriented. Often more than one could be found together, reflecting the syncretic consciousness of individuals and groups.

Coertze's comment on Atteridgeville applies more widely:

"What we have to do with here is not a highly-integrated social unit that serves as a basis for the construction of political power structures. There is just an arbitrarily thrown-together group of residents who show little homogeneity in ways of life and language. There is only a weakly-developed consciousness of themselves as a specific group."¹²⁴

This culture was the product of influences from above and below.

121. Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, pp.157-8. See also Pierre van den Berghe, South Africa: A Study in Conflict (Berkeley, University of California: 1965), p.232, and Meer, "African Nationalism," *op. cit.*

122. Brett, African Attitudes, *op. cit.*, p.11.

123. Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, *op. cit.*, p.74, Brandel-Syrier, Reeftown Elite, *op. cit.*, p.93, and Nat Nakasa, The World of Nat Nakasa, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1975), p.FIND PG #.

124. Coertze, Atteridgeville, *op. cit.*, p.288.

A cacophony of patrimonial discourses was voiced within black communities. In rural areas, kinship ties still dominated social relations.¹²⁵ The dominant discourse was a patriarchal one of respect for age, gender hierarchy, and reciprocity. This was extended to town by migrants' homeboy networks, which maintained rurally-oriented identities, particularly among workers isolated in township hostels or the compounds set up for migrants around the mines. Undercurrents of tension between hostel-dwellers and the more sophisticated city residents occasionally flared into assaults, gang warfare, or disorders, like the clashes that broke out between residents of Dube Hostel and surrounding areas of Soweto in 1957. While permanent urban residents were more open to new associations, they, too, aided clan members who had come to town, extending lineage ties to them through "pseudo-kin" discourse (calling them "sister," "father," etc.) that re-valued clan association.¹²⁶ Even among permanent town dwellers, the language used revealed how older relationships were inlaid into new ones. Forms of address normally used for elders were also applied to young professionals, while at 1950s weddings, bards would sing the praises of the educated as if they were chiefs.¹²⁷ These neo-traditional discourses were expressions of the neo-traditional practices of clientelism prevailing.

125. "In short," Pauw wrote, "the social network remains essentially close-knit." The Second Generation, op. cit., p.195.

126. Manona's work on Grahamstown shows how the kinship discourse was adapted to integrate newcomers from the same clan. "Whereas in the past members of the same clan had a fairly casual relationship and were expected to give hospitality to each other when necessary, present [urban] circumstances give clan membership greater significance. In a classificatory kinship system ordinary clansmen can be turned into close relatives through a process of putative or fictive kinship. It becomes easy to extend terms which are normally used for close kinsmen – like father, mother, daughter, son-in-law – to those members of one's clan on whom you count." Manona, "Small Town Urbanization," op.cit., p.103.

127. Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, op. cit., pp.124-5, and Brandel-Syrier, Reeftown Elite, op.cit., pp.96, 119.

Particularistic relationships also prevailed in the separatist African churches, growing rapidly during the postwar era. Centered on faith-healing and witchcraft, for many city dwellers they filled a social vacuum left by the decline of the chiefs' authority. Church leaders took their place, re-arranging families into tightly-knit units that encapsulated the private lives of their followers. These churches deliberately kept their followers out of the public sphere, accepting apartheid.¹²⁸ Even adherents of missionary or mainline churches among the masses lived a syncretic religious existence. Most continued to accept the ancestor cult in their private lives, with the values and power relations implied, while universalistic Christian discourse governed public relations with other church members.¹²⁹

Another, powerful form of identity centered on ethnic, linguistic, or racial distinction. These discourses were presented as outgrowth of patrimonial relations: the discourse of "kith and kin" stretched from the lineage to ethnic, linguistic, or racial groups through a common ancestry and past, real or mythical. In this way, ideas and practices emphasizing lineage or clan solidarities, such as *lobola*, initiation, or the ancestor cult, also expressed ethnic solidarities. Much the same was true of the neighborhoods, friendship networks, and voluntary associations working-class Africans formed, often on geographic, linguistic, and tribal lines. (So important were these networks that in Atteridgeville, even among the second generation in town, showed that

128. The classic source on these churches is Bengt Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa (London, Oxford University Press: 1961). See also Philip Mayer, "Religion and Social Control in a South African Township," in Heribert Adam, South Africa: Sociological Perspectives. *op. cit.*

129. Pauw found that only 7% of his urban sample in East London did not adhere to the cult. Report, *op. cit.*, pp.194-5. See also Mayer, "Origin and Decline," *op. cit.*, pp.32-3, and Soweto People, *op. cit.*, p.201-05.

most knew little about neighbors belonging to other tribal groups.)¹³⁰ Such bonds were reinforced by activities organized by tribal authorities. The annual celebrations of the Xhosa-speaking Mfengu and Rharhabe groups in and around East London offer an example. Pauw argues that these factors kept alive a consciousness, albeit latent, of past tensions between the sub-divisions in each ethnic group, while towards other Africans, they maintained an awareness of difference and a degree of disdain.¹³¹ (Something similar occurred among South African Indians, where horizontal castes fused into a vertical hierarchy of ethno-linguistic and status groups.¹³²) So pervasive and mutually reinforcing were the various patrimonial values and practices – the traditional and neo-traditional aspects of family life, religious activity, and ethnic identity – that Mayer dubbed them "the old Black Consciousness."¹³³

Tension between members of different racial and ethnic groups made stereotyping a prominent cultural feature. These stereotypes were premised on a normative discourse regarding white, Western, capitalist culture as superior. For blacks, the result was cultural shame and self contempt. Although the "old Black Consciousness" was widespread, so was ambivalence about it. Sowetans professed scorn for African customs and "old fashioned" beliefs. Yet the more they insisted on the

130. Coertze, Atteridgeville, *op. cit.*, p.368.

131. "The long-standing hostility between Xhosa and Mfengu has not quite disappeared, even among the townspeople. There is not much open tension, ... but Xhosa townspeople often still regard the Mfengu with suspicion. ... As regards attitudes to other tribes and ethnic groups, there is awareness of linguistic and cultural differences where these exist, and sometimes a degree of disdain." Pauw, The Second Generation, *op. cit.*, p.183.

132. Privileged Gujarati-speakers could be distinguished from the largely working-class Telugu, Tamil, and Hindi groups. Kuper, Indian People, *op. cit.*, pp.39-40, 60. The Hindu-Muslim divide also ran deep among Indians, like the Christian-Muslim split among coloreds

133. Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*

modernity of their material culture — brick houses, European dress, and the like — the more they betrayed anxiety about it. "In 1965 we found Soweto blacks still caught in a painful dilemma, complaining that whites regarded them as culturally inferior and yet admitting that they were," Mayer wrote.¹³⁴ A tendency to "play the fool" before whites reflected such internalized prejudices. Gerhart noted: "For many Africans, the only way to cope with the brutality of race relations and with the cultural disorientation of the urban adjustment was to internalize the role and personality which white stereotyped perceptions imposed, that of the stupid but good-natured child, dependent on superior white 'parents' for constant guidance."¹³⁵

Similar attitudes were noted among coloreds in Cape Town by Stone: "Lower-class coloreds have tended to view themselves as the dependent, outcast stepchildren of the whites, and to bewail their rejection by whites. ... Negroid elements are denigrated and white aspects idealized."¹³⁶ Finally, both Indians and coloreds looked on Africans with fear and disdain¹³⁷. Africans, for their part, resented these middlemen — strongly, in the case of Indians, perceived as aliens, less so in the case of coloreds, towards whom a degree of kinship was felt.

Self-contempt among blacks went together with admiration for whites, particularly English-speakers. A distinction was made between Afrikaners, seen as

134. *ibid.*, pp.155, 165.

135. Gerhart, *Black Politics*, *op. cit.*, p.31.

136. Gerald Stone, "Identity Among Lower-Class Cape Coloreds," in Michael Whisson and Hendrick van der Merwe, *Colored Citizenship in South Africa* (Cape Town, Abe Bailey Institute of Interracial Studies: 1972).

137. Among coloreds, van den Berghe wrote, "prejudice among Africans has prevented ... a rapprochement, while the internalized feeling of racial inferiority vis-a-vis the whites, and the adoption of racial criteria of status within the colored community have deeply undermined the self-respect of that group, and further enhanced its color-consciousness." *South Africa*, *op. cit.*, p.160.

ignorant bigots responsible for apartheid by electing the NP government, and English-speakers, who were seen as employers, liberal, tolerant, and fair. (This was also how the English-speakers saw things.) Mayer comments:

"This distinction seems to have played a critical part in preventing total black-white polarization and confrontation. For the postulated contrast between the 'good' English and Jews and 'cruel' Afrikaners seems to have served, in the case of many working people, as a barrier against a fusion of the [market-based] class and [racism-based] pariah models [of South African society.] In 1965, while acutely aware both of their low wages presumably paid by Englishmen and of their pariah status in the wider system (dominated by Afrikaners) somehow they didn't seem to put two and two together. They did not blame the low wages on the wider system and the way it loads things in their employers' favor."¹³⁸

Rather than blaming apartheid for their poverty, blacks blamed themselves (for ignorance, laziness, etc.) Thus, while black workers held racial and ethnic stereotypes, politically one could "speak of a lack of political awareness or even lack of political sense. At this level, they seemed willing to see themselves in the role of a normal working class in a capitalist system, and to ignore their abnormal position as unfree labor."¹³⁹

Thus, despite anger at racial discrimination, the broader social order was legitimated syncretically, through discourses describing the articulation of traditional and modern social relations. Glaser notes:

"[I]t is dangerous, particularly before the 1960s, to underestimate the extent to which the hierarchical order was maintained through the cultural elements of hegemony. ... [C]ommon ideological threads in mainstream Witwatersrand [African] culture throughout the 1940s and 1950s can be listed as follows: adherence to the law (albeit often reluctantly and with striking exceptions in the cases of pass and beer brewing laws); respect for private property; rejection of

138. Mayer, *Soweto People*, *op. cit.*, p.31. On similar attitudes among coloreds, see Stone, "Identity," *op. cit.*, p.33.

139. *ibid.* p.32. Mayer adds, "References in previous literature suggest that the images of 'Boer' and English which I have described for Soweto in 1965 were much the same as had existed for many years," *ibid.* p.34.

violence; acceptance of the work ethic; respect for schooling and education; patriarchal family arrangements; respect for elders; prudent living for the future; adherence to religion whether in the form of Christianity, ancestor worship, or hybrid faiths."¹⁴⁰

Likewise, in rural areas, the persistence of chieftaincy and lineage-type forms reflected a response to the state bureaucracy and industrialization by adapting older discourses and relations.

While these discourses helped legitimize the status quo, they were not mere mystifications. White domination and black poverty were keenly decried – but in private narratives of misfortune circulating locally, without causal connections. Popular responses to these problems were usually individualistic rather than collective, framed in the language and practice of patrimonial relations. This reflected the outlooks of subordinate groups and the consciousness-lowering impact of the patronage linkages they maintained with more powerful elements. Gluckman's work on Zululand revealed how subordinates (women, young men, and commoners) skillfully played off chiefs against white administrators.¹⁴¹ Such phenomena led Beinart to conclude that "the metaphor of articulation has some value if it is turned on its head – that is, if the balance of power between articulating forces is reconsidered and greater allowance is made for changes in the African communities, and for analysis of politics and consciousness." In this view, the preservation and extension of lineage-type relations through migrant labor was as much the choice of Africans as of mineowners.¹⁴² Likewise, Mayer described

140. Glaser, "Anti-Social Bandits," *op.cit.*, pp.5, 8.

141. "The Zulu were constantly comparing black and white political officers and switching their allegiance according to what was to their own advantage, or by what values they were being guided on different occasions." Gluckman, "The Bonds," *op. cit.*, p.159.

142. Beinart, "Chieftaincy," *op. cit.*, p.93. Elsewhere he adds, "Through such networks, workers could retain contact with home and establish defensive structures at work. ... It is arguable that in the earlier

how members belonged to separatist churches, because, while insulating them from the larger community, they formed a refuge from its anomie.¹⁴³ In short, traditionalist relations, while involving subordination, also involved negotiation over identity, resources, and valued social ties.

One group – urban black working-class youth – did not share in the value consensus of this era. Educated, jobless township youth suffered both traditional (age-based) and modern (market-related) subordination. While their parents worked, urban African adolescents (particularly young men) developed their own world and codes in the *tsotsi* subculture. *Tsotsis* were youth gangs growing out of neighborhood friendship networks, which included most urban school dropouts.¹⁴⁴ (Similar groups among coloreds were known as *skollies*.) They inverted the dominant cultural values, rejecting elders' authority, the work ethic, manners, delayed gratification, and sexual restraint. The gangs detested middle-class, "scuze-me" africans: what they wanted, they took. *Tsotsis* had their own styles – in the 1950s, narrow-brimmed hats and wide-legged trousers – and their own language, *tsotsitaal*, based on Afrikaans. Tensions between *tsotsis* and their elders sometimes became violent, as in East London's East Bank township in 1958, when grown men first attacked gangsters, then any young males.¹⁴⁵

Despite the existence of marked generational tension, however, urban youth

phases of South African industrialization, particularist association at work made self-protection and organization possible, rather than constrained them," "Worker Consciousness," *op. cit.*, p.289.

143. Mayer, "Religion and Social Control," *op. cit.*, p.178. Stone notes parallels among colored religious sects. "Identity," *op. cit.*, p.39.

144. This account draws on Glaser, "Anti-Social Bandits," *op. cit.*, p.15, and Gerhart, *Black Politics*, *op. cit.*, p.224ff, and Jeffrey, *Cultural Trends*, *op. cit.*, on African gangs, and Stone, "Identity," *op. cit.*, p.30ff, on colored gangs.

145. Pauw, *The Second Generation*, *op. cit.*, p.57-8.

remained atomized rebels without a cause. As noted above, they were little involved in politics before the rise of the PAC. (During the 1950s, their political role was limited to occasionally adding muscle to the enforcement of boycotts and protests.) Their political views were unsophisticated and based on experience of poverty, discrimination, and white power. "For the most part," Glaser writes, "*tsotsi* cultural resistance was unarticulated, incoherent, inconsistent. It was gut level and angry."¹⁴⁶ (In the rural areas, *tsotsi* sub-culture had only limited impact. Schooling remained scarce in the country, while traditional education, stick fighting and age groups, prepared young people for lives revolving around chieftaincy and migrancy. However, groups of primary-schooled youths called *indlavini* mimicked the *tsotsi* subculture in some respects.)¹⁴⁷

Turning to the conceptions of citizenship and community within black political culture, those of the middle classes were elitist and qualified. The assimilationist perspective of middle class blacks implied political objectives limited to power-sharing with whites, expressed by the ANC. As Gerhart puts it:

"[T]he great majority of educated Africans, through the 1940s and beyond, continued to adhere to a basically liberal conception of social and political goals as well as to an evolutionary view of change. What most Westernized Africans wanted ... was the fulfillment of the paternalistic promises of trusteeship: unfettered opportunity to assimilate European culture and learn modern skills, opportunity to demonstrate African competence and to be accepted, however gradually, as equals in a common, competitive society. The right of whites to lead the way was generally assumed: the African sought simply the right to be included as a 'junior partner' in the white man's ruling councils, until such time as he was ready to play his full part as an equal."¹⁴⁸

146. Glaser, Anti-Social Bandits, op. cit., p.206.

147. Mayer, "Origins and Decline of Two Resistance Ideologies," op. cit., p.59.

148. Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa, op. cit., p.38. See also Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, op. cit., p.68.

In surveys, many middle-class Africans supported basing voting rights on education, disfranchising most blacks.¹⁴⁹

Similar attitudes were widespread in colored and Indian communities. Among coloreds, the principal issue in the 1950s was retaining the qualified, non-racial franchise, underlining the centrality of the discourse of assimilation. The Indian elite, for its part, split into two wings. One was collaborationist, inward-looking and compromise oriented, led by high-caste property-owners and represented politically in the Natal Indian Organization. The other elite group, ascendant from the mid-1940s, was composed of outward-looking professionals and trade unionists, organized in the Natal Indian Congress, a body allied to the ANC and influenced by the Communist Party.¹⁵⁰ Although the years after 1948, which marked the rupture of the accommodations that had largely marked relations between the black and white elites, saw the black elite increasingly come to endorse militant means of protest, they did not shift towards radical ends.

Mass conceptions of community were marked by the localism of collective vision and action. The narrow horizons of rural politics struck many observers. Lodge says that though rural conflict was widespread between 1940 and 1965, "it was largely a parochial affair." Kotze, applying Almond and Verba's categories to the Transkei's political culture, characterized it as "largely parochial with very limited participant

149. A majority of African teachers surveyed in Durban in 1960 preferred qualified to universal franchise. Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie*, *op. cit.*, pp.178-9. Analysis of essays written by young educated Africans in 1961-62 found that one-third chose the same option. Lawrence Schlemmer, "Black Attitudes: Adaptation and Reaction," in F.M. Orkin and S.E. Welz, eds., *Society in Southern Africa, 1975-1978* (Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press: 1979).

150. Kuper, *Indian People*, *op. cit.*, pp.51ff.

orientations."¹⁵¹ Concern about the bureaucratic role of chiefs and migrant labor did not transform a world-view shaped by the lineage order, patrimonial discourse, and local concerns into nationalism, as Beinart notes:

"It cannot be assumed that rural people in the earlier decades of this century saw [political unity] as their paramount aim. The evidence suggests that their political responses were often particularist and often separatist. Though aware of the system which gave rise to their grievances, they tried to establish local autonomy rather than to challenge and capture the state. They were not necessarily available for nationalist struggles, or class alliances which sought equal rights within the country as a whole."¹⁵²

Similarly, describing the growth of Sebatakgomo in the Northern Transvaal, Delius notes a "significant section of the membership believed that national issues were of doubtful importance and that 'we are only talking about Sekhukuniland, that is our own place."¹⁵³

Urban political culture, too, tended to be parochial and personalist, centered on patronage, individual followings, and local demands. In Atteridgeville, Coertze wrote, "support for a particular party had more to do with the following of persons than support for particular party principles. Whenever a leading figure from one faction goes over to the other, a group of personal followers goes together with him."¹⁵⁴ Awareness of elite politics, such as debates within the ANC, was limited to the small literate stratum, reflecting the narrowness of the public sphere. Coertze notes:

"We were told that the objectives of the ANC are consciously kept out of township politics because the average resident has no understanding of the 'bigger issues' and 'higher politics' in which the movement is involved. The

151. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945, op. cit., p.290 and Kooze, Traditionalism, op. cit.

152. Beinart, "Chieftaincy," op. cit., p.95.

153. Delius, "Migrants, Comrades, and Rural Revolt," op. cit., p.9.

154. Coertze, Atteridgeville, op. cit., pp.323-4.

purposes of the ANC, our informants stated, can only be understood by educated people such as teachers, municipal clerks and others who are concerned with more than local affairs and regularly read their newspaper. ... Between the aspirations of the leaders and the disposition of the residents, there is a decided gap."¹⁵⁵

Although frustration at poverty and discrimination exploded into riot at times, and political awareness varied within the popular classes, on the whole conceptions of community among black South Africans were limited and narrow before the 1960s.

The nationalist sentiment existing in urban black communities in the 1950s was weak, overlaid on more local loyalties. Pauw noted that in East London, "The attitude of the majority of townspeople towards the contrast between tribalism and an inclusive Bantu nationalism is one of compromise: the ideal of the different tribal groupings moving closer together finds considerable support, but a significant degree of tribal consciousness and pride is retained."¹⁵⁶ Likewise, Coertze noted a broader vision of a South African fatherland in Atteridgeville, but ethno-linguistic identities remained powerful.¹⁵⁷ Beinart describes how a 1950s ANC activist synthesised nationalist and parochial outlooks, much as others syncretically combined modern and traditional religion. His "shift to broader nationalist and class-conscious positions in the 1950s ... was by no means a total turnabout. He took with him some of the ideas, values, and networks that had been central to his previous experience; these were overlaid with, or meshed with, his newly developing political ideas."¹⁵⁸ Moreover, the "nationalism"

155. *ibid.*, p.374.

156. Pauw, *The Second Generation*, *op. cit.*, p.180.

157. Coertze, *Atteridgeville*, *op. cit.*, p.368.

158. Beinart, "Worker Consciousness," *op. cit.*, p.307.

referred to above was African nationalism. It was neither an inclusive black nationalism (bringing together coloreds, Indians, and Africans) or an inclusive South Africanism for all races. (If coloreds and Indians had "nationalist" aspirations, these were for integration into the white South African nation.)

The political culture of black South Africa before the mid-1960s was thus highly compartmentalized by class, locality, personal loyalties, language, and race. Middle-class culture was marked by assimilationism and elitism, that of the popular classes by personalism and localism, while cultural shame and ethnocentrism were shared by all. A weak sense of African national consciousness was overlaid on particularistic loyalties, while radical ideologies of social change found few supporters. These characteristics of the political culture, and the structures, practices, and values that helped produce them, had a profound influence on the nature of mass mobilization and the capacity for social transformation existing in black communities.

VI. PATRONIZED PROTEST, MOBILIZATION, AND REPRESSION

The postwar era saw black popular mobilizations of an unprecedented scale and vigor, but protest was neither widespread nor radical enough to represent a real menace to the South African regime. Centered on elite personalities, many themselves compromised with the system or willing to, they activated the leaders' followings and connections. Militant local subsistence struggles, while intense, were limited in scope

and duration. National protest campaigns knitted together the supporters of local elites, mobilizing through their networks and loyalties more than through issues. The result was a response that was unequal, spasmodic, and largely urban. It could hardly have been otherwise, given the organizational, leadership, and strategic weaknesses of the ANC and other black groups. The type of collective response engendered by populist protest, like that in AB elections, is what Touraine termed "participation without representation": mobilization centered on personalities and identities, unmediated by parties and ideologies. Tilly has characterized these types of protest collective action as the "old" repertoire of collective action characteristic of pre-modern Europe, patronized in character and parochial in orientation, in contrast with the nationally-oriented action, divorced from older elites, which marked more modern forms of protest.^{158a} The 1960 Sharpeville crisis, the greatest 1950s-style protest, also demonstrated its limitations -- while foreshadowing certain phenomena that allowed 1970s protest to transcend them.

The story of black South African politics in the 1950s is conventionally told as a series of mobilizations and protests organized by the ANC as part of the national struggle against the apartheid regime. It begins with the 1950 May Day strikes against the banning of the Communist Party and the 1952 Defiance Campaign of civil disobedience against apartheid legislation, which marked the ANC's shift from an elite to a mass party. These were followed by a series of single-issue campaigns. Those in urban areas including opposition to removals and Bantu Education, as well as general strikes in 1957 and 1958. Rural resistance included women's opposition to the extension of the internal passport laws to them and conflicts around cattle culling and grazing land fencing under "betterment" schemes. Resistance to apartheid reached a crescendo in the Sharpeville crisis, before pitiless repression crushed it.

Yet the protests of the 1950s must be kept in perspective. They were poorly coordinated and symbolic actions, rather than a strategically-developed threat to the regime. The Defiance Campaign resulted in just 7,000 arrests, of which more than two-thirds took place in the towns of the Eastern Cape, the ANC's heartland.¹⁵⁹ The movements against the imposition of passes on women, the establishment of Bantu Education, and forced removals of blacks were localized, limited to a few areas.¹⁶⁰ While the general strikes received substantial if varying responses in Port Elizabeth, Durban, and Johannesburg, they involved only minorities of the African non-farm workforce, and rather small minorities of the total non-farm workforce.¹⁶¹ ANC membership peaked at 100,000 after the Defiance Campaign, but it plunged by two-thirds within a year, nearing its peak only at end.¹⁶² So no more than 1-2% of adult Africans ever belonged to the ANC in this era (though its influence stretched well beyond its membership). In short, as Meer writes, the image of massive resistance "ready for the final plunge" can only be "observed by abstracting the motifs of rebellion scattered through a tapestry, which otherwise speaks of reasonable peace and quiet."¹⁶³

When it did occur, the force of collective action emerged from civil society, through the mobilization of concerns and networks in specific areas or groups, more

158a. Charles Tilly, "Speaking Your Mind Without Elections, Surveys, or Social Movements," Public Opinion Quarterly, vol. 47 (1983), pp.463-469.

159. In Johannesburg and Durban, respectively, only 521 and 192 people volunteered for arrest. None did so across much of the country. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, *op. cit.*, p.52.

160. ibid., chs.4-7, 11.

161. ibid., pp.194-5.

162. ibid., p.75.

163. Meer, "African Nationalism," op. cit., p.140.

than from organizational initiatives or nationalist ideals. In the leading study of black protest politics in the 1950s, Lodge notes:

"Much of the direct action and popular unrest of the decade took place outside the scope of formal organizations, and the energy of local and national politicians was often absorbed by the effort to bring localized subsistence related popular movements within the ANC's orbit. In certain centers the ANC's local presence as a community organization responding to local sources of discontent was of greater significance to local people than its national program of activity. ... In these circumstances the particular ideological orientation of the ANC leadership may have mattered less to ordinary people than the organization's performance in bread-and-butter struggles."¹⁶⁴

Indeed, the collective actions which truly involved mass participation were usually not called by national political organizations, but emerged out of subsistence concerns and local initiatives and leadership. The most prominent among those were the squatter movements of the 1940s and the bus boycotts of the 1950s.¹⁶⁵ Any one of those movements involved more people than the Defiance Campaign did country-wide.

The patterns of mobilization in 1950s ANC campaigns also reflected the involvement of local elites and the followings to which their networks were connected.¹⁶⁶ Lodge reports, "The consequences of [organizational] difficulties were ... that effective campaigning often had to depend on local initiatives and therefore on the personal qualities of local leaders to a much greater extent than would have been the

164. Tom Lodge, "Political Mobilization in the 1950s: An East London Case Study," in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, The Politics of Race, Class, and Nationalism in South Africa (Longmans, London: 1987), pp.314-15.

165. Stadler, "Birds in the Cornfields," op. cit., Edwards, "Swing the Assegai Peacefully," op. cit., Bonner, "Transvall Native Congress," op.cit., Lodge. Black Politics, op. cit.

166. This is a persistent theme in the social movement literature, discussed in Chapter One. See, for example, Alberto Melucci, "Getting Involved: Identity and Mobilization in Social Movements," in Bert Klandermans, Hanspeter Kriesi, Stanley Tarrow, eds., From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Research Across Culture (Greenwich, Jai Press: 1988), and Bert Klandermans, "The Social Construction of Protest and Multi-Organizational Fields," in Aldon Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller, Frontiers in Social Movement Theory (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1992).

case had an efficient administrative machine existed. This was not always to Congress's detriment ... [b]ut it did mean that campaigns were localized and uneven in impact."¹⁶⁷ For instance, in Brakpan, effective beerhall and bus boycotts depended on the ANC-run AB, whose members enjoyed wide followings.¹⁶⁸ Similarly, the greatest strike of the era, the 70,000-strong African miners strike of 1946, was based on migrant worker homeboy networks more than formal union organization.¹⁶⁹ In the rural areas, political mobilization focused largely on chiefs and chieftaincy.¹⁷⁰ The reason why ANC campaigns consistently received their strongest response in Port Elizabeth may well lie in a particularly dense set of networks and elites. These included the ANC, the SACP, trade unions, the AB, and a popular rugby board.¹⁷¹

Yet the dawn of the 1960s brought a sense that the pace of political change was quickening. Independence had begun to sweep across Africa after Ghana gained its independence in 1957. Political turbulence had broken out in nearby Rhodesia and Malawi. Rural Natal had been agitated by protests in 1959. Riots flared in Paarl in the Western Cape in December and in Cato Manor, Durban in January 1960. In February, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan warned the white parliament in Cape Town that the "winds of change" were blowing through the continent. Responding to the

167. Lodge, Black Politics, op. cit., p.76.

168. ibid., pp.180-1, and Sapire, "African Political Mobilization," op. cit., pp.5-6.

169. Beinart, "Worker Consciousness," op. cit., p.296.

170. "Popular movements sometimes bypassed the issues of chieftaincy, but in a number of cases they focused on demands for the reinstatement or elevation of chiefly lineages: Sabata Dalindyebo rather than Kaiser Matanzima, Nelson rather than Botha Sigcau in Pondoland. Bantu Authorities were opposed because they seemed to deliver chiefs into the hands of the government rather than because they involved chiefs." Beinart, "Chieftaincy," op. cit., p.96.

171. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945, op. cit., pp.51-5, Baines, "The Contradictions of Community Politics," op. cit., de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, op. cit.

mood, and conscious of PAC competition, the ANC planned an anti-pass campaign for March 31. To one-up his rivals, the PAC's Sobukwe called on his followers to present themselves for arrest without passes ten days earlier.

The PAC protest on Monday, March 21, 1960, received a large response in only two areas: the Vaal Triangle and Cape Town. In Sharpeville, a crowd of 30,000 gathered outside the police station. Panicked policemen opened fire, killing 69 people and wounding 183. At a meeting that evening in Langa township, Cape Town, police opened up on 10,000 people outside a hostel, killing two, injuring 17, and triggering a riot. As the news of the Sharpeville and Langa tragedies spread, the whole country was shaken. A moral and political Rubicon had been crossed. Prime Minister Hendrick Verwoerd assured Parliament, "We shall remain in power in this white South Africa," but his grip looked increasingly shaky. In Cape Town, Africans went on general strike. On March 25, 2,000 marched to police headquarters there. They dispersed only when police suspended the hated pass laws, a major victory, soon extended country-wide.

A week after the shootings, a one-day general strike called by the ANC and PAC received a remarkable response. Between 85% and 95% of African workers in Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town, and Port Elizabeth heeded the call, as did others in the Vaal Triangle and in up-country Western Cape towns. Some 50,000 people attended the Langa victims' funeral that day, and there were riots in Soweto that night. In the following days pass-burning and unrest spread to East London, Bloemfontein in the Orange Free State, and a few smaller towns. But the most dramatic scenes took place in Cape Town, where the stay-away continued, including the great march with which this chapter opened.

The day of the march, which ran less than a mile from the panicked white parliament, the government declared a State of Emergency which would last five months, and police detained 1,500 leaders of the black opposition. The next day, after the huge Cape Town march, the authorities cordoned off the townships there to starve out the general strike. On April 8, the ANC and PAC were banned. In the days which followed, protest petered out in most centers. Nonetheless, the regime's triumph was costly. The domestic legacy of Sharpeville included prolonged recession due to capital flight and loss of business confidence. International condemnation was also widespread. South Africa had to leave the British Commonwealth in 1961, and the United Nations imposed its first sanctions against the country, the voluntary arms embargo of 1962.

The killings at Sharpeville and Langa represented moments when moral issues focused narrowly in one spot: they became simulacra, revealing the violence underlying white domination in South Africa. The massacres demonstrated that the regime no longer observed the rules of non-violent protest. For a moment urban blacks also refused to hold back. Their expressive outpouring of rage and grief grew as the system's brutality seemed unable to contain it. Lodge's comment on the march of the 30,000 applies to events throughout the period: it "was as much the result of the growing groundswell of political confidence among Cape Town Africans, as a reaction to the police cruelty that morning."¹⁷²

The large-scale involvement of urban youth in political protest for the first time was an important factor sustaining the post-Sharpeville mobilization, and one with particular significance for the future. "Task forces" of *tsotsis* helped the PAC enforce

172. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945, *op. cit.*, p.221.

general strikes and steal or distribute supplies in the Cape Town and PWV areas.¹⁷³ Tens of thousands more weighed in informally, beating up strike-breakers and police and joining disturbances. There was also an upsurge in school pupil protest, with at least 17 incidents reported in 1960-61. Unlike 1940s student revolts, which were quarrels over food and discipline in rural Cape boarding schools, the outbursts were political and spread to the towns and the Transvaal. (Several resulted from South Africa's declaration of a republic on leaving the Commonwealth on May 31, 1961.)¹⁷⁴ The mobilization of *tsotsis* and pupils pointed to the emergence of a new force, the youth, with the potential to reshape township politics.

But after Sharpeville, organized black politics was overshadowed by the shift of the newly-banned opposition movements to armed resistance. The armed struggle against apartheid began on the night of December 15, 1961, when the ANC's newly-formed military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe ("The Spear of the Nation," abbreviated MK) launched the first of over 300 attacks that would take place over three years. MK struck against government offices, power lines, security forces and pro-government chiefs.¹⁷⁵ The government's headaches worsened in 1962 when Poqo ("We alone"), the larger, less disciplined armed wing of the PAC appeared.

By 1963, however, beefed-up government intelligence services, the detention of thousands of activists (frequently tortured under interrogation), and stiffer penalties for political crimes bore fruit, aided by the movements' own security lapses. When exiled

173. Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.225, and Glaser, Anti-Social Bandits, *op. cit.*

174. Hyslop, "Food, Authority, and Politics," *op. cit.*, pp.97-8.

175. The account of the early years of armed action which follows is based on Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, *op. cit.*, ch.10, and Howard Barrell, MK: The ANC's Armed Struggle (Johannesburg, Penguin: 1990).

PAC leader Potlako Leballo announced plans for a Western Cape rising at a press conference in Maseru, Lesotho, local police raided his office and passed their findings to the South Africans, resulting in 3,000 arrests, the quashing of the insurrection, and the collapse of Poqo. MK was dealt a shattering blow when police raided its headquarters in Rivonia, a northern Johannesburg suburb, picking up almost its entire High Command, including Walter Sisulu and other top ANC and SACP leaders. (The ANC's most prominent leader after Luthuli, Umkhonto commander Nelson Mandela, had been held in August 1962.) The subsequent "Rivonia trial" of the MK leaders and their imprisonment for life became a *cause celebre*, but MK's centralized organization never recovered from their loss. Within the country the military wings of the ANC and PAC had been smashed and their organizational networks reduced to bare threads by 1965.

Why did the exceptional mobilization after Sharpeville not endure? The decapitation of the ANC and PAC through detention of national, regional, and even many local office-holders reduced the movements to the mobilized local followings of local elites. Yet the community elites, schooled in the give and take of patronage politics, were unlikely candidates to lead a risky revolt. Furthermore, the movement lacked institutional support in civil society. There were no politicized bodies to provide resources, shelter activists, or absorb leadership networks on a large scale. (Collective action endured longest where these structures these did exist, in the hostels and homeboy networks of migrants in Cape Town and Durban.) There were also no sympathetic mass media and few other spaces for communication with followers, while the narrowness of the public sphere limited the diffusion and comprehension of complex events and circumstances. Moreover, neither the ANC nor PAC had a strategy to exploit the crisis or to function efficiently underground. The ANC's organizational

steering capacity had always been limited, while the PAC's was virtually non-existent. (Even the PAC's three Cape Town branches had no contact with each other during the week after March 21.)

At the mass level, the sense of political opportunity which had flowered briefly was crushed by increasing repression, which broke the movement's momentum. Local networks and identities that had sustained mobilization were in any case inward-looking, given the weakness of collective consciousness at a city-wide or country-wide level. This was underlined by the absence of a sustained response in most rural areas, smaller towns, and even cities. The movement was also badly weakened by the lack of response from the colored community in the Western Cape and the Indians in Natal, whose support would have been crucial there. In sum, the crisis of 1960 represented the ultimate example of the postwar mode of political action in black communities – while offering a hint of the role youth could play in defining a new one.

CONCLUSION

An accurate understanding of black South African politics before the mid-1960s would thus note the profound complexities, ambiguities, and contradictions prevalent in black communities during that era. In the semi-industrialized racial oligarchy which South Africa represented after World War II, the interplay of public and private power constituted the foundation of a clientelist state and social order. Most black political activity took place within voluntary associations and officially-recognized institutions; it was usually compromise-oriented and accommodationist. This was associated with an extremely limited public sphere, in the sense of institutionalized opportunities for the

formation of public opinion. The values and practices of organized black opposition, in particular the African National Congress (ANC), also bore the stamp of the society in which they developed, blending patronage, personalism, and populism. The political culture within which black political actors operated was marked by an extensively networked, somewhat aloof elite with a guilty desire for assimilation into white society. Among the vast, marginalized masses, political passions were intense but parochial, with a weak sense of a common national identity and destiny. These were the foundations of the black politics that the Black Consciousness Movement would challenge in the years after 1965.

The image of postwar black politics presented in this chapter contrasts in several respects with the received one. Popular accounts of black politics describe generations of resistance, progressively gathering force. Even scholarly work has contributed to this impression by treating resistance politics as the only worthwhile object of study. Yet, as Lodge acknowledges, "The dramatic quality of postwar African resistance has sometimes led it to being understood as posing a considerable threat and obstacle to the state's policies. Certainly this was the way the ANC and its allies were frequently pictured in government propaganda, but this should not be confused with the actual extent of opposition mobilized by nationalist organizations."¹⁷⁶ Nor should it be confused with the full gamut of black political and social life, in which resistance was only one, relatively limited element.

Indeed, this description raises some serious doubts about the adequacy of the images prevailing in the literature on the black political and civil society in South Africa

176. Lodge, "Political Mobilization in the 1950s," *op.cit.*, p.317.

up to the mid-1960s, which provide an example of structuralist accounts of political development in undemocratic states. Liberal accounts have described the story as the triumphal advance of modern nationalism, while Marxist versions have presented it as the unfolding of the contradictions of a modern industrial economy and economic structure. Neither took seriously the political and social lives of black communities or the semi-developed character of the South African state.¹⁷⁷ In both cases, the South African state is portrayed as a strong, modern bureaucracy, coherently implementing policy. Administration takes the place of politics. The foundations of power are institutional: state and economic structures and the class composition of black communities. Scant attention is paid to local socio-political life, because local elites operating within government-created institutions are seen as powerless puppets without influence or popularity. The black masses are acted upon, by organizations and structures, rather than actors, while the middle classes, capable of choice, are viewed with suspicion as "petit-bourgeois nationalists." The only black organizations worth analysis are political opposition groups, seen as having no serious competition in black communities. Indeed, resistance and collaboration politics are often treated as entities in opposition, retrojecting the 1970s into the 1950s. Political culture is largely ignored. The state is assumed to have had no legitimacy, and grievances are assumed to lead to action in the absence of structural barriers or penalties. Steadily growing repression is the factor which holds back mass struggle, rather than the social and political contradictions then prevailing within black communities. In short, these accounts all but

177. Particularly telling is the absence of references to the literature on community power structures or clientelism and patronage, staples of analysis elsewhere of local or Third World politics, in writing on black South African politics. See Craig Charney, "From Resistance to Reconstruction: Towards a New Agenda for Political Research on South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 16 (1990), and Chapter One of this thesis.

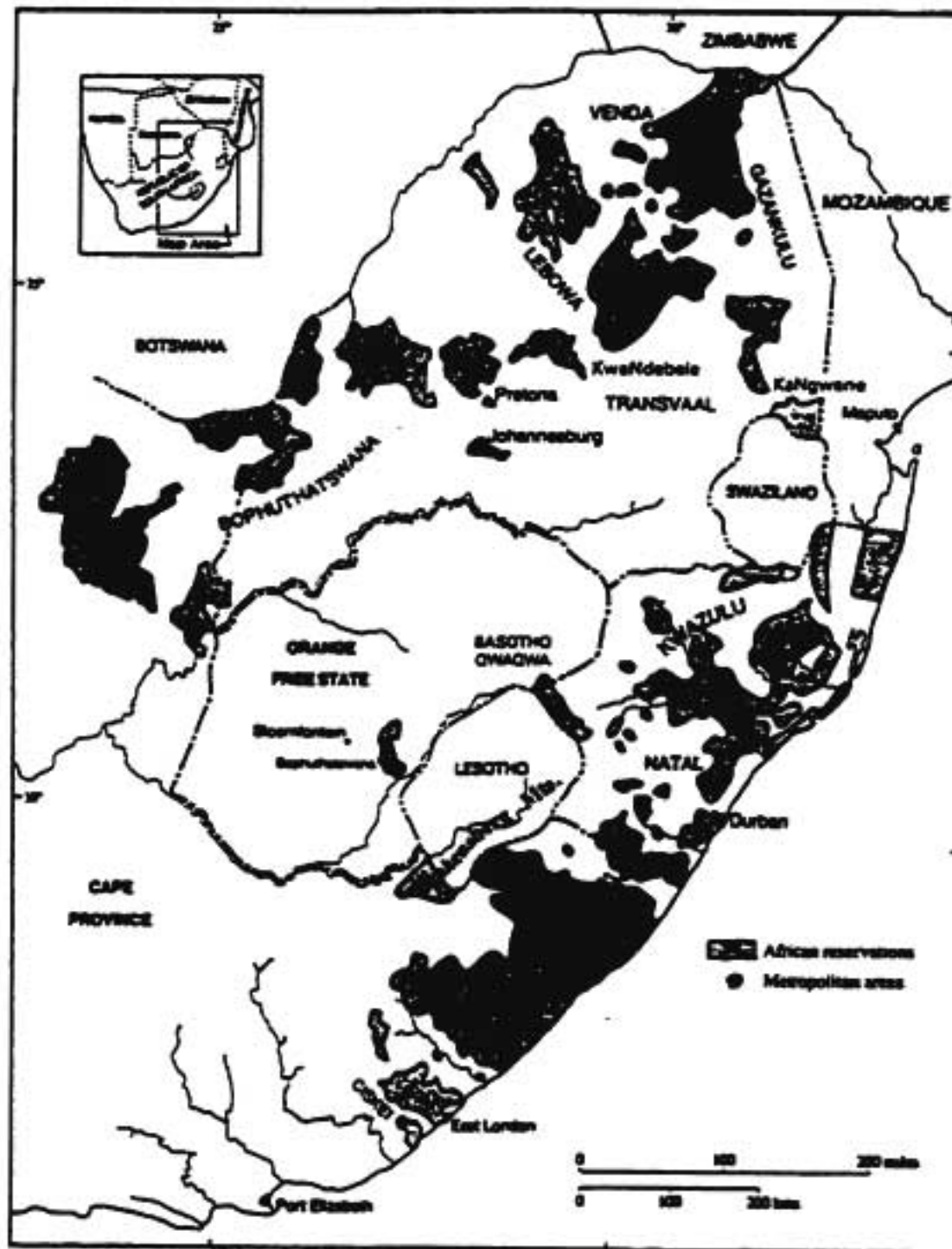
ignore the hybrid structures and complex compromises that immobilized elites, the prevalence of local networks for the control and mobilization of the masses, or the parochial communications and identities that supported the regime restricted the capacity of the oppressed to imagine political transformation, much less attain it.

More generally, this chapter is intended to re-politicize our understanding of the workings of authoritarian states and of change within them. States which are merely repressive have been confused with states which are strong (in the sense of possessing autonomy or commanding consensus). Discussions of authoritarian regimes tend to assume that politics is absent, when it just takes refuge in civil society. The existence of sources of power within subordinate groups, competition within subordinate elites, or their continual (if unequal) bargaining with dominant elites, also usually escapes notice.

The same holds for the sources of power from below that reside in the organization of daily life, involving a mixture of acceptance, negotiation, and resistance. Political dynamism is achieved when political power-holders or their opponents connect, for a time, with the dynamism of civil society. Moreover, this process is a central part of the process of establishing the legitimacy of the regime, a central concern in authoritarian politics as well as under democratic rule. By analyzing the political and social resources available to regimes and oppositions in this way, it becomes possible to understand the ambiguities that restrict challenges to a regime and a society's capacity or self-transformation. It also will allow us to discover in succeeding chapters how changes in the underlying parameters can make possible mass mobilization and regime crisis. The next chapter examines how South Africa's white minority regime (and its conservative black allies) mobilized the social supports available to them in the new circumstances

which prevailed from 1965 to 1975, while the following one examines the sources of change which also emerged over that period.

Map 3.1: The African Homelands of South Africa



Source: Stephen Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels: Inside South Africa's Hidden War* (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1987)

Chapter Three

THE SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE: Clientelism, Coercion, and Consent Under the Apartheid Regime, 1965-1975

September 30, 1974 was a big day in Zwelitsha: the Ciskei National Independence Party was holding its final campaign rally for the local council election in the homeland's second-largest township. It had begun with a motorcade of homeland dignitaries that stirred up the dust in the unpaved streets of the township outside Alice, 75 miles northwest of East London. A large crowd awaited them, and as they arrived, tumultuous cries of "*Bopha!*" ("Link up!"), the party slogan, rang out. Speakers then hammered home the need for Zwelitsha, the capital of the Ciskei, to become a CNIP stronghold, small children recited pro-government verse, and a traditional Xhosa praise-singer lauded the government. Between speeches came more cries of "*Bopha!*" and party songs, hymns rewritten to carry party messages (like the freedom songs of a generation before). A Rhodes University research fieldworker who witnessed the scene, Gordon kaTyakwadi, wrote: "The genuine and spontaneous feeling of the people compelled you to identify yourself with them. You felt that the people around you believed in the freedom and equality that these homeland leaders alluded to."¹ In short, by the 1970s, homeland politics in the Ciskei had tapped into veins of popular enthusiasm and support in an area which had formed part of the ANC heartland ten years earlier.²

¹ Gordon kaTyakwadi, The Development of the Political Party System in the Ciskei, MA Thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1978, p.218.

² The Ciskei was called such because it was composed of the Xhosa-speaking African reserves west of (that is, cis-, or "inside") the Kei River. The Transkei, though also Xhosa-speaking, comprised the lands beyond the

Despite the widespread belief that little of consequence occurred in black South African politics between the mid -1960s and early 1970s, the events in Zwelitsha and many other places showed that those years were far from silent. Many voices of dissent had indeed been stilled, but a surprisingly large number echoed important aspects of official discourse, from conviction or fear. Politics in the so-called era of "high apartheid" involved repression, but it also involved much more: the white regime's policy of separate development mixed control with the cultivation of black conservative support, against a backdrop of rapid industrial growth and restricted urbanization. Taking advantage of the resources afforded by rapid growth, clientelism and racial corporatism were intensified, within a political project aimed at re-invigorating traditionalist practices and ideas. The public sphere was restricted through oppressive new controls, but also restructured by the growth of new media for official discourse and of new religious movements that were massive yet inward-looking. In place of the banned nationalist movements, the role of legal "opposition" fell to organs of black civil society under white control and to groups within the government-created representative institutions, who were also involved in administering the segregated townships and rural reserves for blacks. All these changes reinforced the already-marked tendencies in the political culture towards individualism and frustration among the black middle classes, and parochialism and particularism among the popular classes. This, in turn, tended to narrow the horizons of citizenship, promoting the acceptance of the reserves as "homelands," and strengthening the perception of a lack of political opportunities. It created a considerable potential for conservative, inward-looking

Kei. The slice of land between the two, which included East London, King William's Town, and Grahamstown, was known as the Border region. It was the frontier of colonial penetration in the 19th century.

populists, which some leaders “within the system,” such as the Ciskei’s Lennox Sebe, seized with considerable success.

Looking at the politics of the apartheid era in this way reveals the strengths of South Africa's white-run regime. Although the state itself was institutionally weak, the strength of the regime resided in white control of the nominally independent institutions of black civil society and its alliances with brokers in black political society, much more than in its capacity to crush overt political opposition. Faced with the problems posed by African nationalist movements and the growth of industry and cities, the regime responded with a new political formula of its own, around conservative values and elites. While all the state had sought from dominated groups in the past had been political passivity, now official representative institutions were intended to obtain the participation and consent of significant proportions of the black population, albeit in circumstances shaped significant degrees of constraint and fear. Yet the new subordinate political institutions operated to reinforce the older hegemonic ideology, as the dependence of society on the state was reinforced through the intensification of patrimonialism and state control of corporatist bodies. This illustrates how, in a dynamic, changing society, authoritarian politics involve the juggling of political alliances and structure to maintain legitimacy and support, not just repression. The apartheid regime’s response to the challenges it faced in the 1960s was, in fact, to undertake a powerful social mobilization in a conservative direction.

I. STRUCTURAL CHANGE AND SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT: CO-OPTION, INDUSTRIALIZATION, AND URBANIZATION

The years after 1960 witnessed structural and institutional changes in South Africa which constituted the terrain of social and political struggle for the next three decades. Under Prime Minister Hendrick Verwoerd, the country's traditional system of domestic colonialism was systematized into what became known as the apartheid regime, mixing aspects of what was termed "bureaucratic authoritarianism" elsewhere with a colonial emphasis on racial and traditional authority. After the protests of the early 1960s were crushed, the patchwork of indirect rulers operating through patronage politics was formalized into the system of "separate development," with greater powers and resources. The urban townships received councils and committees with limited executive power, while the tribal reserves became potentially independent "homelands." These changes occurred during a period of rapid, if repressive, industrial growth, much like those in other authoritarian, semi-industrialized states where low wages and foreign investment produced booms in the 1960s. Together, apartheid policies and swift industrialization produced an unusual pattern of urbanization, which was more limited, tightly controlled, and racially segregated than in other new industrial countries. The creation of distinct, strengthened clientelist political institutions, the growing wealth and new social forces created by limited but significant industrialization, and South Africa's peculiar urban order defined the substantial structural resources of defenders of the *status quo*, black and white, along with the grounds on which their opponents could confront them.

Politically, the restructuring of the 1960s re-emphasized clientelism within a modernized patronage system, still built around traditionalist discourses, but with larger, more powerful institutional bases. The bans on the nationalist organizations, and the fierce repression directed against those who remained active in them, were accompanied by the strengthening of alternative channels to satisfy material demands and seek legitimacy. Their discourse was consistent enough with popular political culture to garner a degree of support, particularly in the absence of alternatives. At the local level, urban Africans, coloreds, and Indians were placed under fairly similar representative bodies, with limited powers but substantial discretion in their exercise. Above the local level, the reserves were declared the "homelands" of both rural and urban Africans, in which they would exercise citizenship, while coloreds and Indians were offered national advisory councils in place of parliamentary representation.

In many African townships, Urban Bantu Councils (UBCs) replaced Advisory Boards, although the older institutions persisted in others. However, both were structured on neo-traditional lines: like the Boards, the Councils were elected by male household heads, with hostel residents (mostly male migrant workers) also eligible. The councilors, older, middle-class men, were elected on the basis of ward and ethnic group.³ The new Councils were formally responsible for the functions on which the Boards made recommendations: making bylaws, setting rents, allocating houses and business and church

³ South African Institute of Race Relations, Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1967 (hereafter Race Relations Survey, 1967), Johannesburg, 1968, p.67. For instance, Johannesburg's UBC had 86 000 on its voters' roll in 1971. Soweto's 41 seats were divided into 10 wards, and further sub-divided by ethnic (homeland) origin, with 15 for the Zulu, 6 for the South Sotho, 5 for the Tswana, 4 each for the North Sotho and Xhosa, 3 for the Tsonga, and 2 each for the Venda and Swazi. H.J. Swanepoel, Die Aandeel van Bantoe aan Stedelike Bantoeadministrasie in Johannesburg, MA Thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1973, pp.74-5.

sites, dealing with rent defaulters and illegal residents, and issuing trading licenses.⁴ Their greater control over these issues gave their members even greater scope for patronage politics than those who sat on the older Boards enjoyed. As the official link between the administration and their neighborhoods, councilors and board members also retained the power to forward – or ignore – requests for help with pensions, passes, jobs, and the like.⁵ And as kingpins in their communities, they helped settle local disputes, maintain order, and put forward residents' requests to the white administration, often with some success.⁶ Charton and kaTyakwadi commented, "The opportunity to build up a political machine after the model of Tammany Hall is obviously present in the township situation. The pay-off is in terms of commodities, which are very scarce and therefore highly prized: housing, jobs, and trading licenses."⁷

Colored and Indian areas, which had previously been treated as falling under white city councils, were given separate representative bodies by a 1962 law providing for

⁴ kaTyakwadi, The Development of the Political Party System in the Ciskei, *op. cit.*, p.201.

⁵ Thus, a member of the Advisory Board in Dimbaza, Ciskei, said, "The AB has authority insofar as if you want to go to the Superintendent's Office for anything, you have to go through the Board first, if you want a house or to apply for a pension. We don't have so much control over [migrant labor] contracts, but we have some. The office tells us first when the contracts come from Zwelitsha, then we announce this to the people at the meetings. Then we recommend them to the office." Pippa Green and Alan Hirsch, "Baseless Headmen and Rootless Proletarians: Notes on Social Control in Resettlement Town in the Ciskei," Unpublished paper, Urbanization Conference, South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1982, p.17. For similar comments about the role of the Johannesburg UBC in grievance processing, see Swanepoel, Die Aandeel, *op. cit.*, pp.226-8 and on the Port Elizabeth Advisory Board, see Michael de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction: A Study of Conciliar Behavior in a Black South African township, Ph.D. Thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1979.

⁶ Swanepoel mentions dispute resolution by UBC members, Die Aandeel, *op. cit.*, p.230. de Jongh reports that over ten meetings of the Port Elizabeth Advisory Board, 60 issues were raised with officials, with success on just over one-third, more often on day-to-day issues than matters of legislation, Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*, p.679.

⁷ Nancy Charton and Gordon kaTyakwadi, "Ciskeian Political Parties," in Nancy Charton, ed., Ciskei: Economy and Politics of Dependence in a South African Homeland, (London, Croom Helm: 1980). For further evidence on the brokerage roles and discretionary power members of local-level black representative institutions used to build patronage networks, see Green and Hirsch, "Baseless Headmen and Rootless Proletarians," *op. cit.*, p.19 and de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*, pp.194ff.

government-appointed consultative committees.⁸ Provision was later made for these bodies to be supplanted by partly-elected management committees (in Natal, local affairs committees). By 1973, there were 78 consultative committees, 30 management committees, 20 local affairs committees, and two Indian town councils in Natal with full executive powers.⁹ The competencies of these bodies were similar to those of the ABs and UBCs – as were their patronage possibilities¹⁰. In Natal, voting by the small number of Indians who had the franchise in white municipal elections was phased out, while gender- and property-based voting rights in local elections in the Cape – which sent seven colored men to the Cape Town City Council in 1963 – were abolished in 1972. With this measure, local government was completely segregated, and colored and Indian representation was placed on a par with the limited form allotted urban Africans.

Instead of a voice in national politics, Pretoria decided that the reserves accorded each African ethnic group would become its homeland or bantustan, with a possibility of self-government and even independence. In each territory, all members of the relevant tribe (including the large proportion living outside its boundaries) would enjoy citizenship and be able to vote for the legislature. (This would also mean that the African majority would lose its South African citizenship piecemeal as the homelands were declared "independent," while the internationally-condemned pass laws would give way to "normal" passport controls on "foreigners.") Though the central, white government retained the key levers of

⁸ Race Relations Survey, 1967, p.125.

⁹ Race Relations Survey, 1973, pp.124-5.

¹⁰ Thus, during relocations in Actonville, an Indian community on the East Rand, "the consultative committee enjoyed considerable discretion and allocated homes to a network of clients, relatives, and friends." Firoz Cachalia, Indian Representation and the State, B.A. Honors Thesis, Wits University, Johannesburg, 1983, p.101.

power – including control of the national economy, foreign affairs, defense, and the subsidies that paid most of the homeland budgets – the tribal units received limited but significant power over local economic affairs, transport, health, education, law and order, and bureaucracies.¹¹

Despite the holding of elections, the pivot of power in the overwhelmingly rural bantustans remained the chiefs working within the Bantu Authority structures. Chiefs held a majority of the seats in the homeland legislatures *ex officio*, and also influenced the popular vote through patronage politics, aided by the greater power and reduced accountability Bantu Authorities had afforded them. The result was to keep homeland institutions under the control of local-level chiefly patrons, as Southall noted. "[U]nder the Bantu authorities system, the chiefs were granted a sweeping array of local powers, and ... through their domination of the administrative structure they undertake such functions as the allocation of land, the payment of pensions and welfare allowances, and the appointment of teachers – in addition to their exercise of judicial authority. Furthermore, the authoritarian sway of the chiefs is but little countered by popular representation, and individuals who openly oppose chiefly predominance expose themselves to risk."¹²

Advisory representative institutions were also created for the colored and Indian minorities, offering mouthpieces for local notables. Indians had been taken off a separate

¹¹ Leonard Thompson, Politics in the Republic of South Africa (Boston, Little Brown: 1966), pp.81-85.

¹² Roger Southall, South Africa's Transkei: The Political Economy of an "Independent" Bantustan (New York, Monthly Review Press: 1983), p.121. For more on chiefly power and its increasingly arbitrary exercise over dependents in the 1960s and 1970s, see also Jeff Peires, "Continuity and Change in Ciskei Chiefship," Seminar Paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersand, Johannesburg, 1977, D.A. Kotze, Traditionalism in African Local Government: With Special Reference to the Transkei and Lesotho, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1968, p.278, and Peter Delius, "Migrants, Comrades, and Rural Revolt: Sekhukuneland 1950-1987," Transformation, no. 13 (1990), p.12.

parliamentary voters' roll in 1949, while the separate roll for coloreds, the result of the constitutional battles of the 1950s over the colored franchise, was itself eliminated in 1969. Yet if independent homelands for Africans were conceivable, if implausible, they were unimaginable for the two black minorities, whose members lacked large blocks of territory like the reserves. Instead, a national council was created for each, offering little power but considerable access to the administration. For coloreds, a mostly government-appointed advisory body was set up in 1959, then replaced in 1969 by the Colored Persons Representatives Council (CPRC), composed of 30 elected and 16 appointed members.¹³ The South African Indian Council (SAIC) was created in 1964 as an entirely-appointed body, then changed ten years later into a body half appointed and half elected by members of Indian local government bodies.¹⁴ Both structures were dominated by figures prominent in local-level patronage politics in those communities. The CPRC had limited legislative and budgetary authority over programs affecting coloreds, subject to government approval, while the SAIC was purely advisory.¹⁵ However, each offered a chance to interact with the bureaucrats in the Ministries of Colored and Indian Affairs, under whose control welfare, education, and other government services for the two black minorities were steadily shifted. As coloreds and Indians were shunted into separate bureaucratic and advisory structures, the minority groups were placed in a colonial relation to the state increasingly similar to that of Africans.

¹³ Race Relations Survey, 1969.

¹⁴ Bridglal Pachai, "Aliens in the Political Hierarchy," in Bridglal Pachai, ed., South Africa's Indians: The Evolution of a Minority (Washington, DC, University Press of America: 1979), p.56-7, Meer, "Indian People: Current Trends and Policies," in Peter Randall, ed., South Africa's Minorities (Johannesburg, SPRO-CAS 1971), Occasional Publication No.2, p.17, Race Relations Survey, 1974.

¹⁵ Thompson, Politics in the Republic of South Africa, op. cit., pp.86-7.

Economically, rapid growth formed the backdrop to this period, driven by a process of authoritarian peripheral industrialization. The immediate aftermath of Sharpeville was capital flight and steep recession, but the crushing of the black resistance restored business confidence. With social peace and an abundant supply of cheap unskilled labor ensured by political and labor repression, domestic and foreign investment poured into the country's factories, mines, and infrastructure.¹⁶ The pattern of growth was an exclusive one: domestic demand was driven by the production of consumer durables (cars, fridges, and the like) for the middle classes. Unskilled workers were only a cost of production, not potential demand, and the period witnessed a substantial widening of pay differentials between them and the skilled or professional classes.¹⁷ Together, however, foreign investment and middle class demand fueled vertiginous economic growth: real growth averaged 6% annually between 1964 and 1973, one of the highest rates in the developing world. Indeed, in this era, South Africa resembled the other new industrial countries, such as Brazil, where repressive stability and foreign investment also produced economic "miracles."¹⁸

Industrial growth also led to change in the class structure, and in the racial composition of the different social classes. The working class grew dramatically, its African component most of all. Between 1960 and 1970, the number of unskilled African industrial

¹⁶ See Guillermo O'Donnell, Modernization and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism (Berkeley: University of California, 1973), and Peter Evans, Dependent Development, (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1979) for a discussion of this process in Latin America.

¹⁷ This process of "peripheral Fordism" is discussed in Alain Lipietz, Mirages and Miracles: The Industrialization of the Third World (London, Verso: 1987), and applied to South Africa by Gelb, and Cassim and Ramos.

¹⁸ For comparisons, see James Petras and Morris Morley, "Capitalist Expansion and Class Conflict in Advanced Third World Countries," in James Petras, ed., Class, State, and Power in the Third World (Montclair, NJ, Allanheld Osmun: 1981), J.B. Knight, "A Comparative Analysis of South Africa as a Semi-Industrialized Developing Country," Journal of Modern African Studies, vol.26 (1988), and Gay Seidman, "The Emergence of Political Unionism in Brazil and south Africa," South African Sociological Review, vol.3 (1991).

workers rose rapidly. The middle classes expanded even more rapidly, as growing urban industrial areas required professionals, technicians, proprietors, clerks, and sales people, etc., to establish viable communities, to plan and execute decisions, and to staff shops and offices. (In black areas, black bureaucrats, professionals, and shop-owners also were promoted by the policy of separate development.) The African part of the middle classes grew from 144,246 in 1960 to 264,590 in 1970, an 83% increase. By 1970, Africans, coloreds, and Indians occupied fully half the middle class positions involved in what could be termed "reproduction": teaching, health, religion, and so on. (In contrast, they held only 4% of the jobs in control of production.)¹⁹

For most of those in employment, the economic boom also meant that incomes rose considerably, if unequally. For African workers in manufacturing, the average wage in manufacturing rose from R372 in 1958 to R1,816 in 1968 in current rand.²⁰ Incomes for the black middle classes rose even faster: in real, not current rand, starting pay for Africans in a variety of professions doubled or tripled over the 1960s. Racial inequalities remained dramatic – white teachers still earned two to three times as much as comparably-qualified Africans in 1971, and white incomes per capita averaged 14 times those of Africans – but the gains in incomes and living standards of much of the urban population were undeniable.²¹ For instance, in a 1975 survey of Soweto residents, interviewers rated half the homes of illiterate (and mostly working class) women as having more than the "bare necessities," along with more than three-fourths of those with eight years' schooling or

¹⁹ These figures are drawn from Craig Charney, "Janus in Blackface: The African Petite Bourgeoisie in South Africa," *Con-Text*, vol.I (1988), pp.8-11.

²⁰ Heribert Adam, *Modernizing Racial Domination: South Africa's Political Dynamics* (Berkeley, University of California: 1971), p.98.

²¹ *ibid.*, p.99, Charney, "Janus in Blackface," *op. cit.*, pp.27-28.

more.²² (However, at least two groups were left out of the boom: migrant mine workers, whose real wage level remained flat throughout the decade, and rural homeland residents, either through loss of land rights and relocation or the continuing erosion of their overworked land.)

Socially, the combination of rigid racial discrimination and rapid economic growth led to a pattern of urbanization that was uniquely restricted, re-ordered, and regimented. Influx controls on Africans (the hated pass laws) were tightened during the 1960s in line with the homelands policy, leaving South Africa increasingly under-urbanized in comparative terms. Regulations were changed to deny permanent urban residence rights to Africans who moved from country to town and access to the urban labor market was restricted by requiring job-seekers to apply through rural labor bureaus. In the cities, the enforcement of the pass laws was stepped up, increasing prosecutions from 375,000 in 1961 to 621,380 in 1970.²³ To further constrain the growth of the African population in the cities, the white authorities decided to stop building houses in urban townships in 1968, shifting construction funds to the homelands, while they were also able during the 1960s to prevent the growth of shantytowns full of rural emigrants, which were burgeoning in other Third World countries. The consequence was to restrict permanent African urbanization, to promote oscillating migration by rural workers, along with the return to rural relatives of schoolchildren and retirees, and, ironically, by these means to strengthen urban-rural ties. Indeed, in two-thirds of the urban townships, generally in the smaller towns, the officially-recognized African population actually declined between 1960 and 1970 (though official

²² Market Research Africa, Today's Urban African Household (Johannesburg, 1975).

²³ Thompson, Politics in the Republic, *op. cit.*, p.55, Race Relations Survey, 1971, p.73.

figures for this period are thought to be under-estimates). While natural population growth and legal and illegal migration in the major metropolitan areas still kept the overall totals for Africans in the cities increasing, South Africa's urban population rose more slowly than in other comparable countries. Latin American countries at similar levels of development went from roughly 70% rural to 70% urban between 1950 and 1970, while South Africa's population changed from 70% rural in 1950 to only around 50% urban over the same timespan.²⁴

The policy of enforcing racial segregation also led to relocations that disrupted lives, destroyed communities, and despoiled their inhabitants. During the 1960s, over 400,000 city dwellers who fell afoul of the pass laws were deported to the homelands. So were more than 1 million rural labor tenants, farm squatters, and residents of black spots (small communities on freehold land).²⁵ The residential and commercial segregation provisions of the Group Areas Act required one-fifth of all colored families and one-third of Indians to move, along with 90% of the Indian traders in Durban.²⁶ The wrecker's bulldozer cleared out entire suburbs, such as District Six in Cape Town and Pageview in Johannesburg, forcing their inhabitants into distant, crowded townships. This had a dramatic impact on family fortunes as well, as houses and shops went for a fraction of their market value in forced sales and government compensation, followed by a move to government-owned

²⁴ Tom Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945 (London, Heinemann's: 1982), p.321; Knight, "A Comparative Analysis of South Africa," op. cit.

²⁵ ibid., p.321.

²⁶ Gavin Maasdorp and Nessen Pillay, Urban Relocation and Racial Segregation: The Case of Indian South Africans (Durban, University of Natal: 1977), p.166; Meer, "Indian People," op. cit., p.23.

housing and shop sites.²⁷ (The special re-ordering did sometimes protect the minorities against competition from other races, however: they were given preference for jobs in colored and Indian administration, and colored people were given preference over Africans for employment in the Western Cape).²⁸

This era was also the apogee of segregation in working, educational, organizational, and social life, due to the combination of the South African regime's virulent racism with the scope for regularization created by its bureaucratic capacity. While white racial or class interests may often have been at their origin, powerful prejudices also came into play, so that laws and regulations requiring racial separation and subordination were set out and applied with appalling, often absurd, thoroughness. Skilled trades were reserved de jure for whites, while decision-making posts were reserved for them de facto by the rule that blacks could not supervise whites. This was applied even in black areas, so that in 1966 a newly-qualified Indian engineer was refused work on housing construction in the Indian township of Actonville – because white building workers would have had to call him "boss".²⁹ Schools, both public and private, were rigidly segregated by race, and from 1959 the white universities phased out black students, as separate universities were created for the different black racial and ethnic groups. Even public libraries had to be segregated (with the best facilities reserved for whites). When Cape Town's City Council, controlled by the

²⁷ For example, 60% of Durban's Indians had been homeowners in 1960, but government plans called for all but 10% to be moved into state-owned housing. The impact of shop closures and relocations was so dramatic that the principal area of employment for Durban's Indian population changed from family-owned shops in the 1950s to white-owned manufacturing by the 1970s. Fatima Meer, "Uprooting of Indian Communities," p.13; Meer, "Indian People," op. cit., p.22.

²⁸ ibid., p.28, and Michael Whisson, "The Colored People," in Peter Randall, ed., South Africa's Minorities (Johannesburg, SPRO-CAS 1971), Occasional Publication No.2, p.62.

²⁹ The Star, August 27, 1966.

opposition United Party, tried to defy this regulation, it was forced to back down by the threat of withdrawal of provincial subsidies.³⁰ Government also tried to stamp out racially mixed welfare or community groups. As a result, groups ranging from the National Council for Child Welfare to the National Tuberculosis Association re-organized on racial lines.³¹ Proclamation R26 of 1965 banned racially mixed audiences and casts in places of public entertainment. The authorities even refused an exemption for the annual charity benefit for the poor and orphans organized by Cape Town's Union of Jewish Women, a clear and present danger to racial security.³²

One of the changes which proved to have the most important consequences was the enforced segregation and expansion of higher education. Prior to 1960, the English-language Cape Town, Natal, and Witwatersrand Universities were formally "non-racial." They admitted small numbers of black students who met their entrance qualifications and studied together with whites, although residential and social segregation was maintained even at these institutions. The most black students were found in Durban at the country's only medical school for blacks, formally known as the University of Natal Non-European Section (UNNE). Apart from these bodies, there was one University College specifically for Africans, Fort Hare, which had grown out of a mission school at Alice in the Ciskei. The situation was changed by a 1959 law passed over strenuous opposition from white liberals and blacks, the Extension of University Education Act, which closed admission to the "white" universities to blacks, except by government permit in unusual circumstances. Instead, it provided for the creation of several black universities, legally segregated by race

³⁰ Race Relations Survey, 1966, p.292.

³¹ ibid., p.289.

and tribe: Fort Hare would become the model, set aside for the Xhosa of the Eastern Cape; the University of Zululand would cater to the Zulu, the University of the North to students from the Pedi, Venda, and Shangaan groups, while the University of the Western Cape (UWC) would cater to colored students and the University of Durban-Westville (UDW) to Indians. These institutions, although separate, also marked a considerable expansion of the higher educational opportunities open to black South Africans. The black universities were intended to train staff for the subordinate black bureaucracies, including homeland governments, being built up under apartheid policies, and the black businesses, schools, and professional services which would be associated with them. Within a few years of their opening, however, they would also be producing a very different type of student as well.

What all these developments underline is that South Africa in the 1960s was a significantly different country than in the preceding decade. The banning of opposition movements was followed by the restructuring of black political institutions to further emphasize participation through patronage, without effective representation. The perpetuation of personalist, clientelist politics proved quite compatible with bureaucratic authoritarian industrialization, which modernized the class structure and spread significant if unequally-shared income gains. The juxtaposition of racial and bureaucratic authoritarianism created considerable social tension, as they led to brutal mass relocations and a rigorously enforced segregation which, even if originally grounded in class or racial interests, proceeded well beyond the bounds of rationality. This was nowhere more evident than in higher education, where segregation plus expansion would produce the potential unintended developments. But for most of the country, during the 1960s and early 1970s,

³² *ibid.*, p.293.

the regime's new political and economic strategy offered a potent mix of clientelism, co-option, and control.

II. REINVENTING TRADITIONALISM: THE INTENSIFICATION OF CLIENTELISM AND CORPORATISM

The ban on opposition outside "the system," the strengthening of institutions operating within it, popular needs created by urbanization and relocation, and the parochialism which had traditionally marked black political culture in South Africa all strengthened the tendency of black communities to be inward-looking from the mid-1960s until the mid-1970s. With the white-collar, nationalist section of the elite out of the way politically, conservative, state-connected leaders were left in control. They increasingly monopolized positions of political and economic power, although continuing social ties buffered somewhat their conflict with the other part of the elite. The elimination of groups and individuals sympathetic to the politics of collective action meant that organized political life centered more on elite factionalism than ever. For the social networks reaching up from the grassroots, the conservative institutional elites had become the only available intermediaries with the authorities, and their local ties and particularistic ideas often played well with these audiences.

The greater resources and power afforded black office holders, and the very real competition between their networks of followers, intensified both the practical and ideological power of patronage. Together, the resources, discourses, and monopoly of the

conservatives endowed many of them with considerable community stature and followings. Often they could mobilize many more people to participate in government-created institutions than had been drawn in by the cliquish, low-participation official politics prevailing before 1960. Meanwhile, the middle-class professionals excluded from the political sphere found themselves confined within the narrow limits of racial corporatism. This collectively ensured them rising incomes, but individuals had to pay the price of political silence and a precarious dependency. The Sixties thus witnessed an increased privatization of public life, marked by the narrowed horizons of collective concerns to immediate material issues and localized, ethnic, or professional identities.

The relentless application of apartheid policies eroded the older understandings regarding the social position of the black elites, and the inter-racial relationships on which these had been based. Independent professionals and businessmen saw their working and residential possibilities restricted to the townships and the bantustans, while the tightening segregation laws made it increasingly difficult to maintain the bonds – friendship, religious, economic, and social – that had connected them to the white establishment. The recognized privileges of middle-class Africans, such as exemption from the pass laws, had become a thing of the past. Finally, the bannings of the nationalist political movements, intolerance of dissent, and persecution of individuals shattered the old, liberal faith that it was possible to fight for social change yet remain a leader recognized within and beyond the black community.

As the previous accommodations and ties broke down, a deep rift opened within black community leadership, as the professional and protest elites withdrew, leaving the political scene to conservative, state linked groups. In the 1950s, nationalist-minded white-

collar workers and professionals had been ascendant in the leadership of the political organizations, presenting aggressive political demands through their own corporate bodies. As a result of the bans directed against organizations and individuals, and the tightening control over professional activities, members of this group mostly withdrew, or were eliminated, from politics. To the extent that they remained active in community affairs, this was generally within civil society, in the leadership of church, sporting, or welfare organizations and the other remaining autonomous black institutions. They had opted out to such a large extent that the decade after the Rivonia Trial in 1964 was marked by a general sense within black communities of a leadership vacuum.³³

The leaders who remained in public view were drawn from the older, more conservative segments of the elite, particularly the segments of the middle classes who depended for their livelihood and status on privileges bestowed by the state. They included chiefs, dependent on official recognition, businessmen, who had to obtain trading sites from the state, ministers, who did the same for their churches (particularly in the independent churches, who had no ecclesiastical hierarchy with established premises and bargaining power), civil service clerks, school principals and senior nurses, municipal policemen, and the like.³⁴ These were Brandel-Syrier's "Reeftown Elite": the group who felt they had a stake in the system, and preferred to share gains within it on a local or regional scale to openly challenging it. Some had been involved in the nationalist movements before 1960, and they often felt guilty about their lack of a national political role, while members of the opposition

³³ Philip Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes (Unpublished Report, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, 1979).

³⁴ Charney, "Janus in Blackface," op. cit.

elite branded them "sellouts."³⁵ By the mid-1960s, after the disappearance of more militant elements and discourses, the conservative black elite was alone on the stage. For example, in Grahamstown in 1967, the Advisory Board consisted of two principals, a nurse, and five workers. The average age was 65, and Nyquist reported that it was drawn from the older, poorly educated, conservative faction of the community.³⁶ The newer Urban Bantu Councils drew in a somewhat younger, better-educated, but still rather right-wing group. Thus, in 1975 the Grahamstown UBC consisted of a teacher, two receptionists, two nurses, one businessmen, and two workers. They had an average of 10 years' education and an average age of 45, but still were selected from the more conservative elements in the community. Similar patterns were evident in the composition of black school boards.³⁷ Indeed, by the end of the 1960s, in addition to the state-dependent notables, the UBCs were attracting a fringe of the professional middle classes who sought to have an impact through the only available system. Adam noted, "There is a discernible trend among the politically conscious non-white elite in South Africa to move away from protest through passivity and boycott, and to use the limited possibilities for practical political action."³⁸

Even more than in the past, the interconnected elites that controlled black communities' political institutions also dominated their economic and social lives. A few examples should make the point. Lent Maqoma, one of the elected representatives from

³⁵ Mia Brandel-Syrier, Reeftown Elite: A Study of Social Mobility in a Modern African Community on the Reef, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul: 1971) which deals with the 1950s, and "Coming Through:" The Search for a New Cultural Identity, (New York, McGraw-Hill: 1978) which examines the period under study.

³⁶ Thomas Nyquist, African Middle Class Elite, (Grahamstown, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University: 1983), p.241.

³⁷ ibid., p.244.

³⁸ Adam, Modernizing Racial Domination, op. cit., p.77.

Port Elizabeth in the Ciskei bantustans parliament, was also a traditional chief, former principal of Johnson Merwanga Higher Primary, a key figure in local rugby and cricket clubs, and one of the leading laymen in a black Anglican order.³⁹ His case was not unusual. In the new Indian township of Actonville, on the East Rand, all five of the Consultative Committee members appointed in 1965 were influential businessmen, four were leaders of Hindu and Moslem Associations, two were active on school boards, two in football clubs, and one in child welfare.⁴⁰ In the African township of Sharpeville, in 1960 a PAC stronghold and the site of infamous massacre that bears its name, local government was again dominated by businessmen and professionals who were also boxing or soccer club managers.⁴¹ To a large extent, these ties were the results of the elite's traditional practices, as when AB members allocated trading premises to themselves, as well as the origins of its members, tightly bonded by school, church, family, sport, etc. (These sorts of ties also buffered to some extent the conflicts between the collaborationist and opposition elites, who rubbed shoulders at social and family gatherings.) Yet the interpenetration between economic and political elites in this era was also strengthened by the new, politically-controlled resources that separate development policies put in the hands of township and bantustan rulers: development corporations and credit designed to build businesses in the appropriate ethnic areas, and jobs in burgeoning bureaucracies, as apartheid dictated the

³⁹ Eastern Province Herald, March 17, 1973.

⁴⁰ Cachalia, Indian Representation and the State, *op. cit.*, 1983, pp.99-100. Similarly, the appointed South African Indian Council was composed of leaders in commerce, industry, education, and welfare organizations. Meer, "Indian People," *op. cit.*, p.20. There was also a massive bias in favor of the most affluent language group, the Gugerati speakers, who made up 5% of the Indian population, but took 51% of the seats on government-created bodies. Stan Kahn, "Language and Religion," Seminar Paper, African Studies Institute, Wits University, Johannesburg, 1975 p.15.

⁴¹ Ian Jeffrey, Cultural Trends and Community Formation in a South African Township: Sharpeville, 1943-1985, MA Thesis, University of the Witwatersand, Johannesburg, 1985, p.216.

formation of separate line departments to serve each African ethnic group as well as colored and Indians. Thus, politically connected teachers might receive licenses and credit for shops, civil servants could invest in real estate, and supporters of the authorities would get government jobs.⁴² The consequence was the emergence of a conservative ruling elite in black communities unprecedented both in its opportunities for accumulation and in its internal cohesion.⁴³

Yet with the groups in favor of organized collective action out of the game, political life centered more than ever on the intrigues and conflicts of elite-linked factions. In the bantustans, matters were simpler still: politics largely involved competition between the followings of different chiefs. In the Transkei, Southall reported, "the competition between the ruling party and the opposition grouping has been characterized as principally factional conflict between local 'notables'."⁴⁴ While the cliques of civil society carried over into the political realm, politics made its mark on civil associations as well. In Grahamstown in 1967, Nyquist found "intense competition within voluntary associations among members of the upper stratum." Of 42 clubs he followed over a year, four collapsed due to factional clashes, while two-thirds of the rest suffered serious internal conflict.⁴⁵ Similarly,

⁴² Southall, *South Africa's Transkei*, op. cit., p.84, 88, 106 120, 126, 188.

⁴³ de Jongh noted in Port Elizabeth, "An elite group is apparent. It consists mainly of the official representatives of Ciskei and Transkei, Advisory Board Members, businessmen, ministers of religion, teachers, politicians, and nurses ... The effective network of these members included those people with whom they had multi-stranded links, eg they worked together and belonged to the same rugby club and church." *Interaction and Transaction*, op. cit., p.72.

⁴⁴ Southall, *South Africa's Transkei*, op. cit., p. 135; see also Mayer, "The Transkei Elite and the Elections of 1963," in P.C. Lloyd, ed., *The New Elites of Tropical Africa* (New York, Oxford University Press: 1966). Southall reports (*South Africa's Transkei*, op. cit., p.77) that the rural branches of the ruling party there were controlled directly by the chiefs, while the weak urban branches were small, riddled with factions, and drew activists from those with ties to chiefs or a desire for resources such as loans or licenses.

⁴⁵ Nyquist, *African Middle Class Elite*, op. cit., p.205.

kaTyakwadi reports that in a village in the Ciskei homeland, conflict between bantustan parties led to the collapse of a teacher's group, while in Mdantsane, the fast-growing township for people removed from East London, it led to the resignation of a sports administrator.⁴⁶

Along with elite factionalism, patronage politics also grew more intense in the era of high apartheid. Although black political institutions had little rule-making authority, the increasing reliance of blacks on state structures for access to necessities like shelter and jobs, the greater resources flowing through these institutions, and the widened discretion created by the growing number of laws and regulations they applied all created opportunities for patronage. "The increased bureaucratization and regimentation of life chances of the non-white population ... thus strengthened the power of these secondary rulers," as Adam noted.⁴⁷ Indeed, analysts writing of these bodies termed their leaders "patrons," "brokers," "go-betweens," or "links" with the authorities, the very language of clientelist politics.⁴⁸ The institutions dispensing patronage were grafted onto or adapted from traditional institutions, so that these relations of clientelism invoked older loyalties and shared world-views as well as material dependency.⁴⁹ In the rural homelands, Bantu Authorities stood at the apex of traditional structures: chiefs, headmen, councilors, and village assemblies of male household

⁴⁶ kaTyakwadi, The Development of the Political Party System, *op. cit.*, p.156.

⁴⁷ Adam, Modernizing Racial Domination, *op. cit.*, p.73.

⁴⁸ Local black leaders are termed patrons by de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*, and Southall, South Africa's Transkei, *op. cit.* They are called brokers in Charton, Ciskei, *op. cit.*, while kaTyakwadi calls them links or go-betweens, The Development of the Political Party System.

⁴⁹ For example, Green and Hirsch write, "The Ciskei [homeland] government has extended control over the inhabitants of closer settlements by using their monopoly over the allocation of what resources there are: houses, pensions, even, on occasion, contracts for migrant workers and jobs. The structures established through which to do this are deliberately designed to resemble the traditional controls practiced in pre-capitalist rural communities." "Baseless Headmen and Rootless Proletarians," *op. cit.*, p.5.

heads. In the cities, the institutional order parlayed this, with councilors elected by men who were registered occupiers of townships houses and migrant workers (usually also household heads).⁵⁰ Thus, clientelist ties often involved prestige and emotional bonds as well as resource flows – Pitt-Rivers' "lopsided friendship."⁵¹

Rural politics was marked by the growing power of the chiefs, individually and collectively. In the homelands, chiefs began to appoint headmen and councilors, who often started receiving government salaries. While these positions were still often filled by clan section heads, the new arrangements made them less accountable to the homestead heads who has previously selected them, and gave the chief more control. Chiefs also drew new resources from new functions: for instance, when they were granted the authority to register job-seekers with new tribal labor bureaus which would authorize them to go to the cities, chiefs commonly denied registration (and thus legal work) to recalcitrant subjects. Of course, not all chiefs abused their powers, and even those abuses did not eliminate respect for the chieftaincy, but in this era various observers refer to an "increasing authoritarian trend" in chiefly behavior.⁵² Their power was amplified as they banded together in homeland political parties, such as the Ciskei National Independence Party (CNIP), the Transkei National Independence Party (TNIP), and the like, which became the sole channel

⁵⁰ On homeland governance, see kaTyakwadi, The Development of the Political Party System, *op. cit.*, while on the franchise for urban communities, see de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*, regarding Port Elizabeth, and Swanepoel, Die Aandeel, *op. cit.*, for Soweto.

⁵¹ Cited in Johathan Powell, "Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics," American Political Science Review, vol.64 (1970).

⁵² Kotze, Traditionalism in African Local Government, *op. cit.*, p.278. See also Jeff Peires, "Continuity and Change in Ciskei Chiefship," Seminar Paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1977, and Peter Delius, "Migrants," *op. cit.*, p.12.

for the widening flows of patronage available at local and regional levels.⁵³ Southall's description of the TNIP applies equally well to the rest: "a party for the patrons."⁵⁴

In the urban areas, too, patronage became even more central to politics after the disappearance of the nationalist political organizations. In the crowded, fast-growing townships, housing was the most prized of all resources, and a most important one for patronage purposes. A typical case was that of Mdantsane, where the opposition Ciskei National Party (CNP) complained, "There is a screening of applications for houses and business sites in the townships, and a very watchful eye is being kept on rent defaulters, with a view to disowning supporters of the CNP of their 'permissions to occupy'."⁵⁵ Other resources exchanged for political support included business premises, land ownership, business relief, and help administrative procedures regarding passes, pensions, etc.⁵⁶ The white township administration only considered problems brought forward by councilors in official structures, which made such patrons indispensable conduits for individual grievances.⁵⁷ These resources provided the bases for urban political structures much like

⁵³ The names of such groups were often borrowed from nationalist movements elsewhere on the continent, particularly Zambia's United National Independence Party (UNIP).

⁵⁴ "The TNIP can be characterized as an elite party, which, although exhibiting outward forms that might suggest it has an independent existence of its own, is not only dominated by the chiefs but is actually inseparable from the whole structure of chieftaincy as revived under the Bantu Authorities system." Southall, South Africa's Transkei, *op. cit.*, p.135.

⁵⁵ CNP, Memorandum to General, Xhosa National Unit, 13 November 1973, State Archives, Pretoria. Cachalia reports similar behavior by the Consultative Committee in the Indian township of Actonville, Indian Representation and the State, *op. cit.*, p.102.

⁵⁶ CNP, Memorandum, *op. cit.*; J.T. Mabandla, Memorandum to Minister of Bantu Affairs and Development, 28 October 1974, State Archives, Pretoria; Whisson, "The Colored People," *op. cit.*, Interview No.1, Leonard Mosala, Johannesburg, October 22, 1992; Green and Hirsch, "Baseless Headmen and Rootless Proletarians," *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ For example, see Swanepoel, Die Aandee, *op. cit.*, and Green and Hirsch, "Baseless Headmen and Rootless Proletarians," *op. cit.*, p.12.

those in the countryside, where they strengthened networks and relationships growing out of civil society and neighborhood life.⁵⁸ For example, in Mdantsane, resource allocation would be influenced by people who had become unofficial "headmen" in their areas, where "they might offer a specific service – for example, a local shop keeper with a phone or a self-employed auto mechanic – until gradually they became de facto spokesmen for the street residents. As political opinion leaders, they played an important role in the wards and were normally consulted by Ciskeian party officials and ward councillors."⁵⁹

The case of Port Elizabeth shows how these factors worked together. De Jongh's massive study of the New Brighton Advisory Board concluded:

"The more prominent and powerful members of the Advisory Board ... found the power-base of their support in a core of multi-stranded relations radiating out to the various facets of their everyday lives. Through kinship group, business (or professional), church, sport, social and political relations, they could marshal more human and other resources than most township residents. Individuals within the different activity fields of their networks would not only represent a ready-made source of support, but also a potential force of organizers and canvassers."⁶⁰

These various neighborhood ties were reinforced by the resources AB members could call upon. Some possessed prestige from past ANC membership. In material terms, their role as rugby patrons, discussed in the last chapter, was only one aspect of the benefits they could provide: they helped link people in their areas to a variety of needed services and permissions. As one Port Elizabeth resident put it:

⁵⁸ "The role of the political parties in the urban areas had been observed to be aimed at using the existing political structures and not to establish a permanent political party framework. ... This cannot be an accident, because evidence stemming from the architects of separate development shows an insistence by these gentlemen on the traditional structures." kaTyakwadi, The Development of the Political Party System, *op. cit.*, p.191.

⁵⁹ Les Switzer, Politics and Communication in the Ciskei. An African Homeland in South Africa (Grahamstown, Institute for Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University: 1979), p.32. This gave the official parties considerable reach: one third of Mdantsane residents reported being canvassed by members of Ciskei homeland parties. *ibid.*, p.20.

⁶⁰ de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*, p.190.

"Their homes are always crowded with people with complaints. They stay the whole day. Sometimes they are taken to the *nolali* (the township superintendent) to take up their case. They win most of their cases. Then people get their house back. Or they fix up (pass problems) or their job problems."⁶¹

Dan Qeqe, a prominent Port Elizabeth businessman, rugby official, and AB member, took Tuesdays and Thursdays off from work to deal with the 50 petitioners who packed his yard in an average week. "When elections came, people didn't forget," he says. "Immediately we succeeded in helping individuals, those people were encouraged to vote for such personnel."⁶² The result was what de Jongh called "transactional" politics, in which each AB member acted as "the patron in a patron-client relationship." He explained, "Members of the public do use the councilors to help them deal with the administration and other problems. Payment for such services comes in the form of voter support, respect, status and access to information which can be used as ammunition in further attacks on the administration."⁶³

Drawn by the resources and ideology of the collaborating elites, and facing a lack of alternatives, a sizable proportion of township residents turned towards them in the 1960s, particularly the more conservative and traditionally-inclined ones. As a result, the leaders "inside the system" frequently succeeded in building mass followings larger than those enjoyed by the 1950s politicians who participated in official institutions. In Soweto, for example, there were great expectations in some quarters at the creation of the UBC in 1968, and 35% of household heads voted, more than three times the turnout of AB elections in the

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.194.

⁶² Interview, Dan Qeqe, Port Elizabeth, May 20, 1992.

⁶³ de Jongh, *Interaction and Transaction*, *op. cit.*, pp.197, 687.

previous decade.⁶⁴ At the 1971 Mdantsane council election, Pauw observed "much greater interest than there was in the East London Advisory Board elections in the middle Fifties." Turnout ran over 30%, and many voters were still on line when the polls closed.⁶⁵ In Welkom, where the turnout was 7% or less in the different wards in the country's first UBC election in 1966, it reached around 20% in the next vote three years later.⁶⁶ In Port Elizabeth and on the East Rand, the ANC's strongholds in the 1950s, participation remained at the same levels as in the previous decade: 12% in the former, around 30% in the latter.⁶⁷ Even there, however, council elections were events: winning candidates in KwaThema, for example, were cheered by crowds and carried around the township shoulder-high.⁶⁸ In the colored and Indian areas, turnouts of 10% or less were frequent in the more politicized cities of Cape Town and Durban (particularly in the former, where they were down by half or more from the era when coloreds had the municipal vote.)⁶⁹ However, they were considerably higher in the outlying areas, which lacked the tradition of opposition and, outside the Cape, the history of the franchise.⁷⁰ Given the restricted opportunities for participation by both the black public and politicians, as well as the limited power afforded

⁶⁴ Interview No.1, Leonard Mosala, Johannesburg, October 22, 1992, and Swanepoel, Die Aandeel, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵ Beryl Pauw, The Second Generation (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed. 1973), p.212.

⁶⁶ J.C.N. Mentz, Die Stedelike Bantoeraad van Welkom, BA Honors thesis, Potchefstroom University, Potchefstroom, 1970, p.186.

⁶⁷ de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*, p.135, Mentz, Die Stedelike Bantoeraad, *op. cit.*, p.186.

⁶⁸ Interview Andrew Mokone, Johannesburg, November 12, 1991.

⁶⁹ For example, in management committee elections in 1972 in Cape Town, turnout ran just 1% of eligible voters in Kensington – just one-twentieth of the number who voted in the municipal election in 1966 – while in Athlone it was barely half of the 1966 figure. Cape Herald, December 9, 1972.

⁷⁰ For example, in the small Western Cape town of Worcester, turnout in a colored management committee election was 53% of registered voters. Cape Herald, September 1, 1973.

their subordinate institutions, one could hardly call this vigorous participatory democracy. Yet the political life of black communities in the 1960s also appears far from a quiescent void, the prevailing image in the literature.

The conservative black leaders scored their greatest successes in the elections for bantustan governments and the Colored Persons' Representatives Council. These bodies afforded a platform for conservative populism on a far greater scale than previously was available through the parish-pump politics of local-level elites. Although they could not alter the basic laws of apartheid, they were chosen through the first elections in which all blacks of the relevant race or ethnic group were allowed to vote, affording opportunities to spread the collaborators' ideas more widely and structures to cumulate patronage across localities and at regional or national level. While the election outcomes were muddied somewhat by the manipulations of officials and the limited choices offered, they nonetheless offered the conservative elites opportunities to mobilize and gauge support on an unprecedented scale. In the Ciskeian election of 1973, for example, the turnout was 51% of registered voters. Significantly, electoral mobilization was highest in the cities, running to 70% in Mdantsane and Port Elizabeth – comparable to the levels of mobilization achieved by the ANC's mass actions of the previous decade. Turnout was far lower – as low as 20% – in the smaller towns where the homeland parties were not active and notables stood on their own, in the older fashion of AB politics.⁷¹ In the Transkei, turnout in the first election in 1963, where the opposition won a majority of the popular vote, was 68%. After the pro-Pretoria TNIP secured a majority in the homeland legislature through chiefly support, opposition supporters increasingly stayed home during elections, bringing turnout down to a

⁷¹ kaTyakwadi, *The Development of the Political Party System*, *op. cit.*, pp.119-121.

still-sizable 34% by 1973.⁷² In the first CPRC election of 1969, 49% of registered voters went to the polls, and pro-government parties garnered 54% of the vote. As in the local elections, turnout varied by area, running under 30% in the urban Cape, against 70% or more in other regions.⁷³

The social base of conservative leaders revealed by participation in the regime's elections appears to be based on a mix of dependency, personal popularity, and a shared outlook. De Jongh's survey of 200 Advisory Board voters in Port Elizabeth in 1973 found them to be laborers or manual workers, rural born, with little education, and averaging 45 in age.⁷⁴ Similarly, Morse and Peel's survey of 387 potential CPRC voters in Cape Town in 1969 found that more than 55% of those of lower socio-economic status intended to vote, against only 27% of those of higher status.⁷⁵ In other words, the groups who were the most needy, parochial, and oriented towards the patrimonial traditions on which township patronage culture drew tended to participate in government-created institutions. The better educated, with a broader outlook and less dependence upon state resources, tended to stay away, reflecting the disdain for the new political order of the professional elite, but they made up minorities in their communities. The role played by patronage in shaping voting behavior is confirmed by Southall's work on the Transkei. He notes: "It is the quest for immediate benefits which may in part underlie the post-1963 voting trend in favor of the TNIP, as voters have sought to locate the patron most capable of bringing home the goods.

⁷² Southall, *South Africa's Transkei*, *op. cit.*, p.141.

⁷³ Whisson, "The Colored People," *op. cit.*, pp.49-52.

⁷⁴ de Jongh, *Interaction and Transaction*, *op. cit.*, p.195.

⁷⁵ Stanley Morse and Stanton Peele, "'Colored Power' vs. 'Colored Bourgeoisie': Political Attitudes Among South African Coloreds," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 38 (1974), p.332. Fieldwork took place in September 1969.

Unless there have been local factors which have intervened, this will have effectively meant voting for the ruling party, for to return opposition candidates endangers a constituency's position in the queue for receipt of material benefits."⁷⁶ Similar conclusions were reached in studies of the Ciskei and CPRC elections.⁷⁷

Yet it would be a mistake to regard the patronage politics of official institutions as simple coercion, because its practitioners were often genuinely popular. They responded to demands from grassroots constituents, many of whom – particularly the more traditionalist - - shared their political values and vision. For example, discussing the Port Elizabeth Advisory Board, de Jongh found that "some of the men who came forward (and keep coming forward) were recognized leaders in their community and were men with a wide following. These men did achieve results, though often very modest, from within the context of the local-level political arena."⁷⁸ In East London, Atkinson reports that the AB had recovered some legitimacy by the late 1960s.⁷⁹ Switzer's poll of Mdantsane residents in 1975-76 found that "it was apparent that [the Ciskeian political parties] had already gained a measure of support from the populace." Some 32% belonged to one, and Ciskei Chief

⁷⁶ Southall, South Africa's Transkei, *op. cit.*, p.126.

⁷⁷ In the Ciskei, kaTyakwadi found, "Candidates used traditional institutions to recruit votes," describing how villagers supported the ruling party to obtain material benefits. The Development of the Political Party System, *op. cit.*, pp.123, 169. Regarding the CPRC, Whisson notes, "Favors in the form of shop sites, liquor licenses and business loans are widely believed to follow support for the (pro-government) Federal Party. It is also believed that 'pork barrel' politics may come into vogue, with special aid being given to areas which returned Federal candidates and credit being given to Federal members for any development that takes place." "The Colored People," *op. cit.*, p.51.

⁷⁸ de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*, p.738.

⁷⁹ Doreen Atkinson, Cities and Citizenship: Towards a Normative Analysis of the Urban Order in South Africa with Special Reference to East London, 1950-1986, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1991, p.412.

Minister Lennox Sebe emerged as the most popular politician, with 25% support.⁸⁰ In the Transkei, despite declining voter turnout, 61% of residents pronounced themselves satisfied with the government there in a 1974 survey.⁸¹ In all these different places, the reasons why people felt this way focused on material benefits: the township and bantustan authorities were seen as trying to help residents, to improve schooling and services, to moderate relocation policies, and the like.⁸² Obviously, it is impossible to say how much support the conservative groupings would have enjoyed if somehow a free and fair election, open to all parties, could have been conducted in South Africa at the time, but such a counterfactual exercise is of little utility. It is clear, too, that many blacks wanted little to do with the new conservative politics. Nonetheless, the evidence regarding the circumstances actually prevailing in South Africa from the mid 1960s through the early 1970s, shows that traditionalist, patronage-oriented politics established a substantial following for the conservative elite group participating in government-created institutions.

How participants in official politics exercised influence, voiced popular concerns, and cultivated support can be seen by a look at politics in Soweto in the 1960s. Although many national leaders who had lived in Johannesburg were in jail, like Nelson Mandela or Robert Sobukwe, or in exile, such as Oliver Tambo and Potlako Leballo, there was considerably more continuity in local-level leadership. Many of Soweto's principal civil leaders had served on the Advisory Boards in the 1950s, and quite a few joined the UBC the

⁸⁰ Switzer, Politics and Communication in the Ciskei, *op. cit.*, pp.6-8. The sample size was 300, the fieldwork conducted between November 1975 and February 1976.

⁸¹ Markinor Homelands Survey, Markinor, Johannesburg, 1974, Table 35. The sample size was 252, and fieldwork was conducted in 1974.

⁸² Markinor Homelands Survey, *op. cit.*, Atkinson, Cities and Citizenship, *op. cit.*, p.412, and de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*

following decade. The most important of these was James "Sofazonke" Mpanza; others included P.Q. Vundla, Peter Lengene, and Ephraim Tshabalala. They were joined on the Council by some younger, newer figures, who included Leonard Mosala, Francis Ncube, and David Thebehali.

The foundations of the support that the Soweto UBC members enjoyed lay in their neighborhood networks, personal reputations, and followings.⁸³ The most powerful individual during the 1960s was the aging Mpanza, a classic conservative populist. His fame dated back to his days in the 1940s as a patronage-based squatter boss, the "uncrowned king" of Shantytown "not only in political areas, but also in other areas of the community."⁸⁴ When the Shantytown residents won houses and moved to Orlando, Mpanza won an Orlando AB seat, and he kept his following there, especially among the Zulu. Even though Mpanza embraced the policy of separate development, his personal history also gave him popularity throughout the township, particularly among older, poorer, and less educated residents. This broader following was embodied in a loose network of small ethnically and neighborhood-based groups of supporters. Even after Sofazonke's death in 1970, his followers were able to bring together weekly meetings of 200 supporters to discuss township issues. Similar power-bases were mobilized for different ends by men like Mosala, who belonged to a younger group of members who elected Francis Ngcube as the first chair of the UBC in 1968 over Mpanza. Mosala was a young professional, an accountant for IBM in his 30s, who was active in neighborhood affairs and soccer. He sought to use the Council to

⁸³ This paragraph draws on Clive Glaser, "Public Enemy Number One: Crime and Policing in the Era of High Apartheid," Seminar Paper, Post-Graduate Seminar, University of the Witwatersand, Johannesburg, 1992, Swanepoel, *Die Aandeel*, *op. cit.*, and Interview No.1 Leonard Mosala, Johannesburg, October 22, 1992.

⁸⁴ Swanepoel, *Die Aandeel*, *op. cit.*, p.127. On Sofazonke's early career, see Stadler, "Birds in the Cornfields," in Doug Hindson, ed. *Working Papers in Southern African Studies*, vol.3 (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1983).

change what he could, and establish a cleaner municipal politics. Yet while he was personally more honest, his Tladi Civic Committees differed little from Mpanza's group in their basic *modus operandi*. Neither had a clear program, and both groups were weakly institutionalized, working through a politics of patronage and parochialism centered on strong personalities.

The Soweto UBC embodied a civic politics founded on delivering individual and neighborhood patronage. The brokerage role of the AB members provided them with the essentials of patronage: the ability to secure permits in passes, houses, and other resources. Councilors took advantage of the fact that the administration would only respond to requests through AB channels to build their own followings, and in some cases, to demand bribes as well. When a favor was sought, an elaborate ritual of deference – almost a parody of that due a chief – was enacted, even by professionals. Dr. Ntatho Motlana, a leading Soweto medical practitioner in this era, recalls:

"Even someone like me, if you were in trouble on a permit, you had to go to them. People like Mpanza made a living of this. If you wanted your wife to live with you and he took you to see the white superintendent, who was corrupt as hell, you had to hire a car, go with him, and so on. For this, they were recognized in some way as community leaders. And of course, the government made these things happen to increase their credibility and usefulness."⁸⁵

Those who did not go in for payoffs still practiced patronage politics, seeking favors for constituents or sponsoring soccer or cricket clubs (though compared to Port Elizabeth, sportsmen played a much smaller role in civic politics in Soweto).

In addition to servicing their constituents, Soweto AB members also articulated a patrimonial approach to the major public issue of the day: crime. They emphasized restoring the parental control over unruly youth, drawing on the traditional rhetoric of age

⁸⁵ Interview, Ntatho Motlana, Soweto, July 25, 1992.

and generational hierarchy. For example, Lengene drew rapturous cheers from a crowd of over 500 packing a well-known landmark, Morris Isaacson Hall, in December 1967 when he pledged to establish a "tight connection" between the parents and the boards to fight teenage crime.⁸⁶ Board members often tried to assert the older generation's authority through self-help. Mpanza ran a "parent's court" where young offenders were sentenced to beatings and whippings, while Mosala organized strong-arm squads to face down local gangsters.

These practices built support for UBC members, despite their acceptance of working within structures created by the apartheid regime. One measure was the unprecedented 35% turnout at the 1968 election, the first for the board. Another occurred at Mpanza's funeral in September 1970, thronged by 20,000 from all walks of life and parts of the township.⁸⁷ In short, as Glaser notes:

"In the political vacuum of the 1960s, the Advisory Boards were an important mouthpiece of residents. Although technically powerless, the AB members, who were elected officials, retained a certain legitimacy In the absence of alternatives, thousands of residents looked to the members to articulate their grievances."⁸⁸

While patron-client ties between the state-linked elite and the masses deepened in the Sixties, black professionals chafed within the atomizing bounds of narrow professionalism and racial corporatism. The takeover by the state of the church-sponsored school system and medical facilities for blacks during the 1950s turned the majority of black professionals into state employees. As early as the 1950s, teachers opposed to the apartheid Bantu Education system were dismissed.⁸⁹ In the next decade, political activity outside

⁸⁶ Glaser, "Public Enemy Number One," *op. cit.*, p.5. The rest of this paragraph also draws on this source.

⁸⁷ Interview No.1, Leonard Mosala, Johannesburg, October 22, 1992.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Leo Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie* (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1965), pp.177-188-90.

officially-created township and homeland structures was declared professional misconduct.⁹⁰ Thanks to official recognition, as well as victimization of dissidents, the conservative black teachers bodies which had broken away from the more militant groups in the late 1950s – the African Teachers' Association of South Africa (ATASA) and the Cape Professional Teachers Association (CPTA) for coloreds – grew rapidly in the 1960s, becoming the controlling force in the profession.⁹¹ Similarly, the 1957 Nursing Act forced African nurses to set up separate branches within the South African Nursing Association, electing a toothless advisory body and one white executive council member as the only channels for their grievances. Hospital matrons also penalized nurses opposed to government policy, forcing them, too, to choose between their politics and their jobs.⁹² Civil servants in the bantustans faced dismissals and transfers if they associated themselves with opponents of the ruling parties, even those operating "within the system."⁹³ The consequence of all this was clear, as the head of the Grahamstown African Teachers Association plaintively explained: "We cannot afford to be very active in community affairs as an organization – we may get in trouble with the government."⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Race Relations Survey, 1970.

⁹¹ Jonathan Hyslop, "Teachers and Trade Unions," South African Labor Bulletin, vol.11 (1986), p.94.

⁹² Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, *op. cit.*, pp.220, 223; Shula Marks, paper on African nurses, Seminar Paper, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1988?

⁹³ For instance, in the Ciskei there were complaints of dismissals and transfers at very short notice of school inspectors, teachers, civil servants, and township councilors associated with the opposition Ciskei National Party. See Black Review, 1974 (King William's Town, Black Community Programs: 1975), p.41, as well as Memorandum, CNP to Commissioner General, Xhosa National Unit, 13 November 1973, and Memo, CNP to Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, 28 October 1974, State Archives, Pretoria.

⁹⁴ Nyquist, African Middle Class Elite, *op. cit.*, p.254.

The internal life of the emergent black professional bodies was defined by statizing corporatism and racial isolation. "Statizing corporatism" has been noted as a characteristic of bureaucratic authoritarian regimes generally in the 1960s and 1970s, involving "representative" bodies that function on a top-down basis to immobilize the social sectors forming their membership, who are usually under formal requirements or strong inducements to belong. Their leaders enjoy positions on the basis of government sanction, while challengers are deterred by their apparent futility, co-opted, or crushed.⁹⁵ The functioning of black professional organizations in South Africa in this era fits this model quite well. For instance, a study of an African branch of the South African Nursing Association found its leaders to be conservative older nurses, holding senior posts in the profession. In other words, the top African nurses controlled the very body meant to protest members of the profession against abuses of their power. African nurses were legally required to belong, but few took an interest in what they saw as a "stooge body" that did not represent them. Of 1,000 members, only 70 turned up at the branch annual general meeting, allowing the collaborationist leaders to function as a self-perpetuating oligarchy.⁹⁶ In ATASA similar top-down practices could be observed: principals recruited the teachers at their schools into the organization. "The ATASA unions sought to advance their members' interests by polite lobbying of the Department of Bantu Education," as Hyslop notes. Nonetheless, as he adds, "Organizations which offered a 'practical' relationship with the authorities, through which some concrete concessions could be gained, had a strong appeal." The tradition of mobilization among black teachers was forgotten – except for the

⁹⁵ Guillermo O'Donnell, "Corporatism and the Question of the State," in James Malloy, ed., Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press: 1977), p.69.

organization of choir competitions, into which members were encouraged to put substantial time and effort. (These, too, provided incentives for membership, as schools could not participate unless all their teachers had signed up with the association.)⁹⁷ The isolation of individual professionals before the leaders of such associations was paralleled by the isolation of the professionals in each race group, cut off from other blacks with similar jobs and interests by the racial structuring of representation.

Rivalries among the conservative leadership cliques running the professional groups led to a resurgence of clientelism within them, which further inhibited political opposition by their members. In the prevailing circumstances, where political ideologies counted for little, personalities counted a great deal. In Reef town, Brandel-Syrier reported, every professional organization was split into two or three factions. These, in turn, were held together by individualized patron-client ties between higher and lower ranks of the profession on tribal or other lines.⁹⁸ Among teachers, for example, a form of patronage control was exercised through appointments, since senior figures in ATASA were also principals and school inspectors with influence over hiring and firing.⁹⁹ School boards also changed, as the educated withdrew and uneducated traders, chiefs, and other conservatives took their places, bringing transfers, promotions, and dismissals even further within the

⁹⁶ Angela Cheater, "A Marginal Elite? African Registered Nurses in Durban, South Africa," *African Studies*, vol.33 (1974), pp.145-6.

⁹⁷ Philip Vilardo, "Contemporary Conflict in Black Teacher Politics: The Role of the Africanization of the Apartheid Education Structure, 1940-1992," Seminar Paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1992, p.15, and Hyslop, "Teachers and Trade Unions," *op. cit.*, p.94.

⁹⁸ For a discussion of the complementarity between corporatism and clientelism, see Robert Kaufman, "Corporatism, Clientelism, and Partisan Conflict: A Study of Seven Latin American Countries," in John Malloy, ed., *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press: 1977), pp.113-4.

⁹⁹ Hyslop, "Teachers and Trade Unions," *op. cit.*, p.94.

ambit of clientelism, corruption, and politics.¹⁰⁰ Among colored whose influence as local opinion leaders was generally recognized, patronage was blatantly exercised by the Federal Party (FP), which controlled the Colored Persons Representatives Council after the 1969 election. One FP leader wrote a job-seeker, "I can mean much to you if you are in [Regional FP Executive member Willie] Africa's good books. It will naturally be unfortunate for you and for us if the FP loses control of the [Colored Affairs] Administration."¹⁰¹

Besides professional bodies, salaries and promotions provided further reasons for quiescence: despite the lower status and low ceilings facing black professionals, many enjoyed increasing pay and social mobility in this era. The tightening racial and political restrictions drove the cream of the middle classes out of their jobs and in many cases out of the country. Between 1960 and 1970, the number of Africans in South Africa with university degrees actually fell, from 2,009 to 1,400, despite the establishment of separate black universities, while the number with MA or Ph.D. degrees plummeted by 80%.¹⁰² The absolute barriers to advancement within white South African institutions which apartheid created put paid to the old middle class dream of peaceable assimilation. However, new opportunities were opened by separate development: growing township and bantustan populations needed school inspectors, educational planners, clerks, and higher civil servants. Thus, as Vilardo notes in the case of education, "The effects of Bantu Education on the African teaching profession were differentiated, contradictory, and not entirely alienating. On the one hand, there was a concerted effort to weaken the professional autonomy of

¹⁰⁰ Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, *op. cit.*, pp.184-5, Brandel-Syrier, Reeftown Elite, *op. cit.*, pp.110, 177.

¹⁰¹ Cape Herald, January 12, 1974. There were also press reports of the FP offering top teaching posts to individuals if they would join the party and appointing an unqualified party member to a principalship. Cape Herald, October, 1973, August 18, 1973.

¹⁰² Republic of South Africa, Population Census: 1960, Population Census: 1970.

teachers evident in the repressive school board system, but on the other hand there were new promotional opportunities for 'loyal and able teachers'.¹⁰³ Substantial pay increases also played a role. For example, in 1962, pay scales for African teachers were increased for the first time since 1946, then again in 1967, and almost annually from 1969 on. The starting salary of a beginning male teacher with a higher primary certificate tripled, in real terms, between 1959 and 1970. Although racial inequalities remained substantial, for many black professionals these increases allowed their families to rise from near poverty to modest comfort.¹⁰⁴ Repression and redistribution, together, thus allowed the co-option of most black professionals in the Sixties: those who remained in the country generally shut their mouths and collected their checks.

In sum, contrary to the received belief that collaborating black leaders were mere puppets with no followers, the evidence suggests that the black elites which co-operated with the apartheid regime succeeded in building significant bases of support through their conservative politics of clientelism and corporatism. In regard to local-level patronage politics, there was more continuity than is usually recognized between the 1950s and 1960s. The same practices that made up much of the sinews of black political groups – including the ANC – in the earlier era carried over into the later one, as did many of the people involved. The significance of the banning of political movements was to leave the more conservative and locally-oriented elites alone on the stage, following the elimination of the more radical and national-minded elements from active politics. Those alienated professionals, for their part, were kept in check by the corporatist practices of the state-

¹⁰³ Vilardo, "Contemporary Conflict in Black Teacher Politics," *op. cit.*, p.10.

¹⁰⁴ For details, see Charney, "Janus in Blackface," *op. cit.*, pp.27-31.

supported professional bodies which rose to prominence in this era. Obviously, it is impossible to say whether the black conservatives would have been able to hold their own had free and fair elections including the liberation movements been imaginable at this time. In the absence of such a contest, however, it does seem clear that they had succeeded in persuading or co-opting significant support, while immobilizing most of their opponents. It would also appear that the establishment of larger political fields of contention through bantustan and CPRC elections enabled a particularistic, conservative populism to find a substantial audience for the first time. Confronting the system, then, would mean challenging these black power brokers in two respects: exposing their practices and contradicting their ideas.

III. DISCOURSE WITHIN BOUNDS: RESTRICTING THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The politics of acquiescence in a modernizing authoritarian society such as South Africa in the 1960s required more than the intensification of traditionalist state-society relations: it also called for the taming of opposition political discourse and activity. An important aspect was the panoply of repressive laws and practices which made it increasingly difficult to express dissent publicly. Another was the control of the agenda of the subordinate institutions allotted to blacks: the fundamentals of the regime were made into non-issues by design. Moreover, the localized, oral channels of discourse which had underlain traditional social relations were kept at the center of officially-accepted black

politics, while the messages transmitted were reinforced by a new oral medium: radio. The inward-looking tendency they expressed was reinforced by a turn towards quietist religious movements, a shift of collective energy towards private piety which made them the country's fastest-growing religions. The effect of all these changes was to restrict the public sphere in an effort to make it impossible for ideas and arguments dangerous to the white-controlled regime to reach a sizable audience among black South Africans.

A variety of repressive laws were passed, tightened, or applied in South Africa during the 1960s to render effective extra-parliamentary opposition impossible. The Suppression of Communism Act was used more extensively than before to "ban" individuals: they would be confined to an area, placed under house arrest much of the time, forbidden to enter the premises of schools, universities, and newspapers, and made unable to join organizations, attend meetings, or speak or write for publication. (The provisions were aptly termed "civil death.") After the Sabotage Act of 1962, which provided for renewable 180-day terms of detention without trial, torture of political suspects became common, and the minimal limitations imposed by that law were removed by the Terrorism Act of 1967, which allowed indefinite detention. The two laws also imposed lengthy prison terms (five years minimum) for lengthy lists of offenses so vaguely defined as to deter subversive speech, let alone action. The Publications Control Act was used to prohibit publications by the nationalist movements, or favorable to them, along with thousands of other anti-government or left-wing periodicals, books, and films. (South African legend holds that even Black Beauty was banned, and that when the Director of Publications was informed that it dealt with a horse, not a woman, he replied, "That makes it even worse!") Control of television was no problem, because there was no television: for the dour Afrikaners in

power, TV was a threat to good order and morals. The rationale for these repressive measures was spelt out by Adam: "The frequent banning of 'undesirable' books, films, and the much debated prohibition on TV ... reflect an attempt to maintain the lag in political information on which white domination largely rests."¹⁰⁵

In addition to control via laws, black political expression was subject to more informal but pervasive control by township, homeland, and security officials. "It is with extreme difficulty that we can have a meeting," a Port Elizabeth AB member said in the early 1970s. "During the last ten years, many meetings have been banned."¹⁰⁶ Public meetings in townships required prior approval from the white authorities in charge.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, in the Ciskei homeland, the *inkundla* (village council) and headman had to approve political gatherings.¹⁰⁸ The white Bantu Affairs Commissioner passed on the nominations of the members of each *inkundla*, while candidates for the UBC and African School Board in Grahamstown were vetted by the local Security Police.¹⁰⁹ (In Welkom the police attended every UBC meeting, leading Mentz to comment dryly, "This inhibited debate.")¹¹⁰ The use of informers at public meetings and wiretapping of private conversations was rumored to be pervasive, and this appears to have been the case. Files of the Justice Ministry which I received special permission to examine included detailed

¹⁰⁵ Adam, Modernizing Racial Domination, *op. cit.*, p.106.

¹⁰⁶ de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*, p.182.

¹⁰⁷ Public gatherings in Soweto required the approval of Johannesburg's Non-European Affairs Department, Swanepoel, Die Aandeel, *op. cit.*, p.170. In Port Elizabeth, the township superintendent had to give permission, after being informed of the expected length, attendance, and speakers, de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*, p.181.

¹⁰⁸ kaTyakwadi, The Development of the Political Party System, *op. cit.*, pp.170, 176.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.170; Nyquist, African Middle Class Elite, *op. cit.*, pp.249-50.

¹¹⁰ Mentz, Die Stedelike Bantoeraad, *op. cit.*, p.198.

reports on a township meeting in Mdantsane in 1973, apparently produced by someone who attended, and on a telephone conversation between the Chief Ministers of the Ciskei and Transkei, which had apparently been taped. They appeared typical: markings on them indicated that these reports were part of a far vaster intelligence filing system, presumably that of the Security Police.

The heavy hand of the White Establishment, inside and outside the state, also made itself felt when parties competed in elections for government-created bodies. The Security Police were reported to have intervened in the factional conflicts of Transkei's ruling National Independence Party, ferrying approved leaders to meetings and investigating their opponents.¹¹¹ Similarly, in the campaigns for the Colored Persons Representatives Council in 1969 and for a by-election to the Council in 1973, there were press reports that Security Branch policemen intimidated voters, questioning them about their views on the opposition Labor Party.¹¹² Conservative whites also had a hand in funding some of the parties standing for places in official institutions. Thus, for example, the Commissioner-General of the Transkei wrote to the Minister of Bantu Affairs in 1975, "As you are aware, next year there will be a general election at hand which will again require R4-5,000. I will provide all possible help to put together plans to draw in [TNIP] party funds."¹¹³ Likewise, in the CPRC elections, there were reports that the Broederbond -- the interlocking directorate of Afrikaner leaders in the NP and the leading institutions of Afrikaans civil society -- intervened heavily on behalf of the pro-apartheid Federal Party. They claimed that the FP was given between

¹¹¹ Southall, *South Africa's Transkei*, *op. cit.*, pp.139-40.

¹¹² Whisson, "The Colored People," *op. cit.*, p.53, and *Cape Herald*, October 13, 1973.

¹¹³ Commissioner-General, Transkei, to Minister of Bantu Affairs and Development, 5 December 1975, State Archives, Pretoria.

R30,000 and R50,000, and that whites were urged by the Bond to register coloreds to vote and transport them to the polls.¹¹⁴ Though it would be a mistake to conclude that because of these maneuvers, the government-created institutions and elections were completely invalid as expressions of popular opinion, equally, it would be naive to ignore that both laws and official practices helped determine which discourses and contestants would have the greatest opportunities to be heard.

Beyond overt repression, whites had a large measure of control over the agenda of black politics, ensuring that the foundations of the regime were kept out of consideration. The definition of which issues are legitimate, and which will remain "non-issues," was termed the "second face of power," by Bachrach and Baratz, lying behind that of overt political conflict.¹¹⁵ One measure of the exercise of such power used in political science is to examine which issues institutions consider – and which they ignore.¹¹⁶ By this test, the agenda of the subordinate political institutions, though not insignificant to black South Africans, was narrowly restricted to bread and butter issues arising from local and regional affairs and the implementation of apartheid laws. For example, the issues arising before the Port Elizabeth Advisory Board were mostly immediate and material: transport, education, health, trading, business, and labor.¹¹⁷ For the South African Indian Council, the overwhelming concern was the implementation of the Group Areas Act, which was moving

¹¹⁴ B. Mina, "The Colored Persons Representatives Council: Ten Years' Hard Labor," BA Honors thesis, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1978, pp.56, 66, Post, May 2, 1971, Cape Herald, August 18, 1973.

¹¹⁵ Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, "The Two Faces of Power," American Political Science Review, vol.56 (1962).

¹¹⁶ John Gaventa, Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley (Urbana, University of Illinois Press: 1980).

¹¹⁷ de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*, p.664.

most Indian families out of their homes or businesses. Others included the government's Indian investment corporation, the salaries and promotions of Indian civil servants, and amenities in Indian areas.¹¹⁸ Similarly, the Ciskei legislature spent its time on the budget, liquor brewing, the public service, land, chieftainship, and patronage.¹¹⁹ None of these bodies had any say over the basic laws governing the lives of blacks in "white" South Africa, such as the pass laws, the Group Areas Act, security legislation, race classification, or the structure of education and health services, let alone the franchise. They also lacked effective attributes of sovereignty, such as a say over their borders, monetary and fiscal policy, defense and foreign affairs. Charton's comment regarding the Ciskei parliament applied more generally to the limits on the agendas of the state-created bodies: "the capability of the legislature is crippled by its incorporation into the wider socio-economic system of the Republic over which it has no control, and little influence, and for whose sins of omissions it often has to accept the blame."¹²⁰

In terms of social communications, state structures relied upon the persisting influence of orality, an attribute of the personal relations of dependency upon which they were based. In the homelands, communications were hierarchical, with a very restricted flow of information to household heads via chiefs and headmen. Thus, in one Ciskeian village, most heads of families were unaware of the existence of the homeland legislature, despite the fact that the local chief was a minister there. In the Transkei, Kotze described local politics as "a case of follow-the-chief," commenting that political recruitment occurred

¹¹⁸ Race Relations Survey, 1971, p.22.

¹¹⁹ Nancy Charton, "The Legislature," in The Ciskei: Economy and Politics of Dependence in a South African Homeland, Nancy Charton, ed., (London, Croom Helm: 1980), pp.151, 156.

¹²⁰ ibid., p.181.

"among people who have little or no knowledge of, and who generally do not participate in, national political issues."¹²¹ Nonetheless, the credibility of news from traditional authority was high, at least among other adult men: 60% of the Ciskeian household heads in Switzer's 1976 survey reported that they considered the *inkundla* the most acceptable source of news.¹²² Those who participated in the official political structures in the cities used a similar *modus operandi*, based on personal ties and face-to-face communication. Port Elizabeth AB campaigns involved mobilization by word of mouth, as candidates activated people they knew who possessed political resources, including kin, friends (often with ethnic or homeboy ties), fellow rugby executive members, business and work associates, and connections in homeland political parties. AB member Dan Qeqe described the process: "We get our family and friends to help us and to speak to other people. We also meet influential people."¹²³

The influence of face-to-face communications with people connected with government was reinforced by a new technology for oral communication: state-controlled African language radio, known as Radio Bantu. A rarity in the early 1960s, radios spread widely in African homes during the boom. By 1975, a Soweto survey found them in the homes of 72% of all residents, including those of three-fifths of the illiterate.¹²⁴ In the Eastern Cape, Switzer's survey found that 80% of household heads in Mdantsane and 36%

¹²¹ Switzer, Politics and Communication in the Ciskei, *op. cit.*, p.7. Kotze, Traditionalism in African Local Government, *op. cit.*, pp.292-3.

¹²² Switzer, Politics and Communication in the Ciskei, *op. cit.*, p.20.

¹²³ de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*, pp.178-9.

¹²⁴ Market Research Africa, Today's Urban Black Household (Johannesburg, 1975), Q.31a

of those in two rural villages listened regularly to news on Radio Bantu.¹²⁵ The government-controlled African broadcasting service made no secret of its conservative, pro-apartheid and tradition leanings. Radio Bantu's news and documentaries focused on developments and personalities in the homelands and promoting tribal identity in the towns. (A typical broadcast was entitled, "Today in the Transkeian Parliament.")¹²⁶ Entertainment programs stressed the virtue of tradition and the wickedness of the city, while music broadcasts – featuring the lively, popular *mbube* (choral) and *mbaqanga* (Afro-rock) forms – were made apolitical by strict vetting of lyrics. (Joseph Shabalala, leader of the biggest-selling *mbube* group, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, candidly admitted, "We keep the radio in mind when we compose. If something is contentious they don't play it." The result was exciting titles like "Ikhaya Likhababa" ("My Father's Home") and "Izinkomo Zikhababa" ("My Father's Cows").)¹²⁷ Nonetheless, the formula worked: not only was listenership to the broadcasts high, but they were also widely believed. In Mdantsane, Radio Bantu's reports on the Ciskei were considered as credible as those in the newspapers by African household heads who followed both, while 80% of those in the villages surveyed by Switzer said were satisfied with the network's news coverage.¹²⁸ Thus, a modern technology – radio – reinforced the oral focus of the public sphere.

Inward-looking, quietist churches and religious movements also experienced explosive, officially-sanctioned growth in 1960s South Africa, acting as another social

¹²⁵ Switzer, Politics and Communication in the Ciskei, *op. cit.*, p.11.

¹²⁶ ibid., p.13.

¹²⁷ Jeffrey, Cultural Trends, *op. cit.*, p.244, and Muff Anderssen, Music in the Mix (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1980), p.87.

¹²⁸ Switzer, Politics and Communication in the Ciskei, *op. cit.*, pp.15, 10.

muffler for political dissent. Particularly rapid growth occurred in the fiercely conservative Protestant fundamentalist groupings, such as the Assemblies of God, studied by Mayer among Africans in East London.¹²⁹ These groups had thoroughly accommodated themselves to the apartheid order, with internal segregation, white-dominated hierarchies, and strongly apolitical teachings. Membership also soared in the syncretistic African Independent Churches, most notably the Zion Christian Church.¹³⁰ These were groups which demanded intense commitment from their followers; they organized services which took up a large part of their free time, particularly on weekends, and church activities and pilgrimages were costly for very poor people. But they offered a point of orientation in the urban environment, a world of secure, face-to-face relations important to a largely illiterate flock. They afforded a sense of security against the dangers of the city and the pain of white domination, at the price of resignation from the public sphere altogether, diverting collective energy from political activity.

During the 1960s, the already narrow public sphere in South Africa was changed in several ways that made it more difficult for views opposed to apartheid to be raised before the black public or political institutions, and easier for discourses favorable to the regime to circulate. Repression by statute and administrative fiat dramatically increased the penalties for dissident public expression. Efforts were made to manipulate electoral processes for official black institutions, and key aspects of apartheid were made non-issues for those bodies. The powerful tool of vernacular-language radio was harnessed by the regime, reinforcing the supportive flows of oral information passed on by chiefs, headmen, and

¹²⁹ Philip Mayer, "Religion and Social Control in a South African Township," in Heribert Adam, ed., South Africa: Sociological Perspectives (London, Oxford University Press: 1971).

councilors. Finally, religious movements which kept their followers safely out of public affairs grew rapidly, reflecting the swing of mass attention from politics to piety and at least tacit official encouragement. With these barriers in their way, it should not be too surprising that the regime, in general, faced a weak, fragmentary opposition which found little popular echo.

IV. OPPOSITION IN CIVIL SOCIETY: BLACK BODIES WITH WHITE BRAINS

After the banning of the African nationalist movements, the remaining legal outlets for black opposition to the regime were largely reduced to the communications institutions of black communities – student groups, churches, and the press – along with the voluntary organizations forming the rest of black civil society. But although these institutions served and were staffed by blacks, they were largely white-controlled, albeit usually by the more liberal, English-speaking minority of the white population. The new universities for blacks were under rigid government control, while the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) was dominated by students from the English-speaking white universities. The hierarchies and ethos of the mainline churches were white, despite the overwhelming black majority among their adherents. Black newspapers were in a similar situation. It is thus understandable that while the discourse of these bodies was critical of apartheid (sometimes

¹³⁰ John and Jean Comaroff, Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: the Culture and History of a South African People (Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 1985).

sharply, but usually moderately,) their practice never sought to develop militant opposition to the regime. Those who controlled them were not able to imagine blacks as the agents of change; their focus rather was the traditional liberal emphasis on change through moral suasion among whites. They operated according to their own political culture and corporate interests, neither of which ran to challenging white power.

"The university is a microcosm of the South African society," wrote colored students at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in a 1973 protest memorandum. They complained that student-teacher relations there were deplorable and that lecturers were "paternalistic, patronizing, and condescending." Worse, in the classroom, many lecturers droned away dictating notes read straight out of study guides from the University of South Africa, a correspondence college.¹³¹ At the University of the North (also called Turfloop), reading lists drew primarily on works by undistinguished Afrikaner academics; not surprisingly, left-wing authors were omitted.¹³² The Ft. Hare curriculum was realigned to conform with apartheid: Native Administration replaced Public Administration.¹³³ Some lecturers shied away from controversial subjects. Others delivered pro-government propaganda: teachers at Ft. Hare tried to justify apartheid on academic grounds and at the Indian-oriented University of Durban-Westville (UDW) lavished praise on the caste system.¹³⁴ The three universities for Africans were located out in the homelands, hundreds

¹³¹ Cape Herald, June 16, 1973.

¹³² Gail Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of Black Politics in South Africa, Draft, Chapter 4, p.5 (1992).

¹³³ Em Beale, "The Task of Fort Hare in Terms of the Transkei and Ciskei: Educational Planning at Ft Hare in the 1960s," Unpublished paper, History Workshop, Wits University, Johannesburg, 1990, p.10.

¹³⁴ Cape Herald, June 16, 1973; Em Beale, "The Task," *op. cit.*, p.6; Kogila Moodley, "The Dialectic of Higher Education for the Colonized: the Case of Non-White Universities in South Africa," in Heribert Adam, ed., South Africa: Sociological Perspectives (London, Oxford University Press: 1971), p.202.

of miles from the cities, isolating them from the urban mainstream of intellectual life. Even at the universities in the cities, student-invited visitors were screened by the administration: UDW's rector barred speeches by liberal writer Alan Paton and student leader Ben Ngubane,¹³⁵ The administrations also tried to control the composition and constitutions of student governments, or Students Representative Councils (SRCs). As a result, the students at Ft. Hare, UWC, and UDW refused to elect SRCs during the 1960s, while those at other institutions suffered from low turnouts, leaving black students without effective voices on their own campuses.¹³⁶ Moreover, the university authorities turned a deaf ear to student grievances. When UWC students complained about dormitory conditions, the administration response "was typical of an authoritarian dictatorship": the complainants were expelled.¹³⁷ Study under these circumstances was thus a profoundly alienating experience for bright young black people – while growing enrolments made the institutions they attended ever more fragile.

Yet pressure rose steadily in these institutions due to growing student numbers and the opening doors for working-class students. Driven the by rapidly-climbing numbers of black high school graduates, during the 1960s the fastest-expanding level of black education was post-secondary. Enrollment at the black universities more than quintupled, rising from

¹³⁵ idem.

¹³⁶ Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, Draft, Chapter 4, op. cit., p.5.

¹³⁷ Cape Herald, June 16, 1973. Siphso Buthelezi, who was a student at the University of Zululand, echoed these complaints.. "Within faculties themselves, students at this time resented the organization and content of their curricula. In many subjects, particularly in the social sciences, students were critical of what was regarded as an overdose of ruling-class ideology. ... Poor communications and generally hostile relations between the university administration and white members of staff, on the one hand, and black students, on the other, aggravated frustration and tension on campuses. Severe restrictions on students' social and political lives, with frequent expulsions for transgressions, kindled a live volcano that erupted from time to time." "The Emergence of Black Consciousness: An Historical Appraisal," in Barney Pitsoana et. al., eds., Bounds of Possibility: The Legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness (Cape Town, David Philip: 1991), p.113.

811 in 1961, the year after the four new institutions were created, to 4,601 in 1970.¹³⁸ By then, three-fourths of black residential university students were at black institutions – the opposite of the situation a decade before. Thus, in the new institutions a fast-growing black student body drawn increasingly from the popular classes was chafing under difficult conditions of study, living, and control – a formula for volatility.¹³⁹

Even student political organizations offered little outlet for black students to express their views.¹⁴⁰ NUSAS had swung to the left during the early 1960s in the aftermath of Sharpeville, sharply criticizing racial discrimination, protesting government repression, and aiding political prisoners, winning the admiration of many black students. Its radicalism peaked in 1964, when the leadership debated becoming more directly aligned with the banned nationalist movements, while several former leaders participated in armed attacks by the so-called African Resistance Movement (ARM). However, after the ARM was smashed by the police and the leaders' deliberations were disclosed by the press, a harsh reaction from government and white students followed, the NUSAS leadership had to swing back to more moderate positions, focusing on educating their members about apartheid's evils. Most NUSAS members was composed of students at the English-speaking white universities (the Afrikaans schools had pulled out decades earlier). Though its leaders strongly sympathized with the minority of members who came from the black institutions, the events of 1964 forcefully reminded them that they could not afford to get too far in front

¹³⁸ Nkosinathi Gwala (Blade Nzimande), "State Control, Student Politics, and the Crisis in Black Universities," in William Cobbett and Robin Cohen, eds, Popular Struggles in South Africa (London, James Currey: 1988), p.175.

¹³⁹ Moodley, "The Dialectic of Higher Education for the Colonized" op. cit., p.208.

¹⁴⁰ The account which follow is based upon Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, op. cit., p.65ff.

of their white followers. As the most politically outspoken organization operating in the country in the post-Rivonia period, NUSAS still attracted many black students with its support for non-racial liberalism. The high-water mark of the liberal tide was undoubtedly the visit of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy to South Africa in 1966, which attracted huge crowds on all the English-speaking campuses. But in succeeding years, as blacks came to number as many as one-quarter to one-third of the delegates at NUSAS conferences with the growth in black enrollments, they experienced increasing frustration as they came up against its white majority and their desire to avoid serious challenges to the status quo in the organization or the society.

In the second major institution offering space for criticism of apartheid, the mainline churches, the difference between preaching and practice was also profound. Segregation remained the rule, across the board, in congregations, parochial schools, and church hospitals. Sometimes this was thinly disguised, as when nominally open Anglican and Catholic congregations put Africans in separate services or in the back pews, but in general it was openly acknowledged.¹⁴¹ In turn, black and white churches enjoyed highly unequal resources and facilities, reflecting the differences of wealth between the communities and the failure of the churches to bridge them. To cite just two examples: per capita, white Methodist congregations had eight times as many ministers as black ones, while pupil-teacher ratios in Catholic schools averaged 20:1 at white institutions and 50:1 at black ones.¹⁴² These inequalities also translated into big differences in pay between black and

¹⁴¹ Peter Randall, Apartheid and the Church (Johannesburg, Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society: 1972), p.32; Lesley Cawood, The Churches and Race Relations in South Africa (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations: 1964), passim.

¹⁴² Randall, Apartheid and the Church, op. cit., p.40; Peter Walshe, Church Versus State in South Africa: the Case of the Christian Institute (Maryknoll, Orbis Books: 1983), p.77.

white church employees. White ministers' stipends were often up to twice those of blacks, white teachers' as much as five times.¹⁴³ White domination was the rule within church institutions themselves.¹⁴⁴ Although the Roman Catholic Church was 80% black, the priesthood and episcopate were 90% white.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, though the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa's (NGKA) congregations were all African, in the 1960s four-fifths had white ministers.¹⁴⁶ The Methodist Church's governing conference was structured so that the overwhelming black majority among parishioners could never translate into a black majority in conference votes. Even where black churchmen held important positions, they suffered from unequal treatment, in the church and the broader society. Alpheus Zulu, the first black Anglican bishop, was arrested by police under the pass laws, denied permission to live in the bishop's residence (in a "white" area), and even snubbed by white parishioners who would not let him touch their children as he confirmed them.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, the teachings of Western churches contained many elements blacks found hard to accept. Church positions on marriage, divorce and polygamy, along with those on ancestor worship, sacrifice, and circumcision, directly clashed with the beliefs and lineage systems which remained powerful among Africans.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Cawood, The Churches and Race Relations, *op. cit.*; Cape Herald, March 15, 1975; Desmond Tutu, "The Church of the Province of South Africa," in Hendrik van der Merwe, *et. al.*, eds, Towards an Open Society in South Africa: The Role of Voluntary Organizations (Cape Town, David Philip: 1980), p.20; Walshe, Church Versus State in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.77.

¹⁴⁴ Randall, Apartheid and the Church, *op. cit.*, p.46, 38.

¹⁴⁵ Ken Jubber, "The Roman Catholic Church and Apartheid," Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, no.15 (1976), p.29.

¹⁴⁶ Cawood, The Churches and Race Relations, *op. cit.*, p.28.

¹⁴⁷ Tutu, "The Church of the Province," *op. cit.*, p.17; Jubber, "The Roman Catholic Church and Apartheid," *op. cit.*; Drum, August 8, 1976.

¹⁴⁸ Jubber, "The Roman Catholic Church and Apartheid," *op. cit.*, p.34.

Though not required by law, segregation was also the rule in the training of ministers in South Africa, even in the "open" English churches, which would have profound consequences for these institutions. For blacks in the mainline Protestant churches, the principal source of theological education was the Federal Theological Seminary (FedSem), established in 1963 after previous single-denomination colleges were closed under the Group Areas and Bantu Education Acts. The seminary included the theological colleges for black Methodists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians, as well as one of the two black Anglican colleges. (The other, St. Bede's, was in Umtata, capital of the Transkei homeland.)¹⁴⁹ Black Catholic priests trained at St. Peter's, near Pretoria, while Lutheran ministerial candidates studied at Maphumulo, near Durban. In the Dutch Reformed Churches, colored *dominees* (ministers) studied at the theology school of the University of Western Cape, which by the 1970s was the main source of new clergy for the segregated colored Dutch Reformed Mission Church (NGSK), while the doctrinaire NGKA carried church apartheid to an extreme, running four different theological schools, segregated by tribe, for just 90 students.¹⁵⁰ Writing of the English churches' seminaries, Ashby noted, "Many of the staff of South African theological colleges have come straight out of England, and it would not be at all unusual to hear gossip in the staff common room about what so-and-so used to say in his lectures at Mansfield [College, Oxford] or what Prof. X's theories were in 'my day' at London."¹⁵¹ The English theological schools thus had much in common

¹⁴⁹ Cawood, The Churches and Race Relations, *op. cit.*, p.68.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp.80, 87, 32; Ernie Regehr, Perceptions of Apartheid: The Churches and Political Change in South Africa (Scottsdale, PA, Herald Press: 1979), p.226.

¹⁵¹ Cited in Bonganjalo Goba, "The Task of Black Theological Education in South Africa," Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, no.22 (1978), p.19.

with the rural boarding schools out of which some had grown, or with Fort Hare before the state takeover – indeed, FedSem was located next to Fort Hare – while the Dutch Reformed colleges were much like the new black universities. The result was to build deep racial and political cleavages into the schools from which would pour the black clergy who would staff the church in the 1970s and beyond.

Given these institutional contradictions and complexities, it is hardly surprising that the discourse and practice of the churches concerning apartheid were rather ambiguous. The English-speaking churches were fairly consistent critics of the regime, but hardly militant ones; their posture has been described by Peter Walshe as “complaining but passive.”¹⁵² There was a strong awareness that even if the majority of their membership came from the black community, the majority of their funds came from the whites, and the operative assumption was that any change in South African society would only come through persuasion of the whites. The black Dutch Reformed Churches, for their part, were models of political passivity. The most important institution to challenge this situation was the Christian Institute, founded in 1963 by a pillar of the Afrikaner establishment turned renegade *dominee*, C.F. Beyers Naude. He initially tried, fruitlessly, to change attitudes in the Afrikaans churches, then turned in the mid-1960s to building bridges between black and white Christians in South Africa and exploring the new theologies of social change then gaining currency in the world outside. Spurned by his own, Beyers Naude acquired some influence among English-speaking and black church leaders. Aided by the worldwide turn towards social concerns among Protestant clergy reflected in the 1966 World Council of Churches conference on “Church and Society,” he spurred the South African Council of

¹⁵² This discussion is based on Walshe, Church versus State in South Africa, *op. cit.*, and on Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, *op. cit.*, p.75ff.

Churches (which represented the English-speaking Protestant denominations) to issue a strongly worded "Message to the People of South Africa" in 1968. The text branded apartheid as unscriptural and immoral and flirted with the notion of civil disobedience. Soon after issuing it the SACC set up the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society (SPRO-CAS) to consider what should be done. But the limits of the churches' liberalism in practice were soon exposed: after a broadside from the Prime Minister, they quickly backed off from all ideas of illegal protest. In 1970, when the World Council of Churches made grants for humanitarian assistance to the ANC and PAC, almost all white South African church leaders recoiled in horror at such "assistance to terrorists." It would seem that Worsnip's conclusions about South Africa's Anglicans applied more generally to the mainline churches: while it "would be plainly false" if one were to claim "that there were not attempts to confront racism," nonetheless, "what attempts there were to deal with racial discrimination in South African society by the church were negated because of the fact that discriminatory attitudes and practices could be discerned within the ranks of the church itself."¹⁵³

Of course, discrimination, white control, and hypocrisy within the churches bred profound resentment among blacks, whose significance grew with their reliance on black clergy. The 1960s saw rising concern in mainline church circles because their churches, while growing rapidly, were falling behind the even faster-growing African independent churches. The influential SPRO-CAS report linked this to the compromises the institutionalized churches had made with apartheid. It warned that the English-speaking

¹⁵³ Michael Worsnip, The Church of the Province of South Africa and the Formation of a Social Conscience, 1948-1957, M.Phil. thesis, University of Manchester, 1985, p.136.

churches would "reap the whirlwind" of black resentment if they failed to fight racism in their ranks.¹⁵⁴ This resentment was shared by black clergy: for example, a survey of black Catholic priests found they were angry at discrimination in their church and felt unrepresented within its structures.¹⁵⁵ At the same time, the numbers of black priests and ministers were growing steadily in the major denominations, in absolute and relative terms, as new graduates joined the ranks every year from the theological schools.

As in the universities and churches, the growth of a black presence in South African newsrooms laid bare the contradictions between liberal ideals of non-discrimination and the practice of South African English-speaking white liberalism. Black reporters were frustrated daily by white control of the newspaper production process. Before reaching print, a news article by a black reporter had to cross the desks of a series of usually unsympathetic whites: the news editor, chief sub-editor (copy editor, in American parlance) and a page sub-editor. The subs at The World in Johannesburg, the country's only African-oriented daily, were "a bunch of righties – English immigrants. They would've filled the paper with English soccer if they could."¹⁵⁶ The issue was less individual prejudice than corporate tolerance, however. Even a man like Don Pinnock, one of the most liberal World subs in the early 1970s and a strong critic of the paper's line, still toed it. "We (the subs) were a corporate head that knew how far to go." While a degree of tension between subs and reporters is normal on any paper, that felt by black journalists in this era was

¹⁵⁴ Randall, Apartheid and the Church, *op. cit.*, pp.33, 43.

¹⁵⁵ Ken Jubber, "Black and White Priests," in Andrew Prior, Catholics in Apartheid Society (Cape Town, David Philip: 1982), p.128ff.

¹⁵⁶ Interview, Denis Beckett (former Weekend World editorial director), Johannesburg, October 14, 1991. See also Fred St. Leger and Tim Couzens, The African Press in South Africa, unpublished manuscript, n.d., p.174.

extraordinary. Says Mthimkhulu, "We used to hate the subs."¹⁵⁷ Matters were not helped by the fact that the chain of command was effectively all white as well. Although they were more liberal and diplomatic than the blustering Afrikaners who ran the new universities, the News Editors, Deputy Editors, and Editors of the "white" English newspapers were also, without exception, white. While The World, the colored-oriented Cape Herald in Cape Town, and Durban's Zulu-language Ilanga nominally had black editors, the real power lay in the hands of white "editorial directors."¹⁵⁸ The World's frail, elderly editor, M.T. Moerane, was seen as a figurehead by his staff (he said so little at editorial conferences that behind his back they called him "Empty" Moerane).¹⁵⁹ The editorial and coverage decisions were made by editorial director Charles Steele, a no-nonsense man in his 50s convinced that African readers wanted a diet of sports, sex, and sensation. (Asked to kill a detailed account of how teenagers sniffed glue, he refused, replying, "I'm not in the business of saving children – I'm in the business of selling newspapers.") Dapper, bland-faced, with a receding hairline, he was less an evil figure than a corporate man. Educated, well spoken, he defined the limits but rarely had to put his foot down: he was "the ghost in the machine."¹⁶⁰

The gap between the words and deeds of the opposition press also was glaring in the wages and working conditions of black journalists. Although journalism was at the time one of the few professions in the country in which white and black worked side-by-side in

¹⁵⁷ Interviews, Phil Mthimkhulu, Johannesburg, Oct. 18, 1991, Thenjiwe Mtintso, No.1, May 29, 1991. Gavin Stewart, The Development of the Rand Daily Mail as an Intercultural Newspaper, BA Honors Thesis, Unisa, Pretoria, 1980, p.34.

¹⁵⁸ St. Leger and Cousins, The African Press, unpublished manuscript, n.d., p.166, Marion Whitehead, The Black Gatekeepers, BA Honors Thesis, Journalism, Rhodes University, Grahamstown 1978, p.67.

¹⁵⁹ Interviews, Joe Latakomo, Johannesburg, August 7, 1991, Don Pinnock, Grahamstown, December 2, 1991, Aggrey Klaaste, Johannesburg, August 2, 1991, Mthimkhulu, Johannesburg, July 30, 1991.

¹⁶⁰ Interviews, Pinnock, Beckett, Mthimkhulu

identical jobs, white journalists earned two to three times as much as blacks with comparable experience. Newspaper wage agreement explicitly set salaries by race.¹⁶¹ Bias governed perks as well. When The Star's first black reporter, Harry Mashabela, asked an editor why he didn't receive a "marriage allowance," as white reporters did, he was told he was in a "special category." He caught on: "You mean I'm black," he said. Likewise, although white reporters were allowed to use the paper's cars to go out on assignments, Mashabela was again in a special category: he had to use a motor scooter. The Star, The World, and most other papers also subjected black staffers to all the indignities of the apartheid employment laws – even separate cafeterias and toilets.¹⁶² (The Daily Dispatch and the Rand Daily Mail, the country's most liberal dailies, normally ignored the segregation laws in practice, but even they dared not flout them openly. The result was a bizarre charade: whenever a government inspector arrived at the Dispatch, he would be delayed at reception while the paper's good liberals set to work in a frenzy – putting up the required "whites-only" signs.¹⁶³)

Ultimately, however, the opposition role and internal practices of the liberal English-language press were shaped by its role as part of the white Establishment, business and political. Supporting the moderate white opposition, the United and Progressive Parties, it was tied to the same interests to which they were connected. All the major English dailies and weeklies, white- and black-oriented, except the Dispatch and Pietermaritzburg's Natal Witness, were owned by two large press groups. South African

¹⁶¹ Fred St Leger, "Attitudes of Black and White Journalists in South Africa," Communications in Africa, vol.1, 1974, p.4, and Hachen, "Black Journalists in South Africa," Index on Censorship, vol. 8, no. 3, 1979.

¹⁶² Interviews, Harry Mashabela, Johannesburg, October 9, 1991 and Mthimkhulu.

¹⁶³ Donald Woods, Asking for Trouble: The Education of a White African (Boston, Beacon Press: 1981), p.185.

Associated Newspapers (SAAN) monopolized the morning papers, the Argus group those in the afternoon, both ultimately controlled by Anglo-American and the other big mining and financial conglomerates. Anthony Heard, former editor of The Cape Times, recalls:

"It was a cozy little club, a world of 'wheels within wheels' (as a top board member of the Cape Times enjoyed describing it), all falling within the protective clasp of Anglo American and keeping all others – including, of course, the hated Nationalists – out. Dissident editors who clashed with Establishment thinking were allowed a little head and then finished off.

"The unspoken norm in the commercial press was the capacity not to rock the boat. 'Remember, he IS our Prime Minister' – this was said to critical editors, to tone down their writings,... to my own personal and intimate knowledge."¹⁶⁴

Two successive editors of the Mail, Raymond Louw and Laurence Gandar, were dismissed for too strident opposition to the government, and their example was an object lesson to other editors. Indeed, despite their disagreements over policy, there was a good deal of friendly contact between leading press and government figures. An annual private dinner was held between the Prime Minister and the country's white editors. In those days newspaper editors and cabinet ministers also had "a fairly informal relationship, and observed certain niceties even across political barriers, such as the exchanging of Christmas cards or letters of condolence on bereavement." Even a maverick like Donald Woods, the ultra-liberal editor of the Dispatch, could play the game, appealing successfully to Vorster to help block a right-wing takeover of SAAN and sending congratulatory note to Jimmy Kruger on his appointment as Justice Minister.¹⁶⁵ To the members of the White Establishment in 1960s and 1970s, what they shared – a faith in white leadership, hostility to revolution and Communism – was ultimately more important than their differences.

¹⁶⁴ Anthony Heard, Conference Paper, *The History of the Alternative Press*, University of the Western Cape, 1991).

¹⁶⁵ Donald Woods, Biko (Harmondsworth, Penguin: 1978), p.119; Woods, Asking for Trouble, op. cit., pp.189, 198.

The combination of pressures from government and owners meant that the leash on the black-oriented press grew much shorter in the 1960s. A study by St.Leger and Cousins showed that the proportion of front-page leads stories in The World devoted to serious topics shrank from 65% in 1959 to 20% in 1968. The average issue of The World carried twice as many stories of social criticism in 1959 as in 1968 – even though the paper was substantially larger in the latter year.¹⁶⁶ The tenor of political comment changed from “varied and wide-ranging” criticism of key government policies and extensive comment on the ANC and PAC in 1959 to a narrow focus on safe social problems (such as localized educational or labor problems), while stories about the banned nationalist movements were left on the spike in favor of crime, sex, and sport. Similar changes took place in other black-oriented publications in this era.¹⁶⁷

The result was that the black journalists of the 1960s were a dispirited lot, even as their numbers grew. Most in their 30s, with a few years of high school behind them, they nostalgically recalled the excitement of the previous decade. The newcomers were interested in jobs, not politics. Scope for initiative was limited, and for advancement, almost nil. When a sample of black reporters were polled in 1969, two-thirds were unhappy with their jobs.¹⁶⁸ The same survey found that just eight of 39 African reporters thought the press performed its functions well or fairly well, while a poll three years later in Johannesburg felt that only 3 of 25 felt it did so.¹⁶⁹ But their anger was hushed by their

¹⁶⁶ Cousins and St. Leger, The African Press in South Africa, *op. cit.*, pp.280, 287.

¹⁶⁷ ibid., pp.281, 284.

¹⁶⁸ Interviews, Mthimkhulu, Latakomo, and St Leger, “Attitudes of Black and White Journalists,” *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁹ ibid., pp.9, 21.

lack of alternatives. "For years I wrote silly township stories, but could not shoot off my mouth about my frustrations because I would lose my job," said one black reporter from The Star. "There are so few jobs open to us, we cannot afford to lose a job if we have one," echoed a colleague on the Cape Herald. "If we are unhappy, we have no choice but to suffer."¹⁷⁰ Ironically, however, while journalism had become more frustrating, the number of black journalists was growing rapidly. Partly this reflected the white press companies' professed liberalism, but even more so their growing numbers of black readers, who were buying more black-oriented papers and had come to constitute a third or more of the total readers of the white ones. The largest complements of black reporters in the newsrooms of white-oriented papers were on the Rand Daily Mail, The Star, and the Daily Dispatch. The biggest establishments of all were the fast-growing World and Weekend World in an industrial area west of Johannesburg, where more than 30 journalists banged away at ancient manual typewriters in run-down offices. By the late 1970s, the number of black journalists in South Africa was over 200, against just 10 in 1946.¹⁷¹

Thus, in 1960s South Africa, blacks in the institutions of civil society where dissent might still be aired – universities, newspapers, and churches – were stifled by the effects of racial discrimination and white control. In the absence of overt social and political movements, these organizations of civil society possessed enormous practical and symbolic importance. They represented the only South African institutions formally committed to allowing free expression and producing black elites – and they were also virtually the only ones in the country where black and white worked in identical positions. Yet their effective

¹⁷⁰ Whitehead, The Black Gatekeepers, *op. cit.*, p.67, Peter Bernstein, "Reporting in Pretoria," Index on Censorship, Autumn 1975, p.46.

¹⁷¹ Hatcher, "Black Journalists in South Africa," *op.cit.*, Republic of South Africa, Population Census, 1946.

submission to the white Establishment – even if its more liberal elements – entangled them in a series of contradictions. Blacks involved with them found themselves subjected to discriminatory conditions of study, work, and worship. Within their structures, key levers of power remained firmly in white hands. Their opposition to the regime was temperate in tone and oriented towards winning over whites, not stirring action by blacks. And the stresses experienced only increased as growing numbers of blacks became involved in the organizations, encountering frustration at every turn. The result was that even if they proclaimed their difference with the apartheid order, the black communications institutions could be perceived as a replica of it by their employees, students, and congregants.

V. POLITICAL CULTURE: THE REINVENTION OF TRADITION

The reinvigoration of tradition, narrowing of the public sphere, and "opposition" within the system helped fragment black political culture from the mid-1960s through the early 1970s, atomizing the middle classes and deepening parochial divisions among the popular classes. Among middle class blacks, bruised and isolated politically, yet numerous and prosperous as never before, a grasping individualism and an uneasy conscience were the hallmarks of the era. Their consequences included immense frustration for individuals and a vacuum of authority within communities. For the average black South African, the lines between tribal, racial, and religious groups were sharpened by segregation, resource competition, and the resurgence of traditional identities. At the same time, concepts of

community and citizenship were narrowed and re-oriented towards traditionalist loyalties – the tribe or ethnic group embodied by the new representative institutions of the regime – while fear also served to discourage support for overt opposition. These processes were driven partly by elite initiatives from above, and partly by the acts and choices of those below at mass level. In these ways, both structure and action together tended to divide black communities in this era, demobilize their support for the political opposition, and remobilize them around patrimonial or racial divisions.

At the height of the apartheid era, middle-class blacks' political culture reflected a guilty individualism. The traditional route they had sought out of inferior status – assimilation – had been definitively closed by political defeat and demoralization, along with the rising wall of segregation laws. Paradoxically, at the same time the black middle classes were growing fast in numbers and income (though some sections – particularly Indian traders – suffered grievously from Group Areas removals). Yet without effective political or professional organizations, they were only a collection of atomized individuals. The professionals were caught in the coils of corporatist control, while the state-linked section made the wheels of patronage turn. Both groups sensed that they were profoundly compromised by their dependence of one sort or another on the apartheid system.

After a second extended period of field research in "Reeftown" in the 1960s, Brandel-Syrier reported that the state-linked elite there was unable to join the white group, but unwilling to join the masses – so they looked out for themselves instead. She described them as "people imbued with the aspirations of a capitalist society and with one central ambition: to acquire individual wealth under any circumstances and under any type of

government."¹⁷² The attitude which distinguished the state-connected part of the middle classes most sharply from the masses was the faith that individuals could succeed through their own efforts, despite the rigors of apartheid.¹⁷³ Professionals, despite their rising salaries, experienced isolation rather than optimism. Teachers, for instance, suffered their discontents in silence, rather than exposing themselves to reprisals.¹⁷⁴ Common to both groups was a fierce craving for social advancement. One university graduate remarked, "All I wanted all my life was to get as far as possible – and even farther – away from the place where I was born."¹⁷⁵ (While the middle classes did not abandon their obligations of redistribution to extended families and clients, they often complained of the burden of relatives and hangers-on.)

The counterpoint to the privatized individualism of the middle classes was their withdrawal from the public sphere. Many members of the state-linked elite had been involved in opposition politics in the 1940s or 1950s, but no more. A health inspector put it simply: "I can't connect myself with anti-government politics, and also not with anti-council agitation."¹⁷⁶ So distant were they from politics that Brandel-Syrier found that half the

¹⁷² Brandel-Syrier, Coming Through, op.cit., pp.128-30, 115.

¹⁷³ In Grahamstown, only 33% of the upper stratum agreed that there "isn't much chance for a person to change their position in life," while 63% of the whole community did. Nyquist, African Middle Class Elite, op. cit., p.190. Almost three-fourths of the Reeftown elite agreed with the statement, "One's life is determined only or mainly by oneself rather than external circumstances." Brandel-Syrier, Coming Through, op. cit., p.67. Morse and Peele had similar findings regarding the colored middle classes, "Colored Power or Colored Bourgeoisie," op. cit.

¹⁷⁴ Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, op. cit., pp.182-3; for similar findings regarding nurses, see Cheater, "A Marginal Elite," op. cit.

¹⁷⁵ Brandel-Syrier, Coming Through, op. cit.

¹⁷⁶ ibid., p.116

Reeftown elite didn't even read newspapers.¹⁷⁷ When they did talk politics, they discussed personalities and details of laws, not ideologies and principles.¹⁷⁸ At the same time, the middle classes in general felt guilty about their lack of political involvement. "We are avoiding our responsibilities; after all, these things ought to concern us," one educated Sowetan remarked.¹⁷⁹ Such comments revealed the extent to which apartheid turned the black community's potential leaders into spectators.

Yet despite their withdrawal from active politics, or the overt assistance to the regime of the collaborative elite, middle class blacks felt a strong, if submerged, discontent. In Grahamstown, for example, every one of almost ninety upper status residents with whom Nyquist spoke complained about white oppression.¹⁸⁰ The better educated were, in fact, the most discontented in town and country, reflecting both their greater sophistication and the depoliticization of the masses. "We know more, we read more, and feel more frustrated," said one better-educated Sowetan.¹⁸¹ Likewise, a survey in four homelands found that the secondary-educated group was the only one in which a majority declared themselves dissatisfied with their homeland government.¹⁸² Teachers and nurses, while better paid than

¹⁷⁷ Brandel-Syrier, Reeftown Elite, *op. cit.*, p.92.

¹⁷⁸ Brandel-Syrier, Coming Through, *op. cit.*, p.111.

¹⁷⁹ Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, p.130. See also Brandel-Syrier, Coming Through, *op. cit.*, p.118.

¹⁸⁰ Nyquist, African Middle Class Elite, *op. cit.*, pp.114-15.

¹⁸¹ Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, pp.128-9. Mayer had similar findings in East London. Urban Africans and the Bantustans (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations: 1972), p.15.

¹⁸² Markinor Homelands Survey, *op. cit.* The homelands polled were the Transkei, KwaZulu, Lebowa, and Bophutatswana.

manual laborers, were also more directly affected by pay discrimination compared to whites, and unhappy over unresponsive corporatist bodies that denied them professional respect.¹⁸³

For individuals, the consequences often included intense frustration and self-destructive behavior, such as alcoholism, promiscuity, and violence. "The political climate was so pervasive, you couldn't do anything," recalled journalist Joe Latakomo. "Invariably, people drowned their sorrows in alcohol most of the time."¹⁸⁴ The list of black journalists who died of drink or committed suicide in these years, including Can Themba, Casey Motsitsi, Arthur Nortje, and Nat Nakasa, reads like the honor roll of a generation. Teachers hit the bottle so hard that in the Transkei, the idiomatic expression for drinking too much was "drunk like a teacher."¹⁸⁵ In the KwaZulu homeland, civil servants were drunk on the job so often that by the 1970s, the authorities felt compelled to institute breathalyzer tests.¹⁸⁶ The educated middle classes were quite aware of these problems: Mayer reported from Soweto that they "accused themselves, as a category, of too much womanizing and too much drinking, or of mingling with ordinary people in an undignified way."¹⁸⁷

For black communities, the inward-looking attitude and decadent behavior of so many in the middle classes created something of a leadership vacuum. Mayer found that they themselves felt they had lost influence and popular respect. He quoted one 35-year-old Soweto youth club organizer, who said:

¹⁸³ Vilardo, "Contemporary Conflict in Black Teacher Politics," *op. cit.*, and Cheater, "A Marginal Elite," *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁴ Interview No. 1, Joe Latakomo, Johannesburg, August 7, 1991.

¹⁸⁵ Nancy Charton, "Black Elites in the Transkei," in Nancy Charton, ed., Ciskei: Economy and Politics of Dependence in a South African Homeland, (London, Croom Helm: 1980).

¹⁸⁶ Gerald Maré and Georgina Hamilton, An Appetite for Power: Bethelzi's Inkatha and South Africa (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1987), p.91.

¹⁸⁷ Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, p.130.

"Before people looked up to teachers, nurses, and ministers, but people have lost respect for them. Teachers come to school drunk and the parents don't like it. They start falling in love with the children and things like that. Nurses and clerks treat people badly. Instead of looking after the sick, nurses are busy flirting with the clerks. Who can respect such people?"

A Soweto teacher added:

"Ministers have long lost standing. Teachers are less respected than they used to be. Some drink in the popular shebeens, and there is trouble and gossip."¹⁸⁸

The sense of defeat and neglecting responsibilities could only have worsened the "inferiority complex" before whites of which the black middle classes had long complained.

Among the black popular classes, parochial identities and divisions were deepened by apartheid discourse and practice. Even the apartheid era, the black masses were split along lines of kinship, tribe, age, language, race, religion, and the like, as we saw in Chapter Two. These reflected distinct patrimonial, racial, and religious discourses, the social spaces through which they flowed, and the ways of life which expressed them. Shared self-conceptions more than imposed mystifications, they were shaped from both above and below through constant if conflictual negotiation. Adam put it at the time this way: "Apartheid reinforces the existing group differences. It need not create them altogether but can build on the traditional syncretic structure and thus prevent non-white unity."¹⁸⁹ At least three ways in which group boundaries were strengthened can be identified: social segregation, competition, and exclusivity.

Tightening residential and social segregation pushed groups further apart physically and narrowed spaces for direct face-to-face communications between people of different

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*

backgrounds. From 1955 on, the Bantu Affairs Department, the government ministry controlling all areas of African life except education, applied a policy of tribal segregation by neighborhood in allocating houses in new townships or when houses fell vacant in old ones.¹⁹⁰ For young Africans, ethnic separation was reinforced in the schools, where the Bantu Education Department required mother-tongue instruction for the first six years. This kept lower primary schools – the only schools most Africans ever attended – segregated by tribe as well as race. Group Areas removals locked colored and Indian people into the areas prescribed for them, while unscrambling racially mixed areas such as Johannesburg's Soffiatown, Cape Town's District Six, and Durban's Cato Manor, where they had lived together with Africans.

There was often informal religious or linguistic segregation within colored and Indian areas as well, as well as schools segregated by race. Outside of home and school, interracial contacts were reduced by apartheid restrictions on social contact, barring mixed entertainment, restaurants, hotels, sport, associations, and political parties. Stone commented, "Socially, segregation has been enforced to the point at which the vast majority of coloreds see only brown faces in their residential areas, and their relationships with whites are almost completely confined to white employers or civil servants."¹⁹¹ In addition, government rules which gave coloreds preference over Africans for unskilled jobs in the Western Cape helped give the two groups different interests as well. Assessing the impact of these measures, Whisson wrote, "The policy of apartheid has been successful in creating

¹⁸⁹ Adam, Modernizing Racial Domination, *op. cit.*, p.71.

¹⁹⁰ Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, pp.138, 278.

¹⁹¹ Gerald Stone, "Identity Among Lower-Class Coloreds," in Michael Whisson and Hendrick van der Merwe, Colored Citizenship in South Africa (Cape Town, Abe Bailey Institute of Interracial Studies: 1972), p.39.

self-sustaining barriers which make group attitudes of suspicion more likely and individual non-racist attitudes less likely."¹⁹²

With the different social groups more distinctly separated, competition for resources through the regime's political institutions set them against each other more sharply than before. Although ethnic rivalries had existed previously, the establishment of ethnic political structures, which became the access routes to official patronage, increased the political salience of ethnic and racial identity. Commenting on the resurgent tension between Rharhabe and Mfengu, Manona wrote that "the present ethnic conflict in the Ciskei is not based simply on old prejudices but reflects a very clear and present problem within the Ciskei today – competition for insufficient resources."¹⁹³ The patronage organization of the regime both facilitated and was reinforced by ethnic politics. In the countryside, political struggle focused on obtaining chiefships for one's own group and getting more resources through them, while in the towns ethnicity formed one of the building blocks of township social networks and patronage machines. The result was a form of political competition in African communities in which leaders and followers were linked by traditionalist discourses, clientelist politics, ties to traditional authorities, and a sense of group identity. Southall described its workings in the Transkei:

"The politics of patronage in the Transkei have manifested themselves in electoral terms by a constant emphasis upon tribal particularism. In the first place, for chiefs or politicians to gain access to scarce resources distributed by the state they have had to establish their political weight ... In electoral terms, therefore, chiefs have urged their peoples to identify with their 'traditional group' – as Thembu, Xhosa, Pondo, and so on."¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Whisson, "The Colored People," *op. cit.* p.72.

¹⁹³ Cecil Manona, "Ethnic Relations in the Ciskei," in Nancy Charton, ed., Ciskei: Economy and Politics of Dependence in a South African Homeland, (London, Croom Helm: 1980). p.119.

¹⁹⁴ Southall, South Africa's Transkei, *op. cit.* p.125.

Similarly, in the election for the South African Indian Council, balloting reflected divisions between blocs of Tamils, Hindis, and Muslims.¹⁹⁵ In both the colored and Indian communities, conservative leaders argued with some success that the only alternative to white domination was African domination, which would endanger their interests and identities even more.

More generally, at the mass level, the years from the mid 1960s to the early 1970s were marked by a resurgence of traditionalist identities and a growing social exclusivity among the different categories of black South Africans. Meer noted, "Coloreds are conscious of color differences among themselves, Africans of tribal differences, and Indians of language and religious differences. Apartheid encourages and reinforces such conventions, the origins of which precede South African racialism."¹⁹⁶ This was evident in the Ciskei under Sebe, for instance, which saw the revival of a number of previously dissolved chiefdoms, to the enthusiastic approval of their new subjects.¹⁹⁷ That enthusiasm suggests another important point: the traditionalist revival was impelled from below as well as above. Among Indian South Africans, for example, a growing concern with Indian identity and declining inter-racial contact were evident. The question of identity became so obsessive that even some former Natal Indian Congress activists made a point of giving Tamil (rather than Hindu) names to their children.¹⁹⁸ A large proportion of the African

¹⁹⁵ Cape Herald, November 30, 1974.

¹⁹⁶ Fatima Meer, "African Nationalism: Some Inhibiting Factors," in Heribert Adam, South Africa: Sociological Perspectives (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1971), p.125.

¹⁹⁷ Manona, "Ethnic Relations in the Ciskei," op. cit., p.117.

¹⁹⁸ Kogila Moodley, "The Ambivalence of Survival Politics in Indian-African Relations," in Bridglal Pachai, "Aliens in the Political Hierarchy," in Bridglal Pachai, ed., South Africa's Indians: The Evolution of a Minority (Washington, DC, University Press of America: 1979), p.443-6.

community also held onto parochial and patrimonial identities. For instance, in Durban in 1971-72, around 70% of African men, both skilled and unskilled, paid allegiance to tribal chiefs in KwaZulu.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, in Port Elizabeth at about the same time, around 60% of Xhosa-speaking adults displayed a rural or partly rural outlook.²⁰⁰ The development of newer particularistic identities was encouraged by the explosive growth of syncretistic religious communities, such as the Zion Christian Church, and movements like the Swami cult among Indians.²⁰¹ In short, in the late 1960s, a knowledgeable observer like Adam could conclude, "Nothing seems further from reality than to assume a conscious homogeneity of non-white interests as opposed to their rulers."²⁰²

When it came to identifying with the community, the black middle classes were confronted by several unsavory options: to withdraw from it altogether, to accept the narrow boundaries of the official political system, or to participate only in apolitical community groups. The dissolution of opposition political organizations and the elimination of political space outside official structures atomized the professional middle classes, leading to the withdrawal of most of their members from active community engagement. Isolated in their professional capacities, which were performed on an individual rather than a group basis, they depended on the political sphere for their capacity to act collectively in their own interest or in the community.²⁰³ Consequently, the bulk of bulk professionals stayed away

¹⁹⁹ Lawrence Schlemmer, "City or Rural Homeland: A Study of Patterns of Identification Among Africans in South Africa's Divided Society," *Social Forces*, vol.51 (1972), pp.157-58.

²⁰⁰ de Jongh, *Interaction and Transaction*, *op. cit.*, pp.69-71.

²⁰¹ See Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 1985). Ronnie Govender's play "Swami" deals with inward-looking Indian religious reactions in this period.

²⁰² Adam, *Modernizing Racial Domination*, *op. cit.*, p.71.

²⁰³ See Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (London, New Left Books: 1975).

from anything that could remotely be considered "political" during the 1960s. The second alternative, joining the particularistic official politics, most frequently appealed to the state-linked sections of the middle classes, the traders, notables, etc. in the old petite bourgeoisie. The price, however, was that of echoing official discourse and accepting ethnic identities and institutions in order to access resources. Research in the East Rand townships of Germiston led Brandel-Syrier to describe such "state-employed and state-protected" people as "faithful supporters of the Establishment to which they owe their opportunities."²⁰⁴ The final possibility was involvement in social welfare, sport, or other community groups like the YMCA. Those who led such bodies, however, stayed away from anything which could be construed as "political" or anti-government (even as they joined in the furious factionalism of township social life.)

The consequence of the dissolution or constriction of communal life for many of the members of the middle classes who would otherwise have joined the elite was a leadership vacuum in many communities. The void was particularly evident in Johannesburg and Cape Town, where the rift between a more sophisticated, ethnically or racially mixed professional corps and the conservative political elite ran deep. In those cities particularly, the withdrawal of professionals and notables into apolitical or private concerns meant that the conservative elite's control of patronage could immobilize opponents more than it could mobilize broad bases of support, since it lacked the backing of opinion-leading groups and communal institutions essential for true influence and effective leadership. In some small

²⁰⁴ Brandel-Syrier, *Coming Through*, *op. cit.*, pp.128-30.

towns, such as Welkom, the UBC elite was also regarded as little-known arrivistes.²⁰⁵ The problem was less severe where the conservative elites wielded greater influence: in the bantustans, the nearby townships surrounding Durban, East London, and Port Elizabeth, and some of the smaller urban centers where the older, personalized authority structures remained intact, such as Sharpeville.

Among the popular classes, the spread of narrower, more traditionalist identities helped bestow considerable legitimacy on the officially-defined political communities and institutions. Contrary to the lore of the anti-apartheid struggle, the leaders operating within the system were far from being universally reviled among blacks during the decade from 1965 to 1975. The bantustan leaders, their urban allies, and the conservative colored and Indian politicians rallied a substantial amount of support in that era. In the urban areas inside the homelands, or close enough that homeland parties dominated their politics, the bantustan leaders' mix of ethnic populism and patronage yielded substantial results. For instance, in East London in 1971, Mayer found that black rule in the Transkei had made an immense impression. "I never expected to see a black government in the Transkei," remarked one resident, while another simply said, "I praise the Prime Minister of the Transkei."²⁰⁶ In late 1975, a survey there found the loyalties of Mdantsane residents almost evenly split, with 43% identifying with the Ciskei homeland or their tribe, 44% with a united South Africa.²⁰⁷ The same poll found that when asked to name the best leader in South Africa, 59% of residents mentioned homeland leaders, and just 6% figures from the

²⁰⁵ Mentz, *Die Stedelike Bantoeraad*, *op. cit.*, reports the results of a survey showing that few Welkom township residents knew who their councilors were.

²⁰⁶ Philip Mayer, *Urban Africans and the Bantustans* (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations: 1972), pp.14-17.

²⁰⁷ Charton and kaTyakwadi, "Ciskeian Political Parties," *op. cit.*, p.247.

nationalist movements.²⁰⁸ Similar results were found in Durban in 1970-71 by Schlemmer, who concluded that " the homeland leaders quite clearly can claim legitimate prominence as an echelon of leadership."²⁰⁹ Within the bantustans, an extensive survey taken in 1974 in KwaZulu, the Transkei, Lebowa, and Bophutatswana found that adult residents approved the principle of homelands by a 58% to 20% margin. Satisfaction with the homeland governments was expressed by almost as many, 54%, while 32% expressed discontent.²¹⁰ The homeland leaders may have been bullies, but bullies can be popular: their electoral victories reflected public acceptance, not just intimidation.

The foundation stone of politics within the system remained the local-level tribalist discourses and clientelist practices which legitimated the regime's ethnic institutions. Research in Ciskeian villages found that village household heads were indifferent to messages from the urban media, even when they reached them. They identified rather with the oral opinion leaders of the traditional system, the chiefs and headmen.²¹¹ Even in Durban, some two-fifths of Africans surveyed in the early 1970s were oriented towards essentially local solidarities and identities. In addition to the promise of resources, an important drawing card for the conservative populists was the promise of freedom in their

²⁰⁸ Charton, "The Legislature," *op. cit.*, p.181. It could be argued that fear influenced these results, but the same survey shows that the more conservative residents were also the less fearful of expressing their political views. The consistency of conservative sentiment across a variety of measures, including relatively "safe" questions, also makes it unlikely that answers were driven by fear alone.

²⁰⁹ Lawrence Schlemmer, "Black Attitudes: Adaptation and Reaction," in F.M. Orkin and S.E. Welz, eds., *Society in Southern Africa, 1975-1978* (Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press: 1979), p.135. An open-ended question concerning persons admired elicited 25% of responses for the homeland leaders, 3% for nationalist movement leaders. A direct question would have elicited a much higher degree of support for bantustan leaders, Schlemmer concluded.

²¹⁰ *Markinor Homelands Survey, op. cit.*, Tables 22, 36.

²¹¹ Switzer, *Politics and Communication in the Ciskei, op. cit.*, p.23. Kotze found much the same in the Transkei, *Traditionalism in African Local Government, op. cit.*, p.277.

own areas. For example, the Markinor homelands survey found that the main advantage of homelands was greater freedom.²¹² Several other social scientists concluded after similar findings that the appeal of "half a loaf" was likely to generate a degree of acceptability for the bantustan elite.²¹³ They would not be wished away; they would have to be politically defeated.

Tangled together with the traditionalist view of community was the acceptance of important aspects of the apartheid order as rational-legal forms of domination. This reflected the articulation of social practices and discourses of the domestic and capitalist spheres.²¹⁴ Thus Mayer found that in Soweto in 1965, workers were hostile to the Afrikaner-dominated government, yet sympathetic to English-speaking employers, rather than seeing the political and economic system as a confrontation between all whites and all blacks. Instead of seeing themselves as unfree labor, bound by apartheid, their accounts of their plight implied that they were members of a 'normal' working class. (The economy, as opposed to the policy, was not seen as founded on racial discrimination.) Sowetans had middle class value and aspirations, saw success as a function of individual effort, and blamed themselves for their lack of success, not the system.²¹⁵

Indeed, a belief in black incapacity and white superiority implicitly legitimated the apartheid regime as a rational order, though the suggestion was rarely so strongly put. In the early 1970s, some 40% of Durban Africans expressed reservations about majority rule.

²¹² Markinor Homelands Survey, op. cit., Table 31.

²¹³ See, for example, kaTyakwadi, The Development of the Political Party System, op. cit., p.247, Mayer, Urban Africans and the Bantustans, op. cit., pp.17-18, and Adam, Modernizing Racial Domination, op. cit.

²¹⁴ This is discussed in Chapter Two, pp.56-60.

²¹⁵ Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, op. cit., pp.23, 31-32.

"The whites' knowledge is too deep," said one; "We can never get the wisdom of the whites," another added.²¹⁶ These paralleled Mayer's findings in Soweto in 1965. Africans "will only equal whites in 100 years," one Sowetan told him. "Africans are at a lower stage of development," according to another.²¹⁷ The same sort of feelings were found among coloreds. Thus, at a meeting in a colored area in Cape Town in the late 1960s, a speaker received a great deal of support when he said coloreds could not run welfare centers and needed whites to do it.²¹⁸ Observers from within and without the Indian community also accepted that Indians generally preferred white minority rule to the prospect of domination by the African majority.²¹⁹

While the apartheid regime did possess a greater degree of acceptance than has generally been understood, its stability also rested upon the maintenance among potential opponents of fear and the belief that unofficial political opportunities had been eliminated. Here we are on more familiar ground, regarding traditional conceptions of the South African state -- but how and by whom the fear was instilled is rather more complex than accounts focusing on the "repressive apartheid regime" would suggest. In terms of Lukes' conceptualization of power, the South African regime relied not just on the third dimension, hegemony, but also on the second, the inhibition of dissent, considerably more than the first,

²¹⁶ Schlemmer, "Political Adaptation and Reaction among Urban Africans in South Africa," *Social Dynamics*, vol.2 (1976), p.13.

²¹⁷ Mayer, *Soweto People and Their Social Universes*, *op. cit.*, p.227.

²¹⁸ Michael Whisson, "The Legitimacy of Treating Coloreds as a Minority Group," p.219.

²¹⁹ Meer, "Indian People," *op.cit.*, p.30; Adam, *Modernizing Racial Domination*, *op. cit.*, p.109.

direct physical repression.²²⁰ Moreover, to a large extent, the tasks of perpetuating fear and restraining dissidents were performed by actors within black political and civil society itself.

The pervasiveness of fear within black communities in South Africa during the heyday of apartheid is well documented. Majorities of Africans in Durban and East London said they were fearful of discussing politics openly in the surveys cited above.²²¹ When Nyquist tried to interview members of the African elite of Grahamstown in 1966-67, he found them afraid to talk about political issues.²²² Schlemmer reported that educated Africans in Durban were almost as afraid of the police as of criminals – a remarkable finding for a middle class whose highest aspiration was respectability.²²³ As well as police action, the fears associated with political dissent extended to the loss of jobs, particularly among the professional middle classes, the majority of whom were employed by the state as teachers and nurses. As Curtis Nkondo, then a teacher in Soweto, recalls, his colleagues were terrified of losing their jobs if they spoke out. "If you were a Tsonga teacher you could teach only in Tsonga schools, Zulu in Zulu. If anything happens to you in those schools, you cannot go anywhere."²²⁴

In addition to what the white authorities could do, however, the fear of repression was internalized within various parts of Black communities, which made it far more pervasive and powerful than the government's agents could achieve on their own. For

²²⁰ Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London, Macmillan: 1974).

²²¹ Schlemmer, "Black Attitudes: Reaction and Adaptation," *op. cit.*, p.124. Charton and kaTyakwadi, "Political Parties in the Ciskei," *op. cit.*, p.143.

²²² Myquist, *African Middle Class Elite*, *op. cit.*, p.273.

²²³ Schlemmer, "Black Attitudes: Reaction and Adaptation," *op. cit.*, p.122.

²²⁴ Interview, Curtis Nkondo, Johannesburg, July 29, 1992.

example, councilors kept township dwellers in fear of losing their residence permits and being expelled if labeled as "troublemakers," an important restraint on free expression.²²⁵ Due to the clientelistic character of community life, of course, potential penalties for opposition ran beyond loss of houses, including access to education, welfare services, recreational opportunities, position in church, and the like. Yet the most intimate form of repression took place within the family, when parents traumatized by the upheavals and losses of the past actively discouraged their children from political activity. One African who grew up in the 1960s recalled what happened when questions were asked about the ANC and PAC: "Our parents used to bash us whenever we mentioned those names. We grew up thinking that they were the bad guys who meant trouble."²²⁶ Thus, beyond the direct reach of the law, the social processes of the community and even the socialization process of the home helped to enforce political conformity in the high apartheid era.

Linked to the fear of political involvement was a widespread sense of powerlessness and conviction that no political opportunities were available outside the limited ones offered by official structures. The sense that there was nowhere to take complaints about those structures was exemplified by the comments of an old woman interviewed in a Ciskei relocation village:

"People are afraid to complain because they have nowhere to go. We have been told that we are not allowed to have meetings among ourselves to discuss these problems. We must take all the problems to the Advisory Board."²²⁷

²²⁵ Mentz, Die Stedelike Bantoeraad, *op. cit.*, p.193.

²²⁶ Helen Lunn, Antecedents of the Music and Popular Culture of the African Post-1976 Generation, MA Thesis, Wits University, Johannesburg, 1986., p.113-14.

²²⁷ Green and Hirsch, "Baseless Headmen and Rootless Proletarians," *op. cit.*, p.17.

The extent to which the complaints and grumbles of daily life remained hidden transcripts is expressed by these quotes from ordinary Africans in East London:

"The government is oppressing me and I am just enduring the situation, since I can do nothing."

"Privileges are only for the white people. We are forced to be under their control and we can't even squeal because we will be victimized."

"I can't plan my future, I can't think for myself. The government does the thinking for me."²²⁸

Similarly, Meer reported that Indians found that "their security lies not in voicing their opinions, but in concealing them."²²⁹ Coloreds surveyed in Cape Town reported that they that they could achieve little politically on their own and that they had little confidence in their political capabilities.²³⁰ (A consequence of the lack of autonomous political opportunities was the absence of opportunities to develop political competence and confidence through practice.)

Among Africans, the sense of powerlessness was also intensified by features internal to the African community: intolerance and illiteracy. Political intolerance, which had marked African life even before 1960, figures harshly in accounts of the years after. The Mdantsane survey found that many residents were unwilling to accept that close friends or family members would join a different party, reflecting the patrimonial nature of political activity.²³¹ In the rural Transkei, threats of violence were frequent among political opponents, and non-conformity was seen as anti-social behavior. "Individualism in politics is not encouraged, and a person had better be in agreement with generally accepted views

²²⁸ Mayer, Urban Africans and the Bantustans, *op. cit.*, p.4.

²²⁹ Meer, "Uprooting" *op. cit.*, p.14.

²³⁰ Morse and Peele, "Colored Power or Colored Bourgeoisie," *op. cit.*, p.328.

²³¹ kaTyakwadi, The Development of the Political Party System, *op. cit.*, pp.156-7.

and behavior," Kotze wrote.²³² Feelings of helplessness were amplified by the illiteracy of much of the African population, which left those who could communicate only orally dependent on brokers and officials who could read official documents and news. Mentz, a white official studying township administration, noted, "Especially among the illiterate and semi-literate [Africans], an almost passive acceptance of specific administrative regulations was encountered, which after further inquiry had sprung from an unvoiced fear that any complaints from them could lead to the revocation of their urban residence permits."²³³ The flip side of the communal solidarity created by the networks of civil society was thus the weakness of the individual and the tendency towards unanimity, which was only strengthened when individuals had no access to information besides face-to-face contact with members of their primary group.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, social isolation and the social penalties to opposition tipped the scales in favor of political acquiescence, even for many would-be dissidents. Adam put it this way: "The state has succeeded in atomizing political activism and thereby in destroying an organizational atmosphere of mutual reinforcement that seems a pre-requisite for risk-taking."²³⁴ Ismail Cachalia, then a former Indian Congress activist, described his plight much more simply: "I was alone."²³⁵ In these circumstances, where decisions were individual, the expected returns to protest minimal, and the costs high, acquiescence was the obvious choice, as Meer noted. "Balancing the rewards available to

²³² Kotze, Traditionalism in African Local Government, op. cit., p.297.

²³³ Mentz, Die Stedelike Bantoeraad, op. cit., p.172.

²³⁴ Heribert Adam, "Internal Constellations and Potentials for Change," in Leonard Thompson and Jeffrey Butler, eds., Change in Contemporary South Africa (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1975), p.306.

²³⁵ Personal conversation, Ismail Cachalia, Actonville, October 1981.

the intellectual and professional are the threats of awful punishment for non-compliance and criticism. It is hardly surprising that vested interests, no matter how dubious, are treasured, that co-operation is high and opposition virtually non-existent."²³⁶ This was particularly the case given the material benefits associated with compliance for professionals in the form of rising salaries and rapid promotion in the separate bureaucracies serving blacks.²³⁷ Such positive incentives for compliance, and the deterrent sanction of fear, were far more widespread than direct government action against individuals, which was used rather sparingly. The total number of people banned numbered roughly 200, with several hundred more annually detained without trial, in a population of roughly 30 million. Those who suffered direct state action for political activism were vastly fewer than, say, those annually hurt or killed in automobile accidents.

In short, black political culture in the 1960s changed in certain ways which accentuated its most conservative and parochial tendencies, sharply narrowing the bounds of citizenship and political possibility. These changes include the political atomization of the middle classes and the strengthening of patrimonial identities among the popular classes. Considerable acceptance was won by the homeland leaders and those operating in other government-created political bodies, while the racial basis of economic as well as political power remained concealed behind the normal workings and social stereotypes of the capitalist economy. Control also rested on fear and intolerance, generated even more from within black communities themselves than without by the white security forces (though they remained the alternative of last resort). Consequently, the interaction between the policies

²³⁶ Meer, "African Nationalism," *op. cit.*, p.123.

²³⁷ Charton commented, "Rising salaries and rapid promotion keep (teachers) politically compliant, if sometimes restive and resentful." "Black Elites in the Transkei," *op. cit.*, p.67.

of the government, the positions of the conservative black elite, and popular attitudes created a series of barriers to large-scale collective action against the regime.

VI. CONSERVATIVE POPULISM AND THE QUEST FOR LEGITIMACY: THE IRRESISTIBLE ASCENT OF LENNOX SEBE

The black politicians who operated "within the system" carved out much more significant power bases within the limited space permitted them than has generally been acknowledged. Indeed, in important respects the continuities with the era before 1960, in terms of political practice and even personalities, are as striking as the differences. Yet the black conservatives of the 1960s and early 1970s broadcast their appeals on a larger scale than their parochial predecessors. Combining the resources of bantustan governments or national councils with those of local townships, they established denser elite networks than those of earlier days and appealed to identities which, though particularistic rather than national, still reached further than neighborhood or clan. This proved particularly true in the homelands that included the townships of major cities, KwaZulu, Bophutatswana, and the Ciskei, since these offered much larger population and resource bases. These, in turn, offered them greater capacities for popular mobilization than had existed in the previous political era.

As a result, similar political dynamics drove the various parties controlling official representative bodies, such as the Ciskei National Independence Party (CNIP), the Transkei National Independence Party (TNIP), the Venda Independence Party (VIP), the Lebowa

People's Party (LPP), the colored Federal Party (FP), or the factions which ran the South African Indian Council (SAIC). It centered on competition among local elites rooted in both civil society and the political institutions to forge alliances of patrons and mobilize followers on patrimonial lines, while seeking to deny their opponents legitimacy, resources, and political space. In their quest for legitimacy, conservative populists operating within the system linked discourses of group identity and traditional practice with the real, material interests of their supporters in bread and butter issues, mobilizing their base in opposition to an other defined by ethnicity, tribe, clan, religion, etc. Given the intense pluralism of South African society, these sorts of cleavages are abundant. Thus, the divides between Rharhabe and Mfengu in the Border region, between Thembu and Mpondo in the Transkei, between Mphephu and Sibasa in Venda, between clans supporting and opposing Bantu Authorities in Lebowa, and between African, colored, and Indian and Moslem, Hindu, and Christian in the Western Cape and Natal all became lines of political conflict within black communities.

Reflecting the authoritarian character of the regime, the seductions of tradition and patronage were supplemented by coercion and manipulation, but it would be a mistake to regard intimidation as the primary reason for the popular backing mustered by conservative black leaders. It was certainly true that the intimidation, force, and administrative manipulation hampered the development of opposition groups. Yet this alone cannot account for their weakness. For while the apartheid regime constrained choice through repression, it was not totalitarian. It did not eradicate opposition within the terms of the system or erase tensions within civil society. Indeed, the neo-patrimonial order created by the white authorities and their black allies contained both the contradictions of

patrimonialism, involving gender and clan, and those of representative institutions, since it depended on a degree of political competition for its legitimation.

To illustrate these phenomena, this section will examine the political background, discourses, and practices which shaped the official politics of the Ciskei homeland. By the early 1970s, the region between Port Elizabeth and East London, where the Ciskei was situated, had become one of the country's principal centers of conservative populism. Yet a space remained open there in which the Black Consciousness Movement would incubate. The discussion of Ciskeian politics here will draw heavily on a remarkable study by G.R. kaTyakwadi.²³⁸ A closer look at the Ciskei will thus help to better see the strengths and vulnerabilities of the subordinate black authorities of the apartheid regime.

The cleavages in official Ciskei politics centered on the re-activation of the century-old rift between the Mfengu and Rharhabe inhabitants of the region. The Mfengu were the descendants of refugees pushed out of Natal by the 19th century Mfecane wars. They had allied themselves with the British settler against the indigenous inhabitants of the region, the Rharhabe, winning grants of land, settling around mission stations, and becoming early converts to Christianity and education. As a result, the Mfengu included the bulk of the educated middle classes of the Border region, but they were resented by the Rharhabe as intruders who had militarily, culturally, and politically betrayed them. In the 20th century, the battleground had shifted from the field of guns to that of culture, exemplified by the two groups' competing annual celebrations under the leadership of their traditional authorities.²³⁹ From 1907 on, the Mfengu had held an annual festival under a milkwood tree. In response,

²³⁸ kaTyakwadi, The Development of the Political Party System, op. cit.

²³⁹ ibid., p.113.

in each town the more numerous Rharhabe held the Ntsikana celebration, named after a chiefly hero, in response. In the 1950s, opposition to apartheid and the rise of the ANC (particularly strong in the Eastern Cape) for a time displaced Mfengu-Rharhabe conflict in the political sphere, but it remained latent. In the 1960s, following the ban on the ANC and the implementation of Bantu Authorities, Mfengu-Rharhabe tension re-emerged, as Mfengu leaders collaborated with the new structures to regain a position of power. In 1967, the Mfengu chiefs called on the central government's Bantu Affairs Department (BAD) to recognize them as a group apart from the Rharhabe. The white government agreed, creating the Ciskei Territorial Authority, in which Mfengu and Rharhabe had equal representation, under an Mfengu chief named Justice Mabandla. In the Ciskei, Pretoria's representatives deliberately played Rharhabe and Mfengu off against each other, and Rharhabe leaders complained that Mabandla discriminated against them. The tensions worsened as landless Rharhabe expelled from white farms as a result of mechanization or the pass laws crowded into Mfengu villages. By the early 1970s, African civil society in the region had become polarized around the cleavage, as the Rharhabe-Mfengu split ran through churches, local administrations, and even schools.²⁴⁰

With the approach of the first election for the Ciskeian Legislative Assembly in 1973, this alignment crystallized politically with the formation of two competing groups, largely on ethnic lines. Most of the Rharhabe elite backed the *Ikhonco* ("link"), which would become the CNIP.²⁴¹ The *Ikhonco* group came together in 1972, including African businessmen from the towns as well as rural Rharhabe chiefs. Its leader, Chief Lennox

²⁴⁰ Cecil Manona, "Ethnic Relations in the Ciskei," *op. cit.*, pp.106-7, 114-9.

²⁴¹ The meaning of *Ikhonco* explains the party slogan of "*Bopha*," which literally means to tie up or to secure. However, it also has a second meaning which may not have been lost on opponents: to arrest.

Sebe, a member of Mabandla's cabinet, was a teacher by profession. He was also active as a preacher and in conservative fundamentalist Protestant groups, including the US-based Moral Re-Armament.²⁴² Jowly and plump, bespectacled and ponderous, he was chosen first by Mabandla, then by the committee of Rharhabe leaders seeking someone to challenge Mabandla, for the same reason: he was one of the few Rharhabe with the higher education and experience necessary for a government post. Mabandla's supporters coalesced into a rival group, *Imbokotho* ("grindstone"), in response to the challenge from the Sebe group. Mabandla was not just a chief but a champion of the Mfengu group, heading their annual celebrations as well as the Ciskeian government. While the broad lines of ethnic division were clearly behind the establishment of the two rival groups, the selection of candidates depended on individuals' networks of friendship and reciprocity. The resulting pattern of alliances was complex, reflecting the factional rivalries of a patrimonial society. Thus, most of the Rharhabe chiefs backed Sebe, but the Rharhabe Paramount Chief supported Mabandla, while Sebe drew the Mfengu Chief Njokweni to his side with the promise of the Mfengu paramountcy. The overall impression remains of a substantial measure of continuity in local-level leadership, despite the particularly heavy toll exacted in the Eastern Cape by the post-1960 bannings, as regional business and traditional elites formed up into two competing cartels. This impression is strengthened by a look at the political past of the new homeland elites, a substantial proportion of whom had been active in the liberation movements prior to their banning²⁴³ (In addition to suffering defections from his own camp, Mabandla had also lost favor with the white administration, because he favored the

²⁴² kaTyakwadi, The Development of the Political Party System, *op. cit.*, pp.108-9.

amalgamation of the Transkei and Ciskei and some of his supporters opposed separate development, though he himself did not. As a result, the white civil servants and, more important, the Xhosa-language service of Radio Bantu weighed in on behalf of Sebe.)²⁴⁴

Election day in 1973 saw a big turnout of Ciskeian voters, who gave the victory to the Rharhabe-backed Sebe. Some 173,182 people participated in the election, or 67% of the registered voters.²⁴⁵ Turnout was highest in the Eastern Cape cities of Port Elizabeth, East London, and Zwelitsha, and lowest in the rural countryside, where the election was fought more by local notables than the parties. (Despite the high turnouts in the old urban strongholds of the ANC in the Eastern Cape, few Ciskeians in Johannesburg or elsewhere outside the region took part).²⁴⁶ Sebe's *Ikhonco* group defeated Mabandla's *Imbokotho* by a two-to-one margin in the popular vote, and won fifteen of the popularly elected Legislative Assembly seats against Mabandla's five. Although Mabandla enjoyed an advantage among the chiefs, who held 30 of the 50 seats in the legislature, Sebe eked out a narrow 26-to-24 victory in the vote for Chief Minister. (The results for Port Elizabeth and Sebe's own seat in Zwelitsha were set aside by the courts due to election irregularities, but his party won the resulting special elections handily.)

As soon as the elections were past, the supporters of the two leaders coalesced into parties, Sebe's into the CNIP, Mabandla's into the similarly-named Ciskei National Party (CNP). They had impressive membership totals and formal structures, with tens of

²⁴³ For instance, of the twelve candidates for the Mdantsane council in 1974, seven had gotten their start in the ANC, the PAC, or the Unity Movement-connected All African Convention.

²⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.130.

²⁴⁵ Charton and kaTyakwadi, "Ciskeian Political Parties," *op. cit.*, pp.127-29.

²⁴⁶ kaTyakwadi, *The Development of the Political Party System*, *op. cit.*, pp.119-20.

thousands of card carriers, over 100 branches in the case of Sebe's party, elected executives and party conferences. Yet in reality they had minimal vitality at the grassroots, and tended to shrivel outside of electoral periods.²⁴⁷ Essentially, they functioned as elite cartels, recruiting rural headmen and their urban equivalents. They brought their followers into the party after them, and ceded their party a monopoly on access and influence in the area in return for patronage from it.

The formation of the parties was linked to the establishment of a spoils system that reserved patronage for Sebe supporters. KaTyakwadi explained what this meant in the village of Gobozana:

"Gobozana was identified with *Imbokotho* and this was said to be disastrous to Gobozana. To be identified with the *Imbokotho* meant to be denied certain benefits. Gobozana was said to be denied the privilege of being awarded a junior secondary school. ... Gobozana also expected the government to provide her with such amenities as health services and water, but support of the opposition might well compromise her chances of getting these amenities."²⁴⁸

Not surprisingly, Gobozana swung from the opposition camp to the CNIP. Similarly, in the towns, those who supported the "wrong" party also risked losing government benefits. The opposition party complained of this in a memo to central government soon after the election:

"There is a screening of applications for houses and business sites in the townships, and a very watchful eye is being kept on rent defaulters, with a view to disowning supporters of the CNP of their 'permission to occupy.' Councilors in charge of housing in the townships are pressurizing householders to become members of 'the ruling party' if they wish to retain their houses. ... Applications for rations by indigent families are being subjected to a severe scrutiny and the views of the applicants are sometimes sought to determine which party they support."²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ *ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.186.

²⁴⁹ Memo, Ciskei National Party to Commissioner General, Xhosa National Unit, November 13, 1973, State Archives, Pretoria.

Even a black newspaper reporter who was a former opposition councilor would be threatened with eviction if he did not join Sebe's CNIP.²⁵⁰

Housing was a particularly important form of patronage in the circumstances of the Ciskei, where both removals and construction were taking place on a large scale. In East London, plans were afoot to move out the whole of the old township of Duncan village, while 100,000 houses were being built in Mdantsane, which was to become the country's largest township after Soweto. The new "closer settlements" like Dimbaza were places where Africans dislodged from the white farming areas were desperate for homes. Because influential local leaders were the local representatives of the parties, the exchange of housing for party support or membership was frequently seen as an act of benevolence rather than one of coercion.

The spoils system was applied with a vengeance to government jobs. In rural areas, the opposition complained that candidates for chiefships who backed Sebe received priority consideration, while those in their areas were put under government supporters.²⁵¹ The ruling party took care to appoint only its own supporters to the post of headman.²⁵² Principals and teachers who backed the opposition were dismissed or transferred far from their homes, as were senior civil servants, school inspectors, and township superintendents. Threats against holders of government jobs who did not support the ruling party were commonplace. For example, at one CNIP rally, Sebe announced publicly, "When I come

²⁵⁰ Daily Dispatch, Indaba section, February 20, 1976.

²⁵¹ J.T. Mabandla, Memorandum to Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, October 28, 1974, State Archives, Pretoria.

²⁵² kaTyakwadi, The Development of the Political Party System, op. cit., p.191.

back from Germany, we shall have been granted to portfolio of health, and we shall see where Mtoba [a hospital head and CNP candidate] will work."²⁵³

Clientelist political practice in the Ciskei went along with patrimonial political discourse, much like other political actors operating within apartheid political institutions. In the 1973 election, the two contending groups explicitly accepted separate development, with its stress on parochial group identity over national consciousness.²⁵⁴ Both also engaged in competitive ethnic mobilization. Sebe's Rharhabe supporters, alluding to the "traitorous" past of the Mfengu, declared, "No Mfengu must be allowed to rule over Ciskeians." Mabandla's backers, aware of the reputation of the Mfengu as better-educated, asked, "Why should you allow yourselves to be led by people who had little education?"²⁵⁵ Sebe also played the ethnic card by campaigning for the restoration of several Rharhabe chiefships, which Mabandla had refused to create. This promised both symbolic and patronage benefits for their potential subjects, while offering the support needed to shift the balance towards Sebe in the Legislative Assembly. Mabandla himself commented acidly, "Various tribal groups...do not seem to take the elections as a nation but as different entities, each working for the glorification of its racial image."²⁵⁶

After Sebe became Chief Minister, the emphasis of political rhetoric shifted from identity to straight patronage. In the local elections in Port Elizabeth, East London, and Zwelitsha townships, as in the special elections for the legislature, the CNIP stressed bread

²⁵³ Mabandla, *Memorandum*, *op. cit.*

²⁵⁴ kaTyakwadi, *The Development of the Political Party System*, *op.cit.*

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.104.

²⁵⁶ Cited in *ibid.*, p.117.

and butter issues: lights, houses, schools, welfare, and the like.²⁵⁷ It was made clear to residents that voting for officially-approved candidates was the way to ensure amenities in their areas. (The lesson was driven home by the denial of services to those who had not done so in the Legislative Assembly vote, as in Gobozana.) The link between ethnicity and patronage was rarely made explicit once Sebe was in power, but it hardly needed to be, since the ethnic character of the parties was understood and made patrimonial references implicit in the discourse of material benefits. A second message from the ruling party was the charge that opposition was subversive and had to be suppressed, a claim that resonated in the intolerant political climate of Ciskeian communities. Justice Minister B Myataza warned a rally, "Once we get the necessary powers, ... we shall silence all the prominent members of the CNP or send them to Robben Island, and then there will be no opposition party in the Ciskei."²⁵⁸

In addition to the potent influence of patronage and the accompanying patrimonial discourse, Sebe relied on another sort of persuasion: disruption and thuggery directed against opposition activity by CNIP supporters and dependents. There were frequent complaints that CNIP members tried to break up opposition rallies and meetings. Before Mabandla's supporters held a meeting at Emgwali in August 1973, Sebe's side sent circulars threatening that those attending would be assaulted. When the meeting began, a group of CNIP supporters drove cars into the meeting, blaring horns, hurling ethnic insults at the speakers, and picking fights. (Their leaders included the popular AB member and rugby boss, Dan Qeqe.) There were reports of other attempts to break up meetings in the cities and

²⁵⁷ de Jongh, *Interaction and Transaction*, *op. cit.*, p.189, kaTyakwadi, *The Development of the Political Party System*, *op. cit.*, pp.206, 223-4.

²⁵⁸ Mabandla, *Memorandum*, *op. cit.*

rural areas. Sebe was not only aware of this; he actively encouraged it. A week after a group of knife-wielding young men crashed an opposition tea party in Zwelitsha, he praised them at a rally.²⁵⁹ By 1974, even the South African authorities had to take note of the extent of violence and intimidation in the Ciskei. D.H. Potgieter, the Commissioner-General of the Xhosa National Unit, warned his minister, "The climate in the Ciskei is not healthy, and victimization is the order of the day."²⁶⁰

Yet while Sebe's men may have been bullies, patronage, patrimonialism, and pressure were effective in consolidating his power and building on his popularity. The results of the local and special elections in 1974 showed a clear swing to the CNIP from the opposition. In the Legislative Assembly election in PE, the CNIP maintained its four-to-one advantage, while in Zwelitsha, a collapse of the opposition vote and a swing to the ruling party boosted the CNIP share of the vote from 57% the year before to 91% in the court-ordered rerun. A similar trend was evident in the local council election in Mdantsane, narrowly carried by Sebe in 1973 but won two-to-one the following year. These swings reveal the power of attraction of patronage and the power of dissuasion of intimidation: the opposition vote dropped more than the CNIP vote rose. But while it is certainly true that the public sphere was constrained by Sebe's use of force and fear, as well as by the banning of the nationalist alternatives, there is clear evidence of his popularity as well. A survey of Mdantsane residents found that of those who voted in the Legislative Assembly elections, three-fifths did so because they liked the leader, party, or policy they chose, and one fifth did so to follow their clan or majority sentiment. Only one in eight said they went to the polls

²⁵⁹ *ibid.*

from fear of intimidation or on the orders of their leaders.²⁶¹ Even by early 1976, after challenges to Sebe had begun to appear from outside the system, the survey found that he remained the most popular political leader among Mdantsane residents.²⁶²

Beyond the evidence provided by election results and opinion surveys, the size and fervor of the crowds drawn by the Ciskeian parties offers further proof of the reality of their support. The spectacle at Zwelitsha in 1974 with which this section began was typical of the large crowds and excitement Ciskeian politics generated by the first half of the 1970s. During the local council campaign in Mdantsane the same year, there were seven major public meetings, as well as numerous house parties and visits.²⁶³ A Port Elizabeth meeting called by the Sebe group in 1972 during the run-up to the Legislative Assembly vote drew a crowd of 3,000.²⁶⁴ During the Advisory Board elections there the following year, 500 or 600 attended ward-level meetings, which must have attracted many outside the narrow householder electorate.²⁶⁵ In the rural areas, too, attendance was heavy: for example, the meeting called at Emngwali in August 1973 by Mabandla's minority party brought together 1,000 men and women.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁰ D.H. Potgieter, Letter to M.C. Botha, Minister of Bantu Affairs and Development, October 19, 1974, State Archives, Pretoria.

²⁶¹ Charton and kaTyakwadi, "Ciskeian Political Parties," *op. cit.*, p.134. While their figures may underestimate the effect of intimidation, even doubling it would still mean that three fourths of the voters cast ballots for the party of their choice.

²⁶² Switzer, *Politics and Communication in the Ciskei*, *op. cit.*

²⁶³ kaTyakwadi, *The Development of the Political Party System*, *op. cit.*, p.206.

²⁶⁴ *Eastern Province Herald*, October 9, 1972.

²⁶⁵ de Jongh, *Interaction and Transaction*, *op. cit.*, p.177.

²⁶⁶ Ciskei National Party, Memorandum, *op. cit.*

However, important groups – including the educated, part of the rural population, and the young – remained aloof from the Ciskeian political order, despite its success in drawing together the more conservative social groups in the Border region. The CNIP proved unable to recruit the educated professionals, most of whom who had reservations about homelands and independents and/or an Mfengu background. They preferred the opposition CNP or else to opt out of homeland politics altogether. In Grahamstown, for example, Sebe's party was led by older, traditionalist elements, businessmen, pensioners, and policemen, whom the schooled upper stratum look on with contempt.²⁶⁷ Even in the rural Ciskei, a significant minority appears to have remained wary of the new black rulers and loyal to the old nationalist tradition. For instance, Switzer found that one-third of the household heads in Gobošana village mistrusted information from chiefs, headmen, and the *inkundla*, and speculates that they probably did not support the Ciskeian political system.²⁶⁸ It is likely that in the Ciskei, loyalty to the ANC was connected to rivalries between clans allied or hostile to the government, and perpetuated within extended families. With domestic and partisan loyalties thus intermingled, they probably were expressed in this era as conflicts of clans, when a decade earlier they might have been described by the same contestants in terms of to their attitudes to Bantu Authorities or Congress.²⁶⁹ Above all, Ciskeian youth, particularly the students, supported neither of the official political parties. In fact, party membership among people in their teens and early 20s was so slight that

²⁶⁷ Nyquist, *African Middle Class Elite*, *op.cit.*, p.251.

²⁶⁸ Switzer, *Politics and Communication in the Ciskei*, *op. cit.*, p.22.

²⁶⁹ In the Lebowa homeland in the northern Transvaal, this was the case during the 1970s in Sekhukuniland, site of a 1958 revolt against Bantu Authorities. Members of clans opposed to Bantu Authorities still insulted their supporters as *amaRangers*, a reference to the game rangers who arrived along with the Bantu Authority rules on stock limitation and fencing of grazing. Interview No.1, Elleck Nchabeleng, Johannesburg, August 10, 1992.

neither maintained a youth wing, a standard feature of African political parties in South Africa and elsewhere.²⁷⁰ For the young, the homeland parties were doubly alienating, since they relied on traditionalist discourses, based on respect for age, and supported the status quo, which offered little to ambitious young people who aimed to get ahead in the modern world.

The workings of the Ciskeian political system illustrate how black conservatives gathered support under the apartheid regime, as well as the social groups which eluded them. The homeland elites included the chiefs, headmen, and state-linked petite bourgeoisie, who used official representative bodies to build significant followings through ethnic mobilization and patrimonial politics in a context where opposition was persecuted and intimidated. In this situation of constrained choice, the conservative populists were widely seen as the best option, particularly by the older more rural, less educated, and more traditionalist elements. But the system also contained within itself the social and institutional contradictions of the apartheid order, with the potential for conflict which these represented. Its stress on reinforcing traditional authority intensified tensions with the educated professionals, disfavored clans, and the younger generation. Moreover, the creation of modern political institutions with restricted competencies laid the groundwork for conflict between white officials from Pretoria and the subordinate black elite. Yet despite these tensions, the system had an impressive degree of stability, which Adam shrewdly noted at the time when he wrote: "In the short run, however, the extreme racial structure in South Africa might well support the temporary satraps."²⁷¹

²⁷⁰ kaTyakwadi, The Development of the Political Party System, *op.cit.*

²⁷¹ Adam, Modernizing Racial Domination, *op. cit.*, p.80.

CONCLUSION

Thus, in black South African communities, the 1960s and early 1970s were a period of intense political activity, if in a conservative direction, not just a period of repression and silence. It was a time in which the regime and its conservative black allies intensified the dependent state-society relations of clientelism and corporatism, while striving with some success to build popular support with ethnic and racial populism. The institutions of black civil society, though somewhat critical of apartheid, remained firmly under white tutelage. Black political culture became more pluralistic and divided, while the horizons of citizenship and political potency narrowed for many. In other words, South Africa in the era of high apartheid was a society which is recognizable in terms of the categories used to analyze politics in other authoritarian semi-industrialized countries during the same period. It was also one in which the white rulers had some significant black allies, who sought to win some popular consent, albeit under constraint, and in which the state itself still possessed a substantial degree of legitimacy. In short, though the 1960s and 1970s were a period of conservative dominance in the black communities in South Africa, based on the combination of repression and engineered consent, these together made the apartheid regime a formidable opponent.

This image contrasts rather sharply with the versions in much of the literature on black South African politics, which is representative of structuralist approaches to power and politics in authoritarian regimes. From these perspectives little of note occurred, since there was little organized political activity directly challenging the regime. The underlying

assumption remains that popular legitimacy is a non-issue, and that the reason for the end of protest was the stepped-up state repression which marked the years after 1960. The possibility that the regime achieved a significant degree of organized, if constrained, consent, or that support for its indirect rulers represented a formidable barrier to organized opposition, is not even entertained. Because black politics "within-the-system" has not been taken seriously by scholars, the literature ignores the significance of the forces in black society that the Black Consciousness Movement (like the other small opposition groups, inside and outside the country) was up against. Steven Biko and his associates were neither solely focused on confounding white liberals nor shadow-boxing against insubstantial black opponents: the BCM's tirades collaborationist politics were serious responses to their legitimating discourses and practices.

In this, the chapter confirms a key hypothesis advanced in Chapter One, namely that authoritarian states rely on legitimacy as well as force. Politics under authoritarianism remains a struggle to manage contradictions and gain power, where political discourse as well as material and institutional factors plays a key role. It is clear that even a government as repressive as South Africa's apartheid regime was able to enjoy a degree of consent, as well as ruling through coercion and the manipulation of resources. This fact in no way makes the white minority regime "democratic" or excuses the numerous violations of human rights committed by its servants and rulers. It does, however, render the politics of the period more comprehensible. Restructuring the state-society relationship to strengthen all the elements which comprised it – clientelism, consent, and coercion – was the dominant motif of government policy towards black communities, and was seized upon and advanced by conservative elites within them. The new approach was an audacious shift from the

internal colonial policy of “native administration” which had characterized the preceding era. The extent to which it was successful explains the difficulty which opposition had in mobilizing and the survival of the regime for another three decades. The years from 1966 to 1976 were marked by two completing initiatives among black South Africans: a conservative mobilization from above as well as an attempt to mobilize them from below by the BCM. Having examined the first of these, we will turn to the roots of the latter in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

THE ORIGINS OF REGIME CRISIS: Civil Society, New Solidarities, and the Birth of the Black Consciousness Movement, 1965-1971

A group of 300 African students sat in front of the whitewashed administration building of the University of Fort Hare at 3 p.m. on September 6, 1968, on the second day of a sit-in that had halted classes at the small campus near Alice in the Ciskei. Within minutes, 10 police vans pulled up, disgorging dozens of armed policemen and six police dogs. The police commander told the students they were under arrest for trespass, and had to either go to jail or go home under suspension from the university. The scent of confrontation was in the air. But, calmly and in good order, the students sang "*Nkosi Sikelele Afrika*" ("God Bless Africa"), the African nationalist anthem, and "We Shall Overcome," the anthem of the American civil rights movement. Some three-fourths of the students of the "bush college" left for their dormitories, then their homes.¹

A throng of mourners filed out of City Park in Cape Town on the afternoon of September 29, 1969, following the bier of Imam Abdullah Haron, a prominent Moslem leader and civic activist who had died in detention two days earlier. Some in colorful Islamic robes, most in Western dress, the mourners walked in rows, their arms clasped together, chanting religious slogans and shouting, "Martyr, martyr!" As they marched the five miles to Mowbray cemetery, workers streamed out of factories along the route to join

¹ This description is based upon a memo from the Episcopal Churchmen for Southern Africa, "A Report from South Africa on the Student Situation at Fort Hare," September 1968, in the Karis-Gerhart archive, and South African Institute of Race Relations, *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1968*, Johannesburg, 1969, pp.266-268 (all volumes in this series hereafter cited as *Race Relations Survey*).

in, and traffic came to a halt. "The young assisted the old, laborers in greasy overalls jostled businessmen, and here and there an African face could be seen," commented an observer. By the time the procession reached its goal, almost 30,000 people were marching. Afterwards, a colored politician said it was "more than just a funeral procession. It was a political demonstration."²

In Ceres, a small Western Cape town 50 miles northeast of Cape Town, the night of February 21, 1970 found a crowd of over 200 angry colored people outside the police station chanting, "We are protesters! We protest!" Alarmed by the gathering, 30 local whites, armed with guns and sticks, joined police in cordoning off the station, beginning a tense face-off that lasted three hours. When the police rejected the demonstrators' demands to release two arrested men, the crowd turned angry, and the police and armed whites waded in to disperse it. A wild melee broke out. A section of about 50 colored people regrouped and hurled stones at the police, whites, the police station, and white-owned shops and cars. White firemen tried to turn their hoses on them but were driven back by the hail of missiles. The police then fanned out into the colored township, firing tear gas canisters and arresting 20 colored residents.³

All these events are illustrations of the focus of this chapter: the new potential for collective identity and action which emerged from institutional change and the self-fashioning of a new urban black society in South Africa in the 1960s and early 1970s.

This chapter will examine the changes in urban communities which occurred, with

² See Abdul Rashied Omar, The Impact of the Death in Detention of Imam Abdullah Haron on Cape Moslem Political Attitudes, Honors Thesis, History, University of Cape Town: 1987, pp.54-56.

³ This account is drawn from The Argus, July 23, 1970, August 12, 1970, August 10, 1970, July 24, 1970, January 25, 1971, and The Cape Times, February 23, 1970.

particular emphasis on the forging of new social ties, practices, and consciousness. These were the years in which truly urbanized black communities appeared, distinct from those before in economic structure, life experience, and literacy. While these changes did not wipe out many of the older, more traditional aspects explored in the last chapter, they also allowed the appearance of important new features in civil society – most notably a new public sphere of educational institutions, newspapers, churches, pop music, theater and sport. New micro-solidarities emerged as well, as local social networks and communities came together on increasingly non-traditional lines. The result of these developments was the growth of a new urban public, born both from the new public discourse shared by members of an imaginary urban black community, and by new types of association and contact, ranging from sporting events to school debating societies. Within the institutions of black civil society – particularly educational institutions, the press and the church – which had played a vital role in the emergence of these new identities – white predominance began to face challenge, first by small circles, then growing networks of black dissenters. These changes in civil society also produced changes in political culture, of which one of the most important was the growth of a youth culture, based on the adoption of elements of 1960s counter-culture. Significant, too, was the creation of new urban and national identities, and a growing political awareness and sophistication among urban blacks anxious to understand the new and wider world in which they found themselves. These developments resulted in the episodic but powerful appearance of new and old types of collective action, of which the Fort Hare sit-in, the Haron funeral, and the Ceres riot are examples, reflecting the mobilization of the new networks and identities with

little or no mediation by movement organization. The events in Alice, Cape Town, Ceres, and many other places showed that these years, if fearful, were far from silent.

In short, this chapter examines change from below, though deliberate rather than spontaneous, which created new possibilities for collective action in an intensely authoritarian context, with important implications for our understanding of the origins of crises in undemocratic regimes. The material presented in this chapter sheds light on several of the hypotheses concerning the origins of regime transitions discussed in Chapter One. It demonstrates how change in civil society – particularly in the domain of legitimacy and values – is linked to the emergence of conditions for regime crisis. Specifically, the forging of the new urban black communities and youth counter-culture reflected the creation of new social networks, identities, and values. These would provide social foundations for the growth of the Black Consciousness Movement and its challenge to the regime. The words, ideas, and songs which circulated within those emergent groups challenged the legitimacy of the apartheid order and asserted a desire for positive identities. These hidden transcripts provided the basis of the discourse which the BCM would re-work and voice aloud in the development of the crisis which rocked the apartheid regime in the 1970s.

L THE CITY AS CRUCIBLE: THE GROWTH OF URBAN COMMUNITIES AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The environment in which new kinds of social movements in South Africa could emerge was provided by the growth of its cities. Structural change created opportunities for the self-fashioning, from below, of a new urban black society. It was a society of working and middle-class people whose organization and life experience were far less marked than in the past by time in the rural areas, even if traditional relations and ideas had left their mark. This new society was based upon the emergence, for the first time, of truly urbanized black communities, reflecting the social ties, communications, and forms of consciousness of the city-born. Above all, new opportunities to participate in social and economic life flowed from the growth of education and literacy, which qualified people for jobs previously unavailable and opened their world beyond the narrow bounds of face-to-face ties. Among the most far-reaching changes which resulted in black urban society was the dramatic expansion of the public sphere. Even as the regime strained to restrict political discourse and control the public agenda, the institutional opportunities for social communication were changing rapidly. Industrialization and urbanization were transforming the existing educational institutions, communications media, and religious bodies. They also stimulated new institutional forms of urban collective experience and assembly, including popular music, theater, sport, and factory life. The growth of these discursive spaces made possible new kinds of collective unity and social ties, while they sheltered channels for expression and socialization over which the regime had less control

than those falling directly "within the system." With them appeared new possibilities for group identity, free spaces, and the quickening of public opinion. These changes created the potential for the reconstruction of black civil society and the formation of new collective identities in ways that would make possible collective action by black South Africans on a scale up to then unimaginable.

Despite pass laws and removals, the black population in the major metropolitan areas grew rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s. One factor driving the process was the pull of industrial growth, which demanded a steadily growing workforce. Another was the push exerted by the continuing collapse of subsistence agriculture in the homelands, forcing growing numbers of man and women to seek work in the towns.⁴ As the cities grew, their influence spilled over increasingly to the rural areas, as improved communications allowed migrants and their families to visit each other more often. (Other factors promoting urban influences in rural areas included the villagization of dispersed homesteads and, ironically, the resettlement of people removed from the cities.)⁵

With urban growth came changes in the class structure of the cities, as well as in the racial division of labor. The proportion of semi-skilled African workers in manufacturing rose substantially between 1960 and 1980. The black middle classes expanded even more rapidly, as growing industrial areas required professionals, technicians, shopkeepers, clerks, sales people and the like to establish viable communities, plan and execute decisions, and staff shops and offices. For example, the number of white-collar African workers in

⁴ This "pull and push" analysis draws on the work of Francis Wilson, particularly Migrant Labor in South Africa.

Johannesburg almost tripled during the 1960s.⁶ In the townships and the new homeland capitals, black bureaucrats, professionals, and shopowners also received a boost from the policy of separate development. All told, by 1970, Africans, colored people, and Indians occupied fully half the middle class posts involved in what could be termed social "reproduction": teaching, health, religion, and the like. (In contrast, they held only 4% of the jobs in control of private sector and government activity, and an even smaller share of managerial posts.)⁷

The growth of the urban population also brought with it the growth of the "second generation": the emergence of a truly urban black population. Even as late as 1946, in official statistics African men outnumbered women in the urban areas by more than two to one; by 1960, their proportions were close to 50-50, making the urban community one capable of reproducing itself.⁸ In line with this, the proportion of town-bred people with no family history in a rural area rose sharply. As the older generation of rural migrants gave way to their children, the proportion of adult Africans in Johannesburg who had spent thirty or more years there soared from around 30% in a 1962 survey to over 60% five years later.⁹ Similarly among Africans in Port Elizabeth, by 1973 rural connectedness had become a

⁵ Philip Mayer, "The Origin and Decline of Two Rural Resistance Ideologies," in Black Villagers in an Industrial Society: Anthropological Perspectives on Labour Migration in South Africa (Cape Town, Oxford University Press: 1980) p.49.

⁶ Tom Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945 (London, Longman's: 1982), p.356.

⁷ Craig Charney, "Janus in Blackface: the African Petite Bourgeoisie in South Africa," Con-text, vol.1 (1988), pp.8-11.

⁸ Helen Lunn, Antecedents of the Music and Popular Culture of the African Post-1976 Generation, MA Thesis, Wits University, Johannesburg, 1986, p.119.

⁹ ibid., p.120.

minority trait.¹⁰ The difference in outlook this made was indicated by Durand's survey there, which found just one-fifth of those born in the homelands saw the city as home, while all those born in New Brighton did.¹¹ Census data also show that by 1970, the bulk of professionals were city and Transvaal residents, while in decades past they had been largely rural and in the Cape. This pointed to the emergence of an urban intelligentsia to take the baton of leadership from the rural teachers and preachers who had formed the historic backbone of the black middle class.

Perhaps most important of all, urbanization and industrialization during the long boom were linked to massive growth in education and literacy. Factories, offices, and shops needed workers who could read, and blacks sought educational qualifications to gain social mobility and skills to cope with city life. The emergence of the school as the central public institution in the reproduction of urban black communities was one of the changes linked to the emergence of the second generation of city-dwellers, educated, literate, wage and salary earners and their spouses. Between 1960 and 1970, the number of African blue-collar workers outside farming with at least five years schooling almost doubled, reaching 1.16 million, which included 47% of the urban proletariat.¹² Across all walks of life, the number of literate urban Africans almost tripled between 1951 and 1970, when it reached 2.64-million, or two-thirds of adults in the cities.¹³ To put into perspective how dramatically this changed the numbers of Africans able to read newspapers, it can be noted that Weekend

¹⁰ Michael de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction: A Study of Conciliar Behavior in a Black South African Township, Ph.D. Thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1979, p.186.

¹¹ Cited in ibid., p.71.

¹² Republic of South Africa, Population Census, 1960, 1970 (Pretoria, Government Printer).

World's 1975 readership in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging area alone (1.36-million) was close to twice the number of Africans who could read English country-wide in 1951.¹⁴

In previous decades, as shown in Chapter Two, the reach of modern cultural institutions was decidedly limited in black communities in South Africa. Until the 1950s, schooling was available only to a small proportion of black children, an even smaller, largely middle-class group reached high school, and a handful went further, mostly to white, English-medium universities. Newspaper reading, too, was the province of the white-collar minority, with no dailies oriented towards the urban black working class. Finally, the bulk of the adherents of the mainline missionary churches had remained in the rural areas, while in the cities the fastest growing religious institutions were the syncretic, independent African churches. All these realities would change with urbanization and industrialization.

First and foremost among existing cultural institutions to feel the effects of structural change was undoubtedly the rapidly-growing education system. By the early 1960s, 80% or more of the African, colored, and Indian children between 7 and 14 were in school. Even then, few went on to high school – in all Soweto, there were only eight secondary schools as late as 1970 – but this changed rapidly in decade which followed. Government built more schools in the cities – 40 in Soweto alone between 1972 and 1974 – as industry sought better-educated labor and parents more opportunities for their children. As the school-aged population grew and pupils stayed longer, African school enrollments

¹³ Republic of South Africa, Population Census, 1951, op.cit., Population Census, 1970, (Pretoria, Government Printer).

¹⁴ South African Advertising Research Foundation, All Media and Products Survey (annual series hereafter cited as AMPS), (Johannesburg, 1975); Population Census, 1951, op.cit.

soared from 1.5 million in 1960 to 3.7 million by 1975.¹⁵ There were similar increases among the colored and Indian minorities. The growth of black education, fettered and unequal though it was, drove the rapid rise in literacy and education levels noted after 1960.

Beyond the sheer numbers crossing the portals of schools, even more significant was the fact that with the expansion of opportunities, working-class children also went, often to high school and beyond. A survey in Soweto found that by 1975, the poorest families were as likely as the richest to have children in primary school, and three-fourths as likely to have children in high school.¹⁶ In Grahamstown that same year, three-fourths of junior secondary and two-fifths of senior secondary pupils came from the lower social strata.¹⁷ In the homelands (also known as the bantustans), schools proliferated in the 1960s, as education became essential for job-seekers, Bantu Education separated schools from Christianity, and state policy discouraged school construction for Africans in the urban areas.¹⁸ A 1965 study found that in the Ciskei, 45% of high school pupils' parents held blue-collar jobs.¹⁹ These shifts meant that growing numbers of pupils not from respectable,

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.2, and Jonathan Hyslop, "State Education Policy," Perspectives in Education.

¹⁶ Market Research Africa, Today's Urban Black Household, *op. cit.*, Q.16. Indeed, even in 1965, more than 70% of the parents of 180 high school pupils who wrote essays for Mayer were ordinary working people. Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, Research Report, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, 1979, p.277.

¹⁷ Thomas Nyquist, African Middle Class Elite (Grahamstown, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University: 1983), pp.73-4. Nonetheless, there still was some evidence of class hierarchy: the offspring of the upper strata attended the more prestigious former mission schools, while those of more humble origins attended the newer state high school.

¹⁸ Mayer, "The Origin and Decline of Two Rural Resistance Ideologies," *op.cit.*, pp.46-48, and Delius, "Migrants," p.14.

¹⁹ Pieter de Vos *et. al.*, A Socio-Economic and Educational Survey of Bantu Residing in the Victoria East, Middeldrift, and Zwelitsha Areas of the Ciskei, Unpublished paper, University of Fort Hare, Alice, 1970, p.496.

well-to-do backgrounds arrived at secondary institutions just as urban black high schools grew into a large, potentially organizable constituency for the first time.

Beyond the schools and universities themselves, the spread of education also transformed the media, creating a mass black audience for newspapers. For the South African press, the rapid growth in literacy and income levels among blacks during the 1960s and 1970s translated into huge increases in black readership.²⁰ Between 1962 and 1975, the number of Africans reading English-language dailies tripled, reaching 1.1-million. Readership among coloreds almost doubled over the same period to 438,000. By 1975, more than 40% of urban African men read a newspaper every day. The newspaper-reading audience was greatest in Soweto, where three out of four African men read a daily; one-fourth to two-fifths of the men in other cities did the same.²¹

The result of this growth was the development of a three-tiered press for black South Africans, stratified by class. The top tier was formed by township editions of English-language white-oriented papers, such as The Star, the Rand Daily Mail, and the Sunday Times in Johannesburg and East London's Daily Dispatch. Surveys indicated that these publications' black readers were high-school educated and disproportionately white-collar, like the whites who also read them.²² The second tier included papers newly oriented

²⁰ Gavin Stewart, The Development of the Rand Daily Mail as an Intercultural Newspaper, BA Honors Thesis, Unisa 1980, pp. 58-71; Fred St. Leger and Tim Couzens, The African Press in South Africa, unpublished manuscript.

²¹ QUOTSO 75 (Johannesburg, Markinor: 1975), p.26, and calculations made from AMPS 1975.

²² AMPS, 1975. The blacks who read these publications were also described in the fiction of the time: Adam, the middle-aged floor manager in a Johannesburg radio shop in Miriam Tlali's Muriel at Metropolitan (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1975), p.22, or the "fortunate" Chevrolet-driving stranger in a navy blue suit, snow white shirt and blue tie of Mtutuzeli Matshoba's "My Friend, the Outcast", from Call Me Not a Man (Johannesburg, Ravan: 1979).

towards the urban black working class – The World and the Cape Herald. The World changed from a biweekly elite broadsheet into a racy, mass-circulation tabloid like New York's Daily News, multiplying its readership by six between 1962 and 1975 to reach 679,000 then (twice as many as its middle-class rivals combined).²³ In Cape Town, the bi-weekly, colored-oriented Cape Herald, seized a similar place, winning a 42% share of the colored working class, almost twice that of local English dailies.²⁴ The bottom tier consisted of the African-language press, chiefly the Zulu Ilanga in Natal and the Xhosa Imvo Zabatsundu in the Eastern Cape. Lacking English-language tabloids, in those regions the vernacular papers was read by the urban working class, women, and rural people. (A similar role was played by the Afrikaans press in colored areas.) These papers were kept on much tighter editorial leashes than the rest, but their black readers outnumbered those of local English dailies by four to one in Natal and nine to one in the Eastern Cape.²⁵ As a result of the emergence of a mass-circulation press, for the first time, news and political discourse could carry among black South Africans far beyond the reach of a speaker's voice or a neighborhood chain of gossip.

Finally, the rise of urbanization and education was also linked to the growth of urban mainline churches and mosques. Even though the Zionist and Ethiopian churches grew faster in the burgeoning cities, the missionary churches also experienced rapid growth in absolute black membership in the urban areas. Their growth was linked, in part, to the greater desire to move to town of rural mainstream Christians, compared to animists or

²³ AMPS, 1975. For Tlali, its readers were typified by Ben, the cleaner in the block of flats behind the Metropolitan Radio shop who followed Soweto's beauty queens in the paper. Muriel at Metropolitan, op. cit., p.25.

²⁴ AMPS 1975.

Zionists.²⁶ In part, it also reflected the growth of the town-born generation. (For example, among the Africans in Port Elizabeth, 70% of those born there were Christians, while of those born in the homelands, only 26% were.²⁷) This had profound institutional implications for the churches, which for the first time led flocks who were becoming urban and literate, for their urban dioceses, which were increasingly staffed by blacks, and not least for theological colleges, which had to cater to a growing – and increasingly black – student body to keep up with the growth in church membership. Many of the same changes played themselves out in the colored and Indian Muslim communities as well, which also grew rapidly in numbers in this era. These changes all bore great potential significance, given the resources, prestige, and international ties of the missionary religious organizations, as well as their substantial memberships.

While transforming older communications institutions in black communities, urbanization and industrialization also produced new forms of collective encounter. In the past, popular music had been largely jazz and choral, restricted to dance halls and churches. Theater, motion pictures, and sporting teams also chiefly attracted small, localized followings. With blacks largely employed off the factory floor, opportunities for collective organization and action at work were restricted by small workplaces and numbers, at least outside mining. All these realities changed in the 1960s, as new, national audiences emerged for new offerings.

²⁵ AMPS 1975.

²⁶ Beryl Pauw, Report of Research Concerning Bantu Christians and Their Churches in the Eastern Cape and Transkei, (Grahamstown, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University: 1969), p.29.

²⁷ de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*, p.78.

Pop music – rock, soul, and *mbaqanga* – won a vast following in townships around the country, particularly among the young, propelled by new media, especially records and radio. Despite the regime's efforts to control the public sphere, channels developed which brought officially unsanctioned tunes to black ears. With growing affluence, record players became fairly common in urban black homes, and a substantial market for records opened.²⁸ Often working for new recording companies interested in the black market, local groups produced a succession of record-breaking gold albums (selling 25,000 to 75,000 copies), while top overseas artists had even bigger sales.²⁹ Recorded music reached even more homes over the air. Though blacks were supposed to stick to Radio Bantu, those with AM radios could tune in to LM Radio, the station broadcasting rock and soul to South Africa from neighboring Mozambique. Two-thirds of its audience was black – primarily young, secondary-educated males – and it shaped musical tastes in big cities and small towns alike.³⁰ Overseas stars like The Beatles and James Brown were revered among schooled youth, and hundreds of local black bands imitated them. (The best-known, the "Beaters," paid tribute even in their name to Liverpool's Fab Four.) Semi-educated youth and gangsters flocked to hear *mbaqanga*, which was broadcast on Radio Bantu and became the quintessential township sound. The most successful rock and *mbaqanga* groups played to

²⁸ Ian Jeffrey reports that "radiograms" (tuner/record player sets) became part of the "new township style" among Sharpeville youth in the 1960s, Cultural Trends and Community Formation in a South African Township: Sharpeville, 1943-1985, MA Thesis, University of the Witwatersand, Johannesburg, 1985, p.233, while Nyquist indicates that half the upper stratum African families in Grahamstown had radiograms in 1967, African Middle Class Elite, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Ian Jeffrey, Cultural Trends and Community Formation in a South African Township: Sharpeville, 1943-1985, MA Thesis, University of the Witwatersand, Johannesburg, 1985, p.252, 258.

³⁰ *ibid.*, pp.225, 231 and Markinor Homelands Survey, *op. cit.*, Table 143.

scores of thousands of township residents brought together by unprecedented national tours and stadium-filling festivals.³¹

With apartheid laws closing the cities to black performers and a growing taste for music in the townships, the stage was set for the emergence of another important cultural institution: black musical theater. Several black-run and -staffed theatrical companies emerged in the 1960s as older multi-racial theater groups dissolved in legal and internal wrangles, the most prominent being Gibson Kente's. Given the absence of television and the scarcity of cinemas, theater soon took on a prominent and growing place in black social life. Playing to houses of 500 to 1,500 in township halls, schools, and churches, up to six times a week, on tours of two years or more, the cumulative attendance of successful shows ran run to the hundreds of thousands. Moreover, what began as a largely middle-class affair became a mass phenomenon, as texts and actors increasingly reflected popular realities and audiences were drawn predominantly from the working class and the youth.³²

Along with music and theater, black sport acquired a national following in this era. In the most popular sport among Africans, soccer, local, neighborhood-based teams lost pride of place to new ones with metropolitan or regional followings, united (through a complex and controversial process) in a National Professional Soccer League. Although the game remained politically non-engaged even as new businessman-managers gained prominence alongside the old patron-managers, the scope of competition and loyalties

³¹ Lunn, *Antecedents*, *op. cit.*, pp.144-5, 191.

³² Robert Kavanagh, *Theater and Cultural Struggle in South Africa* (London, Zed Books: 1985), pp.52-53, 117-121.

widened significantly.³³ Cricket and rugby, which had larger followings among colored and Indian people (and among Africans in the Eastern Cape), formed two competing sets of national leagues. One was led by prominent conservatives, associated with the politics of collaboration in the CPRC, SAIC, and bantustans, the other, under the South African Council of Sport (SACOS), by opponents of the regime, among whom teachers and others aligned with the Unity Movement played major roles. Thus, while also presenting larger-than-local arenas for competition and loyalty, in these sports participation also became directly a forum for political debate.

Taken together, all these changes had considerable significance, particularly in the urban areas. New channels for news and information provided access to a new world of information and stimulus for political discussion, while new theaters for sharing experience and ideas helped forge new identities and values distinct from older, more particularistic ones. The need to know was felt keenly: among blacks papers were circulated impatiently, hand-to-hand (with a phenomenal number of readers per copy).³⁴ Urban churches provided spiritual communities in tune with international values and new ideas about the role of churches in a changing society. The growth of pop culture, particularly pop music, was an important element in the urban culture and particularly in the emergence of an urban youth culture.

With all these changes, the urban areas became the crucible in which new social networks and identities could emerge, providing bases both for micro-mobilization and for large-scale collective action. The growth of large urban townships and modern types of

³³ This process is discussed in Jeffrey, *Cultural Trends*, *op. cit.*

stratification opened the way to identifications based upon community, class, or corporate identity on a much larger scale than before. This was reinforced by the more homogeneously urban experience of their residents, marked by new socializing institutions, means of subsistence, and types of leisure. The growth of educational institutions and the urban middle classes provided a large group of people with the qualifications necessary for potential leaders. Even more important, the rise of literacy meant that a majority of the urban black population had, for the first time, direct access to news and views from around their country and around the world. An urban community of discourse was emerging. With these developments, the stage was set for profound change in the identities and character of black society in South Africa.

At the same time, the new imagined and face-to-face communities emerging via the new institutions of discourse were complimented by the communities of residence and workplace that developed as townships and factories. Black South Africans came together - in their schoolyards and their homes, in factory canteens, offices, and trains, at church, in stadiums, in shebeens, and on neighborhood streets - and they talked. They talked about what they had read in the press, heard on the radio, in the classroom, and from the pulpit, or witnessed on stage, at work, or on a soccer field. Around the country, the same events and the same ideas began to stir black men and women, starting to break down the culture of silence bred by the repression of the early 1960s and to feel a variety of mutually-reinforcing new ties. In short, as black South Africans adopted a new, distinctively urban way of life, the new media and cultural institutions they embraced formed a new public

³⁴ AMPS 1975.

sphere allowing social discourse and connections to reach far beyond the cramped limits prevalent in earlier days -- a key change in the structure of political opportunities.

II. MICRO-NETWORKS OF SOLIDARITY: URBAN BLACK SOCIETY RESHAPES ITSELF

The 1960s and 1970s were also a time of tumultuous change in the local social networks which formed the basis of black South Africans' political culture, as they created new identities that crossed older, parochial boundaries. Seizing the opportunities provided by the new urban terrain and new communications media, residents of the cities forged new bonds from below within their townships and country-wide. These new discourses of solidarity ran across the ethnic and class lines which honeycombed South African society. Young people were in the vanguard of the process; as the second generation of urbanites came into their own, a generation gap yawned among black South Africans. The views, styles, and even argot which they shared with each other became the raw material which the Black Consciousness Movement reprocessed into inversionary discourse. Yet rather than simply replacing older loyalties, the newer ones were overlaid atop the previous patrimonial values in a synthesis which created more complex potentials for unity and cleavage. Indeed, even as these more modern identities were forming, black South Africans were strengthening, reformulating, and expanding older social relations. What this means is that even though organized large-scale political

protest was relatively rare in the 1960s and early 1970s, it was a period of intense social and cultural production and mobilization. In South Africa, this enormous change in civil society, against the backdrop of rapid urbanization and industrialization, telescoped into less than 20 years a process which took decades or centuries in the older societies of the center: the “cultural construction of citizens.”³⁵

The cauldrons in which new identities were forged were the local-level neighborhood and lineage-type networks in which urban blacks together shared daily experiences, ritual, and ideas. Despite the churning of population through voluntary migration, the pass laws, and forced relocation, settled urban communities were forming, dominated by those who had been born or long lived in the cities. The new urban neighborhoods in which they lived were bound together on both non-traditional and neo-traditional lines, by mutual aid, shared gripes, and gossip. These reflected the formation of powerful horizontal bonds of solidarity – the invisible networks of potential mobilization – at local level, even as vertical ties of ethnicity and patronage were simultaneously being strengthened, for in creating their new urban culture black South Africans drew from both traditional and modern sources. Within the urban framework, rapidly growing numbers of school pupils and young people in general carved out their own places, based on the specific experiences of their own generation. The results was the growth of urban youth sub-cultures, in conflict with their elders’ in important respects, yet also part of the new urban mix.

³⁵ My argument here has been strongly influenced by two sources: Alain Touraine, The Self-Production of Society (Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 1977) and Simon Schama, Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution (New York, Penguin: 1989).

By the 1960s, the urban black population had undergone important demographic changes which gave it a distinct place in South African society. In decades past, as we saw in Chapter Two, most of the black population of South Africa's cities had strong rural ties, remained culturally fragmented, and was weakly integrated socially. During the postwar era a population of migrants and new arrivals gave way to one of settled families. This change – reflected in the shift of the male/female ratio among urban Africans from 71%/29% in 1946 to 54%/46% in 1960 – revealed the growth of urban communities capable of reproducing themselves.³⁶ In the 1960s, as the children of the African workers who moved to town in the industrial surge a generation before reached maturity, and the pass laws restrained further permanent urbanization, the urban black population for the first time was largely composed of people born or long resident in the cities. By 1967, 60% of the adult Africans in Johannesburg had lived at least 30 years there.³⁷ While part of the urban African population, and much of the colored and Indian groups, had been subject to forced relocation, as the years passed the wounds began to heal and a sense of community to grow. The second generation saw themselves as urbanites in a way their predecessors had not: among African residents of Port Elizabeth, only 18% of those from the homelands called the city home, while 100% of those born there did.³⁸ As the urban population became more distinct in origin and outlook, a clearer demarcation appeared between townsmen and those from the rural areas. Based on extensive field research in Soweto, Mayer reported that “a sharp dichotomy between the migrants and the residents

³⁶ Lunn, *Antecedents*, *op. cit.*, p.119.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p.120.

has replaced the former gradual transition between them."³⁹ In short, though blacks had lived in South Africa's cities for up to three centuries, only in the 1960s did it become possible to speak of truly urbanized black communities.

If the neighborhood remained the basic unit of the urban organism -- within which reciprocity and discourse flowed -- increasingly those who lived there organized their lives around new social relations running beyond clan and extended family. As Pauw learned from his research in East London, "in contrast to rural Xhosa society, where kinship ramifies throughout the whole social structure, it constitutes only one among many categories in the urban structure compared to neighbors and friends, churches, associations, and relationships at work."⁴⁰ The intimacy of township life itself meant that social bonds developed among neighbors, despite the best efforts of apartheid planners in multi-ethnic cities like Johannesburg.⁴¹ The result was a concrete sense of neighborhood solidarity, based on mutual aid and the sharing of problems, views, and experiences across the lines of class, color, or caste. Manona described his observations in

Grahamstown:

"A good neighbor identifies with his neighborhood and sees to it that he gives help where necessary and attends social gatherings taking place there. Variations in income or occupation have no relevance in this connection. Instead, the

³⁸ de Jongh, *Interaction and Transaction*, op. cit., p.71, citing the findings of Durand's survey in the late 1960s, published in *Swartman, Std. en Toekoms*.

³⁹ Philip Mayer, "Class, Status, and Power among Johannesburg Africans," in Leonard Thompson and Jeffrey Butler, eds., *Change in Contemporary South Africa* (Berkeley, University of California: 1975), p.144. Later in the same essay he observes, "... the long experience of blacks living together has accelerated the process of cultural integration within the townships. A strong nucleus of settled inhabitants can look back to years of ethnically intermingled living. Even for the rest, situations in which tribal norms govern behavior have dwindled." *ibid.*, p.154.

⁴⁰ Beryl Pauw, *The Second Generation* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press: 2nd ed. 1973), p.169.

⁴¹ As Pauw also observed, "Generally, people living in the same house or in adjacent ones are not merely in close contact, but are also friendly towards each other." *ibid.*, p.179.

interaction of the people on such occasions shows that there is a basic cultural pattern which all the people share. This consciousness is rooted in the people's common experience of deprivation. Their social relations are not impersonal but have all the warmth which develops among people with common difficulties."⁴²

A central place in the life of urban black communities was held by the shebeens, or speakeasies, almost the only places for informal gatherings outside the home to share drink, news, and gossip in townships devoid of bars, restaurants, or other social amenities. There were estimated to be more than 3000 shebeens in Soweto alone.⁴³

Together, the various forms of contact and interdependency fueled a process, described in another urban setting by Caro, "where a common consciousness began to evolve ... — a consciousness that translated itself into a feeling of belonging in the city."⁴⁴

Face to face with those they knew and trusted, black South Africans spoke of their frustrations, sharing these "hidden transcripts" and forging links in their "submerged networks" of like-minded individuals. In safe surroundings, they voiced their anger at race discrimination and its perpetrators. Strini Moodley, who grew up in an Indian working-class neighborhood, said that while he never heard his neighbors "express profound political sentiments, there was a sense that the whites were greedy, grabbing everything, vicious and dishonest. This was expressed within the context of our own circles, not said on the platform."⁴⁵ Such sentiments were also expressed in the

⁴² Cecil Manona, "Small Town Urbanization in South Africa: a case study," *African Studies Review*, vol. 31, (1988), p.104.

⁴³ Lunn, *Antecedents*, *op. cit.*, p.185.

⁴⁴ Robert Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*, (New York, Vintage Books: 1975), pp.85-6.

⁴⁵ Interview, Strini Moodley, Durban, September 7, 1992.

anonymity of survey interviews, such as the pioneering work of Mayer in the Eastern Cape and Johannesburg and Schlemmer in Durban.

“One can think we are at one with whites because when we are at work we laugh and joke – inwardly we are great enemies.”

“Once you are black in this country you lose all your dignity.”

“My movements are subject to someone else’s will, not my own. The reference book pins one down; I can’t move.”

“There is discrimination against us in all spheres: the economic sphere is only one. The wages are low and unfair: they are merely pocket money.”⁴⁶

A feeling of dehumanization under white rule was shared by both working and middle class blacks. Mayer’s Soweto survey found that:

“A sense of black people having been treacherously conquered by white people seemed well engraved in our respondents’ consciousness. ‘We are oppressed in our own land and have to bow down to the will of the conqueror.’ ... When ordinary working people spoke along these lines, it was in moving but general terms of being denied human status, not a mere abstract concept, but the vital core of their everyday experience. Better educated respondents would list and comment on the more important institutional forms of discrimination.”⁴⁷

Along with the anger, there was also evidence of a new pride, and an affirmation of the value and strength of black people:

“We are made of strong stuff. We are surviving under the worst suppression.”

“I have proved my black power, which is in fact internal. No other color would ever stand the situation which we blacks have managed to endure.”

“I would not like to be white. Whites are cruel. They have no kindness.”

⁴⁶ Lawrence Schlemmer, “Political Adaptation and Reaction among Urban Africans in South Africa,” *Social Dynamics*, vol.2 (1976), p.10 (first quote), Philip Mayer, *Urban Africans and the Bantustans*, (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations: 1972), pp.3-4 (rest). Mayer reported that in the early 1970s, political awareness was highest in the depressed, ethnically homogeneous populations of Port Elizabeth and East London, compared to smaller Eastern Cape towns or Johannesburg. Similarly, de Jongh’s survey of 525 industrial workers in Port Elizabeth around 1970 found “general distrust and a negative attitude” regarding working conditions. *Interaction and Transaction*, *op. cit.*, p.60 The willingness to share views with a stranger under the guarantee of anonymity was itself a sign of the bonds of trust developing among urban blacks by the 1970s.

⁴⁷ Mayer, “Class, Status, and Power Among Johannesburg Africans,” *op. cit.*, p.146. Likewise, Gerald Stone mentions that identity is a particular pre-occupation of working-class colored youth, “Identity Among Lower-Class Coloreds,” in Michael Whisson and Hendrick van der Merwe, *Colored Citizenship in South Africa* (Cape Town, Abe Bailey Institute of Interracial Studies: 1972).

“I do not feel inferior whatever insults I am confronted with. I am keeping my black pride and don’t react with violence.”⁴⁸

These hidden transcripts of urban blacks anticipate Black Consciousness ideology, and this was hardly coincidental: they everyday ideas and experiences of black South Africans were the raw material which the BCM was processing into its ideological discourse of inversion.

Besides the crystallization of new area ties, there were also shifts in traditional bonds – clan and kin – and neo-traditional relations – clientelism and patronage – recasting loyalties within and between lineage groups. When traditional elements survived in increasingly non-traditional contexts, they signified change as well as conservation. For instance, in Soweto in 1975, 60% of adults – both educated and illiterate – had been married with exchanges of *lobola* (bride-price).⁴⁹ While the custom of allying extended families in marriage via the exchange of gifts was respected, the tradition bound now together members of lineages and ethnic groups who had not been in contact previously – indeed whose ancestors had often lived hundreds of miles apart. Similarly, there was a massive persistence of belief in and practice in ancestor worship. Surveys found that 87% of town-born Christian Africans in Port Elizabeth believed in the ancestor cult, and more than 80% in Soweto, while in the latter 49% participated in

⁴⁸ Mayer, *Urban Africans and the Bantustans*, *op. cit.* Commenting on his findings, Mayer noted, “Our material does not indicate that black identity in the aggressive sense has yet become a popular idea. There was some evidence of a new pride in being African which could take the form of wanting to do things on their own, without leaning on whites, but only rarely did we encounter reference to a hoped-for reversal of racial discrimination.” *ibid.*, p.7. Five years after his 1971 fieldwork on this project, he conducted new research that led him to substantially different conclusions; see Chapter Six, Part I.

⁴⁹ Market Research Africa, *Today’s Urban African Household* (Johannesburg, MRA: 1975), Q.57.

sacrifices and 67% had consulted a diviner.⁵⁰ Undoubtedly figures for Durban would have been similar. Yet in a study in Natal, the proportion of urbanites who paid obeisance to the traditional living link to the ancestors - the chief - was just 30% - less than half the corresponding figure for rural dwellers (72%).⁵¹ The proliferation of new social ties - in sport, church, voluntary associations, factories, shebeens, and with neighbors and friendship groups - although organized to varying degrees on neo-traditional lines, still meant that a multiplicity of leaders replaced the traditional elite. Moreover, despite the social and personal ties which bound together the new township elites the very possibility of choice between alternative loyalties and interests in a complex urban environment also helped attenuate the direct, monopolistic dependencies prevalent in the past. As Pauw noted, "The loose-knit social network of many townspeople makes for fewer intense and personal relationships of the kind associated with small-scale society: here the school teacher, the minister, the legal adviser, the superintendent, and the boss are different persons, each with functions tied to the relevant kind of activity. All this goes with a large variety of groups and relationships between individuals resulting in a complexity that also distinguishes large-scale from small-scale society."⁵²

Within their own circles of kin and kind, the revival of customary practices by blacks in the 1960s and 1970s reflected a cultural rejection of white domination, even if

⁵⁰ Studies by Pauw and Moller cited in Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, p.200.

⁵¹ The figures are drawn from a study by Lawrence Schlemmer in Durban in 1970-71, "City or Rural Homeland: A Study of Patterns of identification Among Africans in south Africa's Divided Society," Social Forces, vol.51 (1972), p.159. The figure for urbanites and rural dwellers are averages of those he gave for men and women in each.

they were also used to encourage collaboration with regime by its conservative black allies. Mayer reported that fieldwork in the 1970s “has shown that the practice [of African tradition] has become more widespread and more open; it is taken more seriously, and many people who tried not to participate are finding it more difficult. Behind this development is a desire to resist white domination at the point of the most sacred and private domain: ‘They try to tell us even how to relate to our dead fathers.’” He also found that these customs were appreciated because they strengthened the community against the strain of the urban environment and because they evoked a joyfulness which white-derived custom could not.⁵³ Similarly, Meer reported a revival of Indian cultural and religious customs in the face of apartheid restrictions.⁵⁴ This resurgence of tradition was an ambiguous and ambivalent phenomenon, for to some extent it served the government’s purpose of increasing parochialism, yet it also represented an expression of rejection of white values and an affirmation of black culture. “In this sense,” Mayer noted, “practicing African customs has been akin to giving expression to Black Consciousness. We may speak of the old Black Consciousness of the people, which has deep roots in the history of the white-black encounter, as distinct from

⁵² Pauw, The Second Generation, *op. cit.*, p.220.

⁵³ Mayer, “The Origin and Decline of Two Rural Resistance Ideologies,” *op.cit.*, p.69, and Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, pp.205-7. Similar arguments regarding the cultural resistance function of traditional ideologies which went along with political conformity under the apartheid regime within the Zionist Churches are made in John and Jean Comaroff, Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: the Culture and History of a South African People (Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 1985).

⁵⁴ Meer, “Indian People: Current Trends and Policies,” in Peter Randall, ed., South Africa’s Minorities (Johannesburg, SPRO-CAS 1971), Occasional Publication No.2.

the new Black Consciousness which in South Africa emerged as an intellectual movement in the late 1960s.”⁵⁵

Urban blacks thus created new communities whose solidarity was founded on the synthesis of traditional and modern identities. Far from disappearing as Africans assimilated into the city, as modernization theorists had expected, Africans assimilated modern life into their own traditions. Mayer noted, “African customs have become modified or camouflaged, often almost out of recognition. They have become ‘modernized’ in a multitude of ways to fit in with sophisticated urban lifestyles, and they have been disguised to minimize conflict with Christian teaching.”⁵⁶ These new urban communities and identities were constituted around both types of relations and discourses partly by choice and partly by the necessities of the complex urban situation. As Manona put it:

“The overall urbanization process appears as a complex encounter between new and indigenous social forms in a situation where the people’ struggle to construct a viable social order is also a source of controversy and ambiguity. What the people carry into town is not a rural based traditionalism ... but perceptions which reflect the dramatic juxtapositions in their own lives. What is occurring in town is a development, under urban constraints, of a distinctive urban culture which draws its values and practices as much from its own roots as from those of the largely Eurocentric tradition. It is a process of diversification and adaptation of Xhosa life in which relevant and appropriate values are retained and new ones adopted.”⁵⁷

The experience of urban youth, marked by school and street, contributed to a distinctive youth culture. As Lunn noted,

⁵⁵ Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, pp.207-8.

⁵⁶ ibid., p.190.

⁵⁷ Manona, “Small Town Urbanization,” *op. cit.*, p.108-9.

“The children of the townships, perhaps more than any other group, symbolized the urban character that was emerging. They were also one of the first generations to experience Bantu Education. Many were growing up with little parental supervision which offered wide possibilities for truancy. They were offered the tradition of the town, not the country. Survival and peer groups recognition functioned differently in the city, and ethnic considerations in such a medley of ethnic groups had only a passing significance.”⁵⁸

School became one important locus of identity; street – and particularly gang – life was still the other. Students shared experiences of learning and grievances marked them as a distinctive group, anxious, proud, hostile to discrimination, and disposed to collective action. The young men who hung out on street corners shared other experiences – of joblessness, violence, neighborhood, and a politics of gut-level anger. The lives of youth in school and on the street often intersected, sometimes clashed – but both groups had in common their urban upbringing and a yawning generation gap with their parents.

Almost all young black people in South Africa’s towns and cities spent several years in primary school by the 1960s, while a select few proceeded on to high school. Because they started at an older age than white children, and often repeated grades, primary school often lasted well into the teens for black pupils. Under the Bantu Education system, attending mother-tongue primary schools meant that most children had the chance to attain basic literacy – albeit at a low level. It also meant that that almost all the children of a given neighborhood and language group shared several years together in their local school, creating a strong bond among members of the new urban generation from an early age. High school – for those fortunate enough to attend it – remained an entry portal into the middle classes. Government policy restricted African post-primary education in the cities, trying to divert students to the homelands. But this also meant that

⁵⁸ Lunn, *Antecedents, op. cit.*, p.106.

the urban English-medium secondary schools tended to attract many bright pupils from a number of neighborhoods and ethnic groups, along with a fair number of dedicated teachers. This was particularly true at the top schools – the older, established urban African high schools, the former church boarding schools in black rural and freehold areas that the state had taken over, and the colored schools in Cape Town where Unity Movement teachers and administrators strove to open students minds and awaken them politically. Despite the stifling political and bureaucratic pressures of by the apartheid system, schools like Morris Isaacson and Orlando in Soweto and Livingstone and Harold Cressey in Cape Town

“...provided fertile ground for the re-awakening of a political culture. The reading of extra-curricular books and newspapers was encouraged; many of the bolder teachers, knowing they had the support and sympathy of their principals, quietly introduced potentially subversive social criticism and analysis into the classroom. The school environment engendered a powerful sense of self-identification, a sense of mutual support, and strength in unity.”⁵⁹

Even the problems of the schools – which were many, including overcrowding, poorly qualified teachers, bad facilities, and resources just a fraction of those available in white schools – brought pupils together, in the sense of sharing common dissatisfactions. Thus, as Glaser noted, “the new education system started to forge an unprecedented unity, a common set of experiences and grievances, amongst the township youth. Mass schooling helped to weld together the fractured and internally antagonistic youth constituency; a process which ... helped to lay the groundwork for the eruption of 1976.”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Clive Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, 1958-1976, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, 1994, p.127.

⁶⁰ Clive Glaser, “Anti-Social Bandits: Culture, Resistance, and the Tsotsi Sub-culture on the Witwatersand during the 1940s and 1950s,” Seminar Paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersand, Johannesburg, 1990, p.226.

Glaser's valuable study of Soweto pupils' experiences in the 1960s and 1970s illustrates how the institutional workings of schools helped create a common identity among schooled youth. The high schools themselves were melting pots: there were no barriers of class or ethnicity once within their doors. A symbolic unity was established among students by their uniforms, an intellectual one through the common experience of learning and the discovery of new possibilities, and a social one by their fluency in English, which marked them apart from their less-educated parents and peer. Despite the best efforts of the Department of Bantu Education, the schools were not "total institutions," impervious to ideas from the outside. Some classrooms offered opportunities for critical thinking, as did debating societies. The schools themselves offered places where literate, inquisitive youths with shared backgrounds and grievances could congregate and talk. In circles where students, through neighborhood and family contacts, were knowledgeable about politics, political issues were raised and discussed privately, constituting the networks which would later form the skeleton of student political organizations. Thus, he reports, "The school engendered a powerful sense of self identification, a sense of mutual support and strength in unity."⁶¹

The evidence of the growth of a common outlook and identity among students was abundant. The clearest evidence for this is available from the high schools, particularly the academically elite ones. A former Morris Isaacson student recalls that when he arrived at the school, there was a "spirit of unity and mutual support," while Chisholm writes that "there was a sense of privilege and pride in attending a Unity

⁶¹ Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, *op. cit.*, pp.124, 106-114, 292-293, 127.

Movement high school.”⁶² There was some evidence of negative self-image as well: two surveys in 1970 found that Soweto pupils were much likelier to call white English speakers intelligent, progressive, and civilized than to describe black South Africans with those terms. The terms they used to describe black South Africans included “unfree” (mentioned by 74%), “powerless,” “unhappy,” and “dominated.”⁶³ At the same time, however, they reported some positive feelings as well. In Lobban’s study, blacks were rated as braver than whites, and 97% of the students said they were proud to be black. They voiced their discontent with discrimination and their belief in collective action to end it in no uncertain terms: by margins of 85% or more, they proclaimed that blacks confronted unequal opportunities and racism, and two-thirds or more insisted that blacks had to unite and exert pressure in order to solve these problems.⁶⁴ In other words, the hidden transcripts which students shared, like those of their elders, contained self-doubt and hostility to racism – but added an orientation towards collective action missing from mass culture.

While school loomed larger than ever before in the lives of township youth, the 1960s also witnessed a rebirth of street culture among young people not at school. The big gangs of the 1950s, which had enjoyed great prestige and set styles for their time, had been broken early in the decade by the post-Sharpeville crackdown and forced relocations from the old freehold townships near the cities where they had flourished. But as

⁶² *ibid.*, p.125, and Linda Chisholm, “Education, Politics, and Organization: The Educational Traditions and Legacies of the Non-European Unity Movement, 1943-1986,” *Transformation*, no. 15 (1991), pp.13-14.

⁶³ Melville Edelstein, *What Do Young Africans Think?* (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations: 1972, p.107, and Gillian Lobban, “Self Attitudes of Urban Africans,” in Stanley and Christopher Orpen, eds., *Contemporary South Africa: Social Scientific Perspectives* (Cape Town, Juta: 1975), p.169.

communities grew and new neighbors became acquainted, the youth hanging out on street corners reformed their own networks. "Young men who had grown up together congregated at corners to socialize and pass the time," writes Glaser in his study of young Africans in Soweto. "The networks shaded from indistinctive play groups to non- or petty-criminal gangs through to hard-core criminal gangs."⁶⁵ However, the cultural impact of the gangs was much larger than formal gang membership, because gangster (*mapantsula*) style was widely imitated among the school-leavers who formed the bulk of urban youth.⁶⁶ Much the same thing occurred in the colored and Indian townships, as young men were socialized less by their parents and more by their peers.⁶⁷ The bulk of those on the streets were 14 to 20 year old males, who had left primary school and not yet entered jobs, with a lot of unsupervised free time on their hands. Hard-core criminal gangsters tended to have little formal education – Standard Two or less – and while the members of ordinary street corner groups often had more, the street remained the opposite pole of urban youth culture from school.⁶⁸

The cultural identity of street youth networks centered on territory, toughness, and hostility to authority. Their territorial identity grew out of their place within the

⁶⁴ Lobban, "Self Attitudes," *op. cit.*, pp.175-6.

⁶⁵ Glaser, *Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto*, *op.cit.*, pp.141-2; Clive Glaser, "School, Street, and Identity," Unpublished Seminar Paper, Wits University, Johannesburg, 1993, p.4.

⁶⁶ Lunn, *Antecedents*, *op. cit.*, p.197.

⁶⁷ Don Pinnock, *The Brotherhoods* (Cape Town, David Philip: 1984). Regarding young Indians, P. Ramesar wrote, "In the populous urban centers ... reinforcement from youthful peers is more easily available and the young seek counsel about living from outside the family. Rebelliousness against elders is on the increase and it is a fashion to belong to gangs outside the home," "Emerging Social Problems among the Indian People of South Africa," in *The Indian South African* (Durban, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1967), p.32

⁶⁸ Glaser, "School, Street, and Identity," *op. cit.*, p.4, *Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto*, *op. cit.*, p.131.

neighborhood itself. As Murphy Morobe, a future activist who mixed with gangs while a Soweto schoolboy, put it, "One love of every youngster growing up in the township is to have your group of colleagues who you meet at the shops or the street corner. ... Over time it graduates into ... a bunch of youngsters who begin to look at themselves in terms of the territory in which they play around." Although the gangs in a given area competed locally for territory, they made it a point of honor not to prey upon local residents and defended their turf together against outsiders.⁶⁹ Toughness involved projecting and of masculinity (street life was a male affair) and defending it through violence when necessary in battles to keep or win control of women, parks, halls, or shebeens in a given area.⁷⁰ The anti-authority aspect of street life, along with its stress on street wisdom and adventure, appealed to young men bored with the constraint and drudgery of family and school. (One of the most potent symbols of this rejection of authority was the use by gangs of German names and insignia ("German," "Berlin," "The Gestapo"), embracing what adults and the authorities had considered their greatest enemies.)⁷¹ Politically, they thought not of the issues and tactics which preoccupied students, but rather reacted with visceral hostility to the dominant whites and their understanding of "law and order." The archetypal *pantsula*, as poet Oswald Mtshali put it in "The Detribalised," "never says *baas* ("boss") to no bloody white man." Lunn noted correctly that the *mapantsula* "are at one level unconsciously the most strident supporters of Black Consciousness."⁷²

⁶⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p.5; Glaser, *Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto*, *op. cit.*, pp.137-8.

⁷⁰ *Idem.*

⁷¹ *ibid.*, pp.132, 147.

The sub-cultures of school and street were marked by both conflict and overlap. There were frequent, indeed growing, clashes between gangsters and school pupils during the 1960s and early 1970s. Gang members harassed, robbed, beat up, or even raped school pupils; they regarded school pupils with resentment for their achievement, scorn for their conformity, and animosity for being outsiders to their turf. Students returned the hostility, in clashes of often ferocious brutality.⁷³ Yet the overlaps between street and school were large enough that each formed part of the larger urban culture. Many young pupils flirted with the world of the gangs, represented by neighbors they knew and had grown up with. A *pantsula* and a pupil often listened to the same music, read the same papers, idolized the same soccer stars. Both groups shared in the generational tensions which opposed them to their elders – in traditional terms, as youth expected to defer to parents who were often illiterate and less familiar with the urban world than their children, and in modern terms as people socially disenfranchised by the lack of a stable job or social place.⁷⁴ The values which would define the behavior of young people – those which divided them or those which united them – were very much a function of the situation. As Glaser noted, “identities, although strikingly fluid, suddenly solidified around school, gang, or neighborhood at moments of threat and heightened competition.”⁷⁵ Thus, the triad of school, street, and neighborhood formed part of the

⁷² Oswald Mtshali, *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum* (Johannesburg, Renoster Books: 1971), p.47; Lunn, *Antecedents*, *op. cit.*, p.204.

⁷³ Glaser, *Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto*, *op. cit.*, pp.139.

⁷⁴ Meer, “Indian People,” *op. cit.* p.30: “The young, knowing no other idiom but that of urban South Africa, seek [comfort] in the South African idiom. There is anger, but the anger is directed against the parent generation”

⁷⁵ Glaser, “School, Street, and Identity,” *op. cit.* p.2.

new social mosaic which young blacks created in South Africa's cities, while at the same time pointing to new possibilities for youth action and unity.

In short: the urban society which had emerged in South Africa's black communities by the 1970s was both more socially integrated, and tied together in very different ways, than had been the township dwellers of the 1950s. New urban neighborhoods, composed of people who had never known rural life and drawn from a variety of backgrounds, saw new social networks of kin, pseudo-kin, neighbors, and friends sharing complaints, gossip, and gripes, without respect for ethnic or traditional boundaries. The mechanisms of patrimonial power were double-edged: spread of family and organizational ties meant that a plurality of elites emerged, while the resurgence of tradition also contained an implicit critique of white domination, in a synthesis of traditional and modern identities. Within this broader urban culture, young people were creating their own sub-culture, centered around school and street. The school – as a community of discourse, a center of shared experiences, and a locus for common grievances, became an important source of identity and political culture. Overlapping and conflicting with school culture was the street culture of gangs and violence. Not only in its connections to the wider world, but even in its constituent cells, urban black society had recast itself in a new and distinctive form in this period. The emergence of macro-connections and micro-solidarities among urban blacks created new potentials for shared identity – and collective action.

III. CONSTRUCTING A PUBLIC: DISCURSIVE CONNECTIONS AND THE EMERGENCE OF BROADER LOYALTIES

Besides establishing new networks and contexts for micro-mobilization, during the 1960s and 1970s urban black South Africans were creating larger, more sophisticated collective identities on a city-wide and national basis. The new frameworks reflected the emergence of shared experience and communities of discourse, as ordinary people participated in the life of the cities and in the new public sphere opening up around them. The formation of an urban identity involved an interaction between members of the urban audience – who supported the new social communications institutions, shared their ideas with their friends, relatives, and neighbors, and recognized each other as having something in common – and the workings and discourse of those institutions and the people who staffed them. Key roles in this process were played by the black press, music and theater, sports leagues, and interscholastic organizations. Flocking to them, blacks came together as members of urban communities which overarched their older loyalties of kin, class, and tribe. The new media and associations did not create an urban identity by themselves, but they offered an opportunity to do so which urban blacks seized avidly. Moreover, despite the efforts by the regime and private-sector management to control and restrict public expression, the content of their messages promoted the establishment of new social unities. Even when formally non-political, they permitted the partial exposure of hidden transcripts, in which some grumbles and complaints were aired, albeit within limits. They also facilitated an awareness of common experience and interests on non-

traditional lines across cities and the country as a whole. And they encouraged a modernizing perspective: an outlook which was non-oral, rationalist, abstract, and nationally- and internationally-oriented. The consequence was the creation of a single urban black public, composed of social equals, even before the demand for citizenship received political expression. At the same time, black South Africans markedly increased their own political awareness and sophistication, through their own efforts to understand their world. These new loyalties and ideas did not replace the older ones, but developed atop them, creating an urban and national consciousness stronger than had ever before existed among black South Africans.⁷⁶

The rise of the black press gave those in its audience a chance to recognize that they had something in common as urban blacks. Those who read each publication were aware they were part of a large, mostly unseen community of readers, who every day or week learned, thought, and talked about the same events, concerns, and diversions through the paper. In the repressive atmosphere which prevailed, those concerns were usually non-political – but they were expressed in a lively language and set of terms quite specific to urban blacks. A representative set of page-one headlines from The World included “Bucs Sack Russia,” “Quela Quela Roams Townships,” or “Real Hearts Set to Tax Sagging Bucs”⁷⁷. A white journalist who read them asked if these were “strange messages from outer space, some sort of code perhaps?” Then he explained their meanings: Orlando Pirates soccer club – the Buccaneers, or “Bucs” for short – fires their

⁷⁶ Here the argument follows Schama, Citizens, op. cit., ch.5 (“The Cultural Construction of a Citizen”), E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Harmondsworth, Penguin: 1962), and Benedict Andersen, Imagined Communities (London, New Left Books: 1983), chapters. 1 & 2.

manager “Russia” Jacobs, Police van (“Quela Quela” from the noise of its sirens) raids the townships, game against Real Hearts will be tough for slumping Pirates. Yet whether as soccer fans or nervous pass-bearers fleeing an approaching police wagon, these stories told city folk that they had something in common. As Andersen noted, this is evidence that the readers themselves and the reports they read about were all considered part of the same imagined community.⁷⁸

The existence of this community was reaffirmed, of course, every time they saw others reading their paper on the buses or trains, carrying it under their arms, or buying it on street corners from excited newsboys, as well as every time they talked about it with their friends.⁷⁹ It was underlined by the way readers argued with each other on the letters page – a sign that they considered the other readers part of a group of interlocutors whose opinions mattered to them. Thus, to cite just a few examples drawn at random, on the letters page of The World of March 29, 1968, Eibie Mpulu challenged the views of Joseph Moleko, published in a letter ten days earlier, as to who would win the forthcoming national middle-weight boxing championship, while Joe Mkhize argued that a Pretoria undertaker should not display coffins where children could see them – which provoked a response from M.S. Motloun in a letter published April 11. The tone could become heated: in the paper for January 12 of the same year, a Mr. Adams declared, “I wish to say a thing or two to Mr. Timothy Radebe about what he wrote in The World’s

⁷⁷ All cited in an article on The World in The Star, February 17, 1975.

⁷⁸ Andersen, Imagined Communities, op. cit., p.39.

⁷⁹ Stone Sizane, who would become a student activist, describes the excitement that the arrival of the daily paper generated among his peers: “Students were keen to read. ... [When the paper got there,] interested groups would form [around one person with it], sometimes small groups of five. If the issue was

issue of January 3 on the Jazz Festival held in Swaziland.” *Drum* made an explicit reference to its readership as an imagined community in its call for letters: “Speak up, man! ... Share your views with millions of *Drum* readers.”⁸⁰

At the same time as Andersen has argued, the fact that the urban Black press communicated in English helped unite an audience far larger than the tribal followings available through the spoken African vernacular languages.⁸¹ The diversity of *The World*’s readers and their tastes was evoked by a white journalist who profiled the paper: they ranged from “rugby-loving Xhosas in Eastern [Cape] province to the blood-and-guts taste of [blue-collar] East Rand readers and the less ethnical, sophisticated people of Soweto, who are mostly Zulus and soccerites.” Indeed, when the author of the above lines on *The World* in 1975 described it as a “national black newspaper,” this implied the existence of a black nation which could support it!⁸² Similarly, *Drum*’s letters pages and cartoons were oriented to an African readership drawn from all ethnic groups and parts of the country, as well as some coloreds and Indians as well.⁸³ Through the medium of English literacy, members of all ethnic and racial groups in town joined together in a broad community in which all could participate equally.

widespread – if it was something like an increase in bus fares” interest would be particularly lively. Interview, Port Elizabeth, May 18, 1992.

⁸⁰ Found on the letters page of every issue in this period; for example, *Drum*, February 8, 1973

⁸¹ Andersen, *Imagined Communities*, *op. cit.*, p.47.

⁸² *The Star*, February 17, 1975

⁸³ See, e.g., the letters pages of *Drum*, December 22, 1972, or February 8, 1973, (letters from I.K. Leemisa, a Tswana-surnamed reader in Sharpeville, Shakes Shakane and Meshack Nsibanyoni, Zulu or Swazi-surnamed readers in Witbank a Sandy Mdingi, a Xhosa-surnamed reader in King William’s Town, and Shunmugan Pillay, an Indian reader in Durban) as well as the cartoon on the latter (one of two colored Muslim youths at a “non-white” swimming pool tells a scantily-clad colored bathing beauty, “Haai, meraai, did you know that Gammat was the breast stroking champion?”)

The very discourse of the papers and their readers increasingly implied that they formed part of a shared subjectivity, a community or nation. The World's motto – emblazoned on its masthead – was “Our own, our Only paper.” This was a sentiment reflected in readers’ letters, who frequently echoed it word for word.⁸⁴ But who was the “we” to whom it belonged? A look at the discourse of editorials and letters makes this clearer. Even a conservative editorial urging participation in the 1968 election for Soweto’s Urban Bantu Council election, the state-created representative body, was entitled “Let us vote.” and declared that “the future of our people” depended on the outcome of the election. The “people” referred to were clearly the African people of the township as a whole. This perspective was shared by readers like by “Anti-Pollution,” in whose letter “us” explicitly referred to “the people of Soweto.”⁸⁵ Other letters point to a sense of “we-ness” that encompassed all Africans. Henry Marora wrote to The World that the “questions put forth by our Soweto leaders are the main problems that face the African people,” while B Korasi wrote, “We should love one another as one African nation.” Others referred to the “Black Nation.”⁸⁶ When “Homeland Citizen” noted in Drum that “we are supposed to be governing ourselves,” he or she was referring not to people of the same ethnic group but the “Black man” in general. Significantly, Drum's

⁸⁴ See, for example, the letters of Joshua “Caesar” Mofokeng in The World of April 5, 1968 (“our own and only paper”), M. Masigo in the edition of January 12, 1968 (“our only paper, The World,”) or Emmanuel Chiloane (“our daily paper, The World”) and “Soccer Enthusiast” (“our only paper”) in the paper for April 24, 1973.

⁸⁵ The World, March 29, 1968 and February 23, 1973..

⁸⁶ The World, April 5, 1968, March 29, 1968, and February 23, 1973.

letters page editor went one step further, asking, "Shouldn't we all just be South African?"⁸⁷

The papers' choice and presentation of news and letters also helped create a national consciousness, by defining "local" and "national" news as city-wide and country-wide processes running beyond traditional borders. Thus, for example, the editorial page of The World for March 16, 1973 includes a congratulatory letter to a local school, an article on the election in the Ciskei, 1,000 miles from Johannesburg, an attack on witch doctors, and a comment on the selection of black athletes from around the country for the South African Games. The combination of these facts, the exclusion of others (there is no news on events in Maputo, for example, although the capital of Mozambique is only half as far from Johannesburg as the Ciskei) help to define certain news as local or national.⁸⁸ These categories are given resonance, in turn, by shared experience (having family members in an urban school, having relations in the Ciskei or knowing people who do, having an interest in sport).

They also allow readers to address each other, reflecting a developing sense of potential common interests and a willingness to partly expose transcripts of grievances kept hidden in the private sphere previously. Sometimes this was simply to draw like-minded people together. Thus one young man wrote to the world to "appeal to all young ladies and gents who are interested in jazz and reading books to write to me" to create a

⁸⁷ Drum, December 22, 1972, and April 8, 1973.

⁸⁸ As Andersen notes, "The structure of the state and market are what bring this shop, that marriage, this price, that bishop together on the same page. In this way, an urban newspaper naturally, apolitically, creates an imagined community among a readership to whom those topics are 'local' or 'national.' It is to be expected that political elements will follow." Imagined Communities, *op. cit.*, p.63.

jazz book club.⁸⁹ Yet the such simple appeals point to the emergence of new, non-traditional loyalties, without regard to traditional ties, among people across a whole metropolitan area who had never spoken to each other or been in contact except by the new mass media. Other letters represented a chance to sound off about issues of immediate concern. For example, a resident wrote, "We are very worried here at the Meadowlands hostel because of the many killings taking place."⁹⁰ (The device of pen-names was particularly popular among nervous writers of such letters.) Sometimes the letter pages offered a chance to fantasize about future freedom, as when Irish Matthews Khumalo wrote to Drum, "There's a better world I've foreseen/ Where matrimony knows no ban / Where people live without permits / They work wherever they want."⁹¹ Yet the very diversity of interests, topics, and concerns which readers wished to share with each other is vital evidence of the emergence of a real urban sense of community.

Blacks also found news about developments outside the borders of South Africa in the print media – especially those concerning black people elsewhere. The struggles and gains of American blacks in the civil rights movement, studiously neglected by the vernacular press and state radio, received prominent coverage in South African English-language newspapers. Cultural trends among black Americans – the Black is Beautiful movement, Soul Power, and to a lesser extent Black Power – along with their manifestations in music, dress, and hairstyles were covered widely by the black-oriented South African papers in particular. The newspapers also gave attention to developments

⁸⁹ The World, March 29, 1968.

⁹⁰ The World, April 11, 1968.

elsewhere in Africa. While these reports often focused on coups, massacres, and conflicts, in the mid-60s they also included the independence of countries like Kenya in East Africa and Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland on the Republic's borders, as well as the independence struggle in nearby Rhodesia.

Indeed, over this period urban blacks increasingly chose the print media over oral sources of information for news above the local level – which both reflected and encouraged among readers an outlook contrary to some of the assumptions and relations underlying traditional power. Switzer's survey of Africans in Mdantsane found that when they were asked which news source they trusted most, 68% named print media, 29% state radio, and just 3% word of mouth. He commented, "The print media were clearly regarded as the arbiters of credibility as far as news was concerned ... The urban respondents appear to have absorbed political information and ideas from the print and broadcast media without the intervening variable of oral opinion leaders."⁹² Indeed, the letters pages of the papers frequently carried attacks on oral traditions about illness and misfortune, an important power source for traditional leaders. "The blunt truth about witch doctors, fortune tellers, and spiritualists is that they ... are unable to protect anyone against death," wrote Agazia Setuki in The World. Stemel Daniel Xolo thanked Drum for its medical advice column, declaring, "Doctor Drum plays an important part in our lives."⁹³ In other words, although oral sources and traditional knowledge remained the principal bases of communications and power in rural areas, and still reigned in local and

⁹¹ Drum, no date on photocopy.

⁹² Les Switzer, Politics and Communication in the Ciskei: An African Homeland in South Africa (Grahamstown, Institute for Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University: 1979), p.24.

intimate relations in the cities, urban blacks were using the new window on the world the press offered to construct a different understanding of it and its workings.

Reflecting the rise of new information sources for matters beyond the local, urban blacks grew steadily in their awareness and sophistication regarding public affairs, both national and international. Research at the time underlined the growing role which the mass media were playing as an information source for domestic and foreign news among blacks. For instance, in 1969, when Morse and Peel surveyed colored people in Cape Town, 60% said they read newspapers more than once a week, and they reported that their primary source of information on the Colored Persons Representative Council was what they read in the press.⁹⁴ Similarly, Lobban reported that the identification of young Africans with the cultures and politics of American blacks and Africans elsewhere reflected their “recently-acquired knowledge of these groups through their mention in the mass media and the popular press.”⁹⁵ Readers themselves remembered the impact of the papers on their outlooks. “If you picked up the Daily Dispatch, that influenced you.” recalled Skenjana Xoji, a future activist, then a schoolboy. “There was a lot of knowledge there, what happened overseas too, and as a bonus, your English improved.”⁹⁶ Much the same conclusions can be drawn from a perusal of the comments on the letters pages of the black press. In 1968, World readers’ comments on issues and problems tended to be fairly local and narrowly focused. For instance, “Shakes” complained of

⁹³ The World, March 16, 1973, and Drum, February 8, 1973.

⁹⁴ Stanley Morse and Stanton Peel, “A Socio-Economic and Attitudinal Comparison of White and Colored Adults in Cape Town, South Africa,” in Stanley Morse and Christopher Orpen, eds., Contemporary South Africa: Social Psychological Perspectives (Cape Town, Juta: 1975), pp.253, 254.

⁹⁵ Lobban, “Self Attitudes,” op. cit., p.173; see also Lunn, Antecedents, op. cit., p.179.

finding a fly in hamburger meat he had bought; J.T. Matlou reported that bus service for domestics in Johannesburg's suburb of Cyrildene was poor; and while Beth Madlanga wrote to complain of the standard of Bantu Education, she did so because her own knowledge of arithmetic and history was poorer than that of her brother, who had studied under the previous system.⁹⁷ Five years later, their comments dealt with broader issues, in much more sophisticated terms, which situated issues confronting blacks within South Africa's political and economic context. Bridgeman Khumalo wrote of inflation and its particularly heavy impact on ordinary black consumers on fixed incomes, "Worried" weighed up the arguments for and against a maize price increase, and Billy Ngwentsana urged the hiring of African traffic policemen for African areas.⁹⁸ There was also a steady increase in comment on black people outside South Africa, ranging from African-American culture and the war between Tanzania and Uganda to the plight of Australia's aborigines.⁹⁹ In short, urban black South Africans used the press to widen their world and their understanding of it in ways that affirmed the developing bonds of community among them.

The rise of a single urban black public was also reflected in the explosive growth in audience for popular commercial music and theater. With the massive spread of radio and record players, popular music acquired a reach and audience across the urban areas far greater than ever before. In the 1940s and 1950s, music had remained largely live and oral, whether the jazz favored by a fringe of township sophisticates, the *marabi* of the

⁹⁶ Interview, Skenjana Xoji, King William's Town, May 26, 1992.

⁹⁷ The World, January 12, 1968, March 29, 1968, and April 11, 1968.

⁹⁸ The World, January 12, 1973, April 24, 1973, and February 23, 1973.

working classes, and church or tribal music. In the 1960s, recordings of the same tunes were generating excitement from Johannesburg to Cape Town, Pretoria to Port Elizabeth – and often from Detroit to Durban and Liverpool to East London as well. Young (and some not so young) people who a generation before might have heard only sober *a capella mbube* choirs in their own language now sang, hummed, and strummed along with the Beatles, Diana Ross, and James Brown, as well as local rock groups like the Beaters and *mbaqanga* stars the Mahotella Queens. Besides belonging to the invisible community of record and radio owners, from 1967 on music fans came together in huge music festivals held in township stadiums.¹⁰⁰ Musicians also became involved in theater, as the township musical theater scene steadily grew in numbers of plays produced and tickets sold.

Indeed, despite widespread belief to the contrary, the 1960s happened in South Africa, and as in the rest of the world, music played an important part in defining youth sub-cultures. The words of the songs spelled out hidden transcripts the young identified with, the musicians helped set new, rebellious styles, and the music helped its audience connect with peers nationally and internationally. Young, educated blacks literate in English were powerfully drawn to rock and soul music from the US and UK. Rock found a wide audience among urban black youth – particularly, though not only, coloreds and Indians – and influenced scores of local guitar-and-snare-drum bands, of whom Sharpeville's Beaters were the best-known example. Not only did the latter pay homage to the Beatles with their name, but also in their musical and dress styles. This was not

⁹⁹ *Drum*, November or December 1973, and February 8, 1973.

accidental, as Jeffrey notes. "Rock and roll was to become part of a new township style which rejected parochialism and which called for a greater awareness of the world, and it was the radio that facilitated this. ... Following my research in Sharpeville, it is clear that LM Radio had a profound influence on the youth there during the 1960s and early 1970s."¹⁰¹ Soul, the black American sound had an even more widespread resonance among Africans, though coloreds and Indians appreciated it, too. There was a big following for songs asserting a black views and demands normally silenced in South Africa, like James Brown's "Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud" or the Temptations' 1968 "Message from a Black Man" with its chorus, "No matter how hard you try you can't stop me now." They spawned local soul groups which, though tamer, helped promote the music to a wider audience. The impact of such music in bringing out the demands for self-assertion and redress of grievances which blacks normally repressed was described by a then-university student who recalled hearing Brook Benton's "The Color of My Skin":

"That song made me think about myself and the treatment around me and I realized there's something wrong here. It sort of motivated me. What he was saying in that song was things I was aware of. I just never took notice of them."¹⁰²

As Jeffrey notes, the consequences of this assertion of identity were profound: "Soul music was part of a trend among American blacks toward rediscovering their roots and asserting African culture and their skin color and something to be proud of, articulated in the Black Power movement. In South Africa, this became one of the bases of the Black

¹⁰⁰ Lunn, *Antecedents*, *op. cit.*, pp.142-44, 192.

¹⁰¹ Jeffrey, *Cultural Trends*, *op. cit.*, pp.228, 231.

Consciousness Movement.”¹⁰³ A third level of popular music – urban *mbaqanga* – was the music of gangsters or the unskilled and illiterate African workers. Though overtly non-political – Radio Bantu’s censors ensured that – it dealt with the concerns and feelings of their world – *lobola*, feuds, and the like. As Lunn noted, the music reflected another, powerful assertion of black identity: “the very values of black culture which, although unconscious, are distinctly African and do not reflect to any great degree the influence of foreign music styles or culture.”¹⁰⁴

For Africans who understood English, theater also offered a new sphere for experiencing shared ideas and emotions. Although the plays were often little more than loose strings of songs they were popular, and the audiences who packed schools and township social centers to see them identified with them. As black theater grew, although it was not yet explicitly protest-oriented, it became increasingly oriented towards township realities (“Back in Your Own Backyard.” “Unfaithful Woman”) and African history (particularly powerful leaders – Shaka, the 19th-century Zulu king, and Nongquause, who led the desperate Xhosa cattle-killing of 1853 in response to white settlement). As Gibson Kente, the leading black dramatist, put it, “It’s not only sunny South Africa but also a South Africa which has dark corners.”¹⁰⁵ Despite their lack of overt protest content, these plays had important effects, putting the spotlight on past African glories and current African miseries. Still more important, by generating shared joy, laughter, and sorrow among an urban audience mixed in age, gender, and ethnicity,

¹⁰² Lunn, *Antecedents, op. cit.*, pp.233, 234, 178.

¹⁰³ Jeffrey, *Cultural Trends, op. cit.*, p.247.

¹⁰⁴ Lunn, *Antecedents, op. cit.*, p.222.

they helped weld together emotionally the new communities which the press connected intellectually.

In fact, it would be a mistake to segment the emerging black sub-cultures in this era too rigidly, because there was a large and growing overlap between the tastes of the educated and the illiterate, the big city and the smaller town. How the audiences of Kente's own work grew and changed is emblematic of the convergence upper- and lower-class blacks tastes and outlooks within the new urban political culture. In 1965, the premiere of his first major play "Sicalo," was a "glittering social occasion" for the township elite. Nine years later, the play was the second part of a double bill with *mbaqanga* stars Mahotella Queens for a working class audience.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, students and illiterate youth often listened to many of the same songs, because "the music of the period ... spoke about the issues and values they were concerned with." Fans of all musical types rubbed shoulders in the big stadium festivals, as a former student recalled: "I used to go whenever there was a show. ... The Movers, the Beaters, Soul Music, it was popular after a good session of *mbaqanga*."¹⁰⁷ Likewise, groups and plays toured country-wide, bringing the new urban culture to the smaller cities and towns. A man from a small city in the Free State wrote breathlessly to The World in 1968, "The Bethlehem people are grateful that they have been privileged to see the following [musical] troupes: Space Queens, Bra Sello, Chris Songxaka, the Elite Swingsters and the greatest of them all, the Kings Messengers Quartet. We have long been waiting for

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.148, and Kavanagh, Theater and Cultural Struggle, *op. cit.*, pp.53, 118.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, pp.120-21.

this opportunity and we hope to see some more of these good shows like ‘Sikalo,’ ‘Shaka,’ ‘Nongquause,’ and ‘Unfaithful Woman.’”¹⁰⁸ Thus, much as Schama noted in 18th-century France, so in South Africa theater and popular song gave the black elite and masses a chance to come together, physically and in outlook, them to see themselves as members of the same society, with equal worth and common values.¹⁰⁹

A parallel process took place through sport, which became another factor in fusing disparate township neighborhoods into a single urban public. The most popular sport, soccer, had previously been dominated by neighborhood teams, run by patron-managers drawn from the local elite (see Chapter Two, p.74). The 1960s and 1970s saw the rise of professional black soccer teams, run by entrepreneurs (including soccer heroes) who hired paid players and drew fans from across a city or the entire country. Pre-eminent among these new heroes, crowned by the market rather than by tradition, were the Kaiser Chiefs, the new team managed by former soccer great Kaiser Motaung. The process was matched by shift in the locus of sports fans’ loyalties to a larger scale. Jeffrey described how the rise of Vaal Professionals bound together soccer fans from different neighborhoods in Sharpeville: “There was universal support from the whole township because it did not come from a certain area. It commanded support because it was considered to be strongly the Vaal [regional] team.”¹¹⁰ Local sporting disunity, on the other hand, was increasingly frowned upon. Thus a fan wrote to Drum, “It is disgraceful to see such a small township like Kagiso in Krugersdorp having so many football clubs.

¹⁰⁷ Lunn, Antecedents, *op. cit.*, p.192.

¹⁰⁸ The World, April 5, 1968.

¹⁰⁹ Schama, Citizens, *op. cit.*, pp.131-3.

For its size, Kagiso should have had only one strong club."¹¹¹ The national appeal of the top "sides" (teams) was underlined by fans' letters to the press; for example, Moroka Swallows of Soweto had warm admirers among Africans in Pretoria, 50 miles away, in Potgietersrus, halfway to the Rhodesian border, and even among Indians in Durban.¹¹² Indeed, some fans even dreamed of a single national league for all black football teams, as Sydney Madida suggested in Drum: "It's high time we blacks – Indians, Africans, and Coloreds – came together and formed one football association. We may call this the Black Football Association."¹¹³ In other sports, such as rugby among Eastern Cape Africans and cricket among coloreds and Indians in the Western Cape and Natal, the scope of sporting loyalties were undergoing similar processes of growth, although this was due to the emergence of non-racial anti-apartheid leagues which rallied fans against the officially-supported segregated sports bodies, rather than professionalization.¹¹⁴

The impact of larger sporting loyalties was visible and visceral: the new sides generated huge crowds and intense loyalties among their followers. They jammed the big new municipal stadiums built in many townships. A Soweto soccer fan noted, "The Orlando stadium is at the moment the biggest we have, but during big time soccer, it is

¹¹⁰ Jeffrey, Cultural Trends, *op. cit.*, p.202.

¹¹¹ Letter from George Mathiba, Drum, December 8, 1972.

¹¹² See the letters of Elias Rapholo of Mabopane, Pretoria, The World, December 18, 1974, S.M. Makhafola of Mahwelereng, Potgietersrus, Drum, 1973, and Birds Supporter, Westville, Drum, August 22, 1973.

¹¹³ Letter, Drum, August 22, 1973.

¹¹⁴ For more detail, see the discussion of the rise of the black Port Elizabeth Rugby Union, KWARU, in Chapter Six, p.533ff.

reduced to just an ordinary ground by the huge crowds that attend matches.”¹¹⁵ Emotions ran high at games; thus, a fan wrote that at Thembisa Swallows matches the fans were “going crazy the whole 90 minutes.”¹¹⁶ Indeed, anyone who has been to a South African soccer match can testify that there is something extraordinary in the tie that binds black fans and their teams: a shot on goal, for example, jolts the whole crowd like an electric charge. Once more, the new city-wide ties grew atop the older localized ones, rather than uprooting them altogether. In the above-mentioned case of Vaal Professionals, for instance, a local sportsman noted that when it was launched, “that is when we had two allegiances: allegiance to one’s [neighborhood] amateur club one belonged to, like me.... and to Vaal Professionals.”¹¹⁷ Yet as with the press, music, and theater, the rise of mass black sports was also a token of profound social changes. It brought together huge numbers of people of different areas, races, ethnic groups, ages, and classes, united to cheer new city- or country-wide heroes whose renown was based on accomplishment rather than ascription. In this way, huge crowds and even larger unseen communities forged powerful emotional bonds of unity based on equality and constructed alternatives based on popularity to older bases of authority – prerequisites for a culture of citizenship.¹¹⁸

Another type of community was formed by school pupils via inter-school organizations and contacts – an important part of the emerging public sphere. The most

¹¹⁵ Letter from John Bivase, The World, January 12, 1973.

¹¹⁶ Letter from C.G. Chauke, The World, March 29, 1968.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Jeffrey, Cultural Trends, *op. cit.*, p.202.

¹¹⁸ Schama, Citizens, *op. cit.*, pp.124-5.

popular of these were undoubtedly sporting events, choir competitions, and dramatic presentations. On these occasions large crowds of students from different schools came together, met, and shared experiences as students.¹¹⁹ More significant from a political viewpoint was the rapid growth of student debate and religious groups. By the late 1960s, such groups had been formed at all Soweto's secondary schools.¹²⁰ The inter-scholastic debates, run by the students themselves, often attracted sizable audiences, and contributed to the emergence of a political tradition in several of the township's better, more tolerant schools, including Morris Isaacson and Orlando High.¹²¹ Students also formed a variety of church-related groups, some school-based, others denominational, others non-sectarian, of which the largest and most important was the Student Christian Movement, a well-funded and attended mainline Protestant group. The SCM was active around Johannesburg and in the Eastern Cape, while similar roles were played among colored students in the Western Cape by the Christian Youth Association and the Muslim Youth Movement.¹²²

Besides these overtly non-political groups, the 1960s also saw the rise of politically-oriented student and educational groups. In 1968, the African Students Movement (ASM) was established in Soweto by students from several schools frustrated by the apolitical character of church youth groups. The group's leaders were vague in

¹¹⁹ Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, *op. cit.*, p.123.

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p.292.

¹²¹ *ibid.*, pp. 293, 291.

¹²² *ibid.*, p.294, Interview, Daniel Montsitsi, Johannesburg, August 5, 1992; David Bond, Colored Education Struggles in South Africa: Education Boycotts in the Western Cape, 1976, Master of Social Science Thesis, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1984, p.113.

their political outlook at the time of its establishment, but they read widely looking for political ideas, and were increasingly exposed to Black Consciousness ideas through their Christian links. They campaigned redress of student grievances – especially corporal punishment, called for the establishment of students representatives councils, and organized remedial instruction outside of school hours. They made contact with students in Sharpeville, who set up a students' association and cultural groups of their own. Together with some SCM members, they also set up an organization called the Society for African Development (SAD) to allow discussion of political issues.¹²³ In Cape Town, colored students were drawn into the Unity Movement by involvement in a series of political reading groups. Two Unity Movement-sponsored educational "fellowships" also organized politically-oriented cultural events, including lectures and discussions, movies, music, and films on national and international issues.¹²⁴

A key consequence of these organizations and contacts was the development of informal student networks from which movement elites would emerge. The groups themselves grew out of school and neighborhood friendship chains. For example, future Soweto student leader Daniel Sechaba Montsitsi became active in ASM in 1970 because some of his friends were members or leaders in the organization. "Then I got to discuss things, hear poetry, attend meetings. Three were in my neighborhood – in the same township, Diepkloof – the other two were in the same zone, 500 meters away."¹²⁵ The

¹²³ Glaser, *Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto*, *op. cit.*, pp.123, 294, Nozipho Diseko, "The Origins and Development of the South African Students Movement, 1968-1976," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1991), p.43.

¹²⁴ Chisholm, "Education, Politics, and Organization," *op. cit.*, pp.13, 17-21.

¹²⁵ Interview, Montsitsi.

result of such developments was to establish a web of ties among students at the different schools in each township. As Glaser put it, “high schools ... provided a dense network of associative structures, such as debating societies and Christian discussion groups, which, given appropriate impulses, were later infused with political content.”¹²⁶ These networks also linked up to university student activists whom the students knew or who had graduated and come to teach them.¹²⁷ The numbers who were most actively involved were small – a few dozen at the core, a couple of hundred in the outer circle – but they had connections that led around the townships. When Billy Masethla arrived at Orlando High School in 1970, he found a “hive of activity,” and became part of a network of around 50 highly politicized students who formed the core of ASM’s activists at all Soweto’s high schools. “It was on this core,” says Nozipho Diseko – herself once a part of it – “that the BCM was to rely for the propagation of its ideas among township students.”¹²⁸

What animated these groups and networks was their role as arenas for political discussion and the development of political skills. This was the case even in formally apolitical venues like debate and church groups. As Glaser showed, the debate societies brought together students in the history and arts track, whose syllabus, though controlled,

¹²⁶ Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, *op. cit.*, p.127.

¹²⁷ For instance, Tom Manthata and other UCM-connected individuals helped the founders of ASM and supplied them with literature, while members of the CYA in Cape Town were in touch with students at the Unity Movement oriented Hewat Teachers’ Training College and the University of the Western Cape, where Black Consciousness thinking was hatching. Diseko, “The Origins and Development of South African Students Movement,” *op. cit.*, p.42, Bond, Colored Education Struggles in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.113.

¹²⁸ Diseko, “The Origins and Development of South African Students Movement,” *op. cit.*, p. 56. Similarly, the core of the Unity Movement’s activists numbered around 50, though up to 300 might attend popular events. Chisholm, “Education, Politics, and Organization,” *op. cit.*, pp.13-14.

had unavoidable implications regarding South Africa (the French revolution, for example), and encouraged social inquisitiveness. Debates attracted sizable audiences, even more after their topics swung towards social and political topics in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and they proved to be “key incubators of leadership and political ideas.”¹²⁹ Similarly, at least when clergy were sympathetic, church youth groups combined hymns with socially relevant themes. Khotso Seathlolo, who would become an important student leader in 1976, recalled that his first contact with politics came in an Anglican students group, whose priest allowed political discussions and encourage plays on political topics like the pass laws.¹³⁰ Involvement in SCM also seems to have been a political catalyst for some of those involved.¹³¹ The more directly politicized organizations, of course, had a more openly political agenda. Thus ASM challenged arbitrary discipline in the schools and the use of class time to prepare for choir competitions. The agenda of the SAD included issues ranging from the French student movement to black struggles in the US and the Soviet and Chinese Revolutions. In Cape

¹²⁹ Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, *op. cit.*, p.293.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p.294. Similarly, based on interviews with some of the participants, Alan Brooks and Jeremy Brickhill write, “The religious character of their parent bodies seems to have been often largely incidental to these youth clubs. They offered opportunities for both discussion and joint activities and if the latter did not become overtly political, the discussions often did, and therein lay their attraction to many youngsters seeking solutions to the problems facing them at school and ad home.” Whirlwind Before the Storm: The Origins and Development of the Uprising in Soweto and the Rest of South Africa from June to December 1976 (London, International Defense and Aid Fund: 1980), p.80.

¹³¹ This point is made vigorously by Glaser, who described Soweto meetings full of “mounting political awareness and debate,” and quotes former SCM member Zakes Thotela, who says “They used to quote form the Bible about equal rights.” Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, *op. cit.*, p.296. His view is partially contested by former ASM activists Nozipho Diseko (“The Origins and Development of South African Students Movement,” *op. cit.*, p.52), and Montsitsi (Interview), both of whom regarded SCM as an Establishment group and a competitor with ASM. While ASM was undoubtedly more overtly political, this view seems likely to overstate the differences as perceived by ordinary SCM members, given that more than a dozen of Glaser’s interviewees recall political discussions in SCM, and ASM and SCM activists

Town, SPEF lectures examined topics from Third World revolution and the Vietnam War to Carl Sagan's "Cosmos" series.¹³² The exposure to political ideas political learning which these forums provided had a profound impact. "My education was shaped in a real and fundamental way by SPEF and the individuals associated with it," recalled a former Unity Movement member. As to ASM, Diseko recalled, it offered "a forum in which the pupils who were later to lead the 1976 uprising were trained."¹³³

In other words, the development of the inter-school sphere had another important cultural consequences: the reinforcement of student identity. It made this identity wider: it helped extend networks of loyalty and solidarity beyond individual schools across townships as a whole, and it made clear to students that their concerns and problems were not just those of one school but those of students in general. This included both the conventional – sport, music, religion – and those specific to South African circumstances – their grievances as black students and their curiosity about politics. It also made the identity deeper: it helped infuse political content and awareness, along with political skills and connections. It began to mark out the members of future elites as well as impacting on their followers. In earlier days, school students had simply not existed as a political or social category in South Africa. From the late 1960s, they began to coalesce as a sizable group with a meaningful collective identity.

collaborated in forming SAD. In any case, the gap closed as Black Consciousness activist became more influential in ASM, as both Diseko and Montsitsi note.

¹³² Diseko, "The Origins and Development of South African Students Movement," *op. cit.*, pp.51, 55; Chisholm, "Education, Politics, and Organization," p.19.

¹³³ *ibid.*, p.20, and Diseko, "The Origins and Development of South African Students Movement," *op. cit.*, p.56.

The new youth culture was, however, only a part of the broader urban culture which was growing up among blacks in South Africa's cities. The press was one important catalyst, as blacks identified with their papers, learned from them, and argued with them and with each other about them. The circulation of news itself helped produce both a sense of a common destiny among blacks within the country's borders and a growing awareness of developments outside them, including developments such as the US civil rights and Black Power movements. The growth of pop culture, including theater and music, also exposed city dwellers to new and often unsettling ideas from the wider world, including soul music and indigenous *mbaqanga*. Sporting bodies were also major influences on the development of broader identifications, helping clubs to fuse their old localized followings into city- and country-wide fan bases. And schools, as we have seen, played a crucial role in helping students become the excited, united mass which would play a crucial role in South African political life in 1976.

IV. THE TIME OF RUPTURES: THE BIRTH OF THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT

Within the new, impatient generation of young township blacks who grew up in the 1960s, the networks of affinity which were emerging included circles of politically-minded dissenters increasingly frustrated by white liberals who were long on rhetoric but short on willingness to confront the authorities. Participation in the white-dominated groups in civil society which had replaced the banned nationalist movements strengthened networks of

contact among these young people even as it heightened their conflicts with whites. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, these became the blacks who challenged the weak-kneed liberalism of multi-racial organizations as outlets of opposition, ultimately breaking away to form the black student, church, and journalists groups which spearheaded what would become known as the Black Consciousness Movement. In each case, the process was similar, and the movement spread from the blacks in one opinion-forming institution to those in the others. Though initially small, their separate bodies grew quickly, as their discourse found a ready echo among peers and colleagues who shared their experiences and ideas, beginning the formation of a new, defiant black elite in the institutions and organizations of civil society.

The emergence of these activist circles and groups represent special and particularly important examples of the micro-networks of solidarity and identity described earlier in this chapter, ones which connected key individuals located within some of the most important institutions which black South Africans were using to create a new public sphere. They were united by their frustrations within the white-controlled opposition institutions and their spontaneous rejection of the legitimacy of the regime and its symbols. The rapid growth of their groups among their peers reflected their movement along networks based on shared identity and institutions, along with blacks' common social and professional experience of discrimination. In turn, the institutions of social communication within which they worked and the associations with whose leaders they formed ties came to propagate the ideas of the Black Consciousness Movement among the new black urban public – but that is the story of another decade and another set of struggles, recounted in the next chapter. First, it is necessary to understand how the BCM emerged seemingly “out of nowhere,” in fact out of

submerged networks hidden within the key linkage institutions of black civil society. In this, its appearance was much like that of New Left movements in other authoritarian Third World countries.¹³⁴

The students who went to the black universities in the 1960s were a distinctive group socially, culturally, and politically. They were the first generation of students to have been schooled under apartheid-imposed Bantu Education. As a result, they were more diverse in their social origins but more frustrated by their schooling than their elders. Yet they were also children of the Sixties, exposed to the full gamut of social, cultural, and political ideas that marked that decade of upheaval. They wore jeans or miniskirts, listened to the Beatles and James Brown, and idolized figures like Kenneth Kaunda and Stokely Carmichael – quite a contrast to the dress, music, and heroes of the more genteel generation before them. Many were in their mid-20s or even older, because they had been held back in their schooling or by the need to earn money. Thus they were more experienced and mature than the average student elsewhere – but young enough not to have been very involved with their parents' politics and failures. In short, they were a new political generation, arriving as youth was fashioning itself a distinct social and political identity in South Africa and abroad.

The mid-1960s saw the emergence of circles of discontent with NUSAS among black students. The most important was at the University of Natal Non-European Section, the pivotal institution for several reasons. As the segregated medical school for blacks, it attracted the cream of black students, and it was the only school where African, colored, and

¹³⁴ On this point see George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (South End Press, Boston: 1987), particularly his discussions of Mexico and Latin America and Omar Cabezas, Omar, *Fire from the Mountain: The Making of a Sandinista* (New York, Crown: 1985).

Indian mixed freely. It was also the only black institution of higher education still within a liberal, urban English university, affording greater freedom of organization, expression, and communication than at the Afrikaner-run "bush colleges." It was a place where traditions as well as races mixed, the ANC and Indian Congress alongside the PAC and the Unity Movement, and one where in the 1960s the growing number of African students had increasingly set the political pace.¹³⁵ It was in this environment that Biko and his politically involved friends debated the merits and demerits of a multi-racial student organization. "We were beginning to argue ... that we were fewer at universities than whites were, and we were getting less votes, therefore at the student assemblies ... primarily because of exploitation of us by the system. And that if this student organization claimed it was committed to the struggle, then it must reflect within its ranks a much more realistic orientation," he explained.¹³⁶ Others did the same thing in other centers: individuals who had belonged to ANC, PAC, and UM-aligned student groups as well as politically aware newcomers for whom the black universities served as meeting places. UNNE was a fairly free space, one within which a new challenge to white power could hatch.¹³⁷

Undoubtedly the leading figure of this generation of students was Stephen Bantu Biko. He was born in the Eastern Cape in 1946, the son of a municipal policeman who died

¹³⁵ Lindy Wilson, "Steve Biko: A Life," in Pityana *et. al.*, eds., Bounds of Possibility: The Legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness (Cape Town, David Philip: 1991), p.22; Gail Gerhart, "The Black Consciousness Movement: The Formative Years," Draft manuscript, 1992, p.8; Terrence Beard, "Background to Student Activities at the University College of Fort Hare," in Hendrick van der Merwe and David Welsh, eds., Student Perspectives on South Africa (Cape Town, David Philip: 1972), pp.160-61.

¹³⁶ Gail Gerhart Interview, Stephen Biko, Durban, October 24, 1972, p.6; Interview, Aubrey Mokoape, Durban, September 10, 1992.

¹³⁷ Interviews, Henry Isaacs, No.1, Washington, DC, September 1989, Saths Cooper, Boston, December 1989, Moodley.

when he was four, leaving his mother to work as a domestic servant while raising four children. He grew up in Ginsberg township, outside King William's Town, a close-knit community of 800 families in neat rows of identical four-roomed brick houses. Excelling academically from an early age, he was given a scholarship by the community to attend the prestigious Lovedale mission school at Alice, where his older brother Khaya was also studying.¹³⁸ However, in 1963 Khaya was detained and later convicted on charges of PAC activity; Stephen was detained by police for questioning, and though neither involved nor charged, expelled by Lovedale on his release.¹³⁹ After a year out of school, his intellectual prowess won his admission to St. Francis College, Mariannhill, an elite black Catholic school near Durban. There he shone in the humanities, but he also developed a reputation as a young black man with an attitude: he challenged the nuns about the restrictive rules of the church and the school, and he talked politics with black students and teachers, inside and outside the classroom. (A teacher recalls that studying Zulu praise poetry, with its elaborate historical references, offered one such opportunity.)¹⁴⁰ After graduating from Mariannhill, Biko went to the University of Natal in 1966 to study medicine; law, the subject he preferred, was considered too risky given the politically repressive atmosphere.¹⁴¹

At university, Biko quickly drew attention, both as an individual and as a leader. He was handsome and expressive, as a friend and priest explained. "His forehead was high and prominent, his nose long and slightly up-tilted towards the end, with wide, flared nostrils.

¹³⁸ Wilson, "Steve Biko: A Life," *op. cit.*, pp.17-22.

¹³⁹ Aelred Stubbs, "Martyr of Hope: A Personal Memoir," in Stephen Biko, I Write What I Like (London, Bowdeman Press: 1978), pp.154-55; Gerhart Interview, Biko.

¹⁴⁰ Interview, Harriet Ngubane, New Haven, March 1990; Gerhart Interview, Biko.

But his soul was in his eyes, which were brown liquid and infinitely expressive; and in his whole body, which communicated him more directly than is normally the case."¹⁴² He was active in student politics, attending the annual NUSAS conferences of 1966, 1967, and 1968, where his wit, warmth, and commitment led the leadership to talk of him as the organization's first black president. But he was not interested.¹⁴³ Instead, he became President of the SRC of the University of Natal's "Non-European Section," where he began to seek a new and different direction for black student politics.

The catalyst for Biko's disenchantment, like that of other politically conscious blacks, was experience: a series of clashes with the built-in white majority of NUSAS, which left them convinced that the organization could not identify with blacks. When he arrived at university in 1966, Biko had been enthusiastic about NUSAS and its non-racial politics, but the conflicts – and even more, their symbolic implications – changed his mind. Biko commented later, "In between the lines you could read a much deeper debate, but because of the nature of the country proper debates couldn't be held over the issues."¹⁴⁴ The first came when the 1966 NUSAS conference voted down a black-sponsored motion calling for an end to the use of segregated venues (City Halls, beaches, etc.) for the student-run charity fundraising events called "rags." The decision underlined the willingness of whites, even those critical of segregation, to benefit from separate facilities. Another clash involved the display of the South African flag at the conference – to blacks, a symbol of oppression,

¹⁴¹ Interview, Ngubane, Wilson, "Steve Biko: A Life," *op. cit.*, p.22.

¹⁴² Stubbs, "Martyr of Hope," *op. cit.*, p.159.

¹⁴³ Gerhart, "The Black Consciousness Movement," *op. cit.*, p.10; Interview, John Daniel, Grahamstown, December 1991.

¹⁴⁴ Gerhart Interview, Biko, p.5.

to whites of national unity. The real issues in this coded discussion was that even liberal whites ultimately identified with the regime – while the black students viscerally rejected its symbols and legitimacy. Even language became an issue: some whites insisted on speaking Afrikaans, poorly understood by Africans and seen as the language of the oppressor. Yet when Biko replied in Xhosa, whites complained – further underlining the white identity of the organization. For Biko, and some of his friends, the last straw came at the 1967 conference. Separate accommodation for blacks and whites had been a perpetual irritant at student conferences. Despite promises that blacks would be allowed to sleep and eat on campus for the first time – instead of being relegated to second-class facilities in the township – the old pattern was repeated. Outraged black delegates called for a suspension of the conference until a non-racial site could be found, but were voted down by four-to-one. For Biko, this was it: "I had made up my mind at that stage that this was a dead organization; it wouldn't listen to us, and that no useful and forthright opinion can be expressed." Afterwards, he went to Port Elizabeth to see Barney Pityana, an activist and classmate from Biko's Lovedale stay studying at Fort Hare, and they began to discuss the need for a separate black students group.¹⁴⁵

Before they could find themselves, however, the disgruntled black activists would have to find each other, drawing on personal connections and encounters flowing from other student groups. For most black students, the goal was still "getting into NUSAS," not getting out of it, particularly because the administrations of all the black campuses (save UNNE) had banned it. "From this," Biko later said, "we began to evolve now an approach, an approach for which we had to find a platform." One major platform which helped bring

together the future Black Consciousness elite the University Christian Movement (UCM), an ecumenical, multi-racial forum for Christian students which in 1968 had attracted 3,000 members at 15 institutions of higher learning. UCM's membership was politically liberal and majority black; for the whites it was an alternative to conservative denominational groups, for the blacks the only officially-tolerated space where students from different campuses meet and speak.¹⁴⁶ Ironically another organizational network of importance for the blacks, despite their complaints, was NUSAS itself, for it connected the black student elites on different campuses. Indeed, Biko and his friends used the debates at the July 1968 NUSAS conference to identify potential black student leaders, then networked with them outside the public sessions.¹⁴⁷

The key step on the road to a black student group was taken at the 1968 UCM conference, which drew around 90 blacks and 60 whites to Stutterheim in the eastern Cape province soon after the NUSAS gathering. Following a pre-arranged strategy, Biko and UCM Vice President Gerald Rey split the conference over whether the Africans should obey the pass laws. These laws banned non-resident Africans from staying in a city for more than 72 consecutive hours. Since the issue did not affect whites, Biko called on the blacks to discuss it in a separate meeting – his aim all along. Once there, he quickly moved to the real agenda: the need for black students to control their own organization. Against the backdrop of the racial division at the conference, this was accepted, and a committee was set up to bring together leaders from the black campuses to discuss creating a black

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p.7; Wilson, "Steve Biko: A Life," *op. cit.* p.23.

¹⁴⁶ *Black Review* 1972, p.186; *Race Relations Survey, 1968*, p.262.

¹⁴⁷ Gerhart Interview, Biko, p.7.

student movement. (When they rejoined the other students, the blacks kept mum about the bigger issues, simply announcing that in a "Christian spirit" they would walk in and out of town, while the whites – unaware that the blacks had just taken a step which would have appalled them – cheered the announcement.)¹⁴⁸

The creation of a black student group still required two more conferences of student leaders, part of a long process of consensus formation, networking, argument, and negotiation, occurring within a student activist network based on mix of ideology and personal ties. Biko spent all of 1968 writing and speaking with contacts on black campuses around the country. A number of students worked closely with him, including Pat Machaka and Harry Nengwekhulu from Turfloop and Pityana at Fort Hare, while a larger group drifted in and out of activity. The latter "were not terribly clear in terms of a long-term analysis of the situation," Biko recalled, "but agreeing with the basic principle, and also committed to me on a sort of personal friendship basis." In December, at Marianhill, Biko and his colleagues again made their case for a separate group, and found a receptive audience, if a limited one, since several campuses, including UWC, UDW, and Fort Hare were either not or poorly represented. Over the next few months, they argued, corresponded, and organized on their campuses, challenging the old consensus on the black campuses for "common-society liberalism," as Biko called it. When the second conference convened, at Turfloop, there was still some resistance; to entice in those who still wanted to join NUSAS, the leadership deferred to it as the national student union. However, the view that prevailed was that contact among black students was "of paramount importance at this stage," as a communiqué issued there put it. The result was the birth of the first

autonomous black opposition movement since the banning of the ANC: the South African Students Organization (SASO).¹⁴⁹

SASO rapidly won support on the black campuses, though not without some opposition. Although black student leaders increasingly agreed on the need for a separate organization, there were many in the rank and file who did not. The larger group among them still supported multi-racial liberalism; "getting into NUSAS" remained attractive to them, not getting out, while on the other side, pro-PAC elements wanted a movement for Africans only. Emotions ran high: in one meeting at UNNE, white student observers were expelled amid jeers and shouts of "Kick out NUSAS"; at another, pro-PAC students insulted and drove out colored and Indian students, though they were decisively outvoted in the end.¹⁵⁰ To garner support, Biko, the organization's President, went to campuses in Natal and the Transvaal, Pityana, Eastern Cape UCM Secretary, to those in the Cape. Pityana recalled that the theme was, "It's about time that black people up and down the country began to speak together in one voice."¹⁵¹ The effects of this discourse on students were mesmerizing: an Anglican priest who watched Biko address students at FedSem said, "His hold on his all-black audiences was almost frightening; it was as if they were listening to a new 'messiah'."¹⁵² SASO was also able to tap into the resources of UCM to help its organizing drive; many of its leaders were also in the religious group, so they could use its

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.9.

¹⁴⁹ This account is based upon Gerhart Interview, Biko, pp.10-13. The quote is from the "Communiqué as drawn up by the 1969 SASO Conference," in the Carter-Karis-Gerhart Archive, n.d., p.2.

¹⁵⁰ *Dome*, March 27, 1969; Gerhart Interview, Biko, p.13.

¹⁵¹ Wilson, "Steve Biko: A Life," *op. cit.*, p.24.

¹⁵² Stubbs, "Martyr of Hope," *op. cit.*, p.158.

funds to travel to SASO meetings piggy-backed onto UCM events, and draw on its networks and contacts to obtain and distribute funds and literature, and work with its full-time staff.¹⁵³ As the drive took off, at one campus after another, students became involved: by 1971, SASO was established at all the black universities, as well as the Federal and Lutheran seminaries, and the Indian Transvaal College of Education, and the following year its newsletter claimed a circulation of 4,000. It would be hard to differ with Gerhart's assessment: "SASO in a remarkably short period had become the most politically significant black organization in the country."¹⁵⁴

Like the black students, the young, educated black churchmen who entered the South African clergy in the 1960s and 1970s also formed a generation with attitudes different from their elders. Their background was similar to that of the university students, and they shared their values and outlooks. This was shown emphatically in Verryn's 1970 survey of Anglican and Catholic clergy in South Africa. The survey revealed the chasm between the socially-minded younger generation and their quietistic elders. All the black churchmen under 40 surveyed were oriented towards change in "this world" or gave equal importance to "this world" and the other world, while almost 90% of the older black clergy exclusively stressed the "other world." The younger churchmen also rejected the proposition that because authority came from God, the church should uphold the established order by 72-1. A massive 75% of them said they church was too undemocratic: "The laity are being stifled by the clergy," said one. They were keenly sensitive to discrimination in

¹⁵³ Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, *op. cit.*, p.13; Interview, Basil Moore, Johannesburg, May 8, 1992.

¹⁵⁴ Gail Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa: the Evolution of an Ideology (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1978), p.270.

the church: "White priests think they are superior," said one young Catholic priest, while one of his Anglican counterparts declared, "It seems I can never come to terms with my white colleagues." The political vocation was particularly strong among young Catholic priests: if they could have chosen their occupation freely, the most popular choice – after the ministry – would have been politics.¹⁵⁵

The UCM became the thread which first bound together small groups of blacks uncomfortable with the status quo in the churches into an informal network. In an effort to link the Gospel to modern life and South African realities, it brought together young black and white students (including seminarians) dissatisfied, with the stuffy, conservative mainline churches for unconventional worship, including jazz and folk music, films, dancing, and other things anathema to traditionalists.¹⁵⁶ By 1969, it was estimated that perhaps 5,000 students, the majority of them black, were interested in UCM activities, with a core of 200 to 300 very active.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, despite the appearance of SASO's separatism, one of the UCM's attractions remained contact with whites, allowing inter-racial theological, political, and social intercourse. (Its 1971 retreat was perhaps the only Christian gathering ever where a warning was given to avoid an area inhabited by poisonous mambas to couples planning to make love in the bushes!) UCM's own leaders explained that it was "establishing community" among student Christians in a free space, outside the usual bounds of church and race, where political and religious ideas usually held back could

¹⁵⁵ Trevor Verryn, *The Vanishing Clergyman* (Johannesburg, South African Council of Churches: 1971), pp.91-95, 151-55.

¹⁵⁶ Interviews, James Moulder, Pietermaritzburg, September 9, 1992, Alan Mabin, New Haven, 1989.

¹⁵⁷ University Christian Movement, "Information to Churches," mimeo, 1969, p.4.

be voiced. “Within such groups it is only natural that students of various racial groups should express their concern about the situation in South Africa.”¹⁵⁸

After SASO’s creation relieved the UCM of the burden of substitution for a national student organization, its members became increasingly interested and involved in spreading what they called “Black Theology.”¹⁵⁹ Like the founders of SASO, the black theologians sought a chance for black churchmen to have a voice of their own, responding to frustrations experienced in their own denominational institutions. Ironically, however, the most important initial exponent of black theology was white: Basil Moore, UCM’s first President and a young Methodist churchman. With two black UCM members – Gerald Rey (who had helped Biko launch SASO) and Bob Kgame, Moore attended a conference of the American UCM in late 1966 where they encountered the Black Power movement’s theological manifestations and supporters. The most notable of these was James Cone of Union Theological Seminary, who invited the young South Africans to visit him there in New York to soak up all the literature they could on the subject before returning home. Back in South Africa, Rey withdrew from UCM and SASO amid allegations he was a police spy, while Kgame was killed in a township robbery – leaving Moore alone to spread the word. He wrote a paper summarizing what he had learned in America and how it might apply to South Africa under the title, “Towards a Black Theology.” The topic of Black Theology became a regular theme at UCM conferences and branch meetings around the

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.3

¹⁵⁹ Interview, Moore.

country. It aroused such intense interest that more than 2,000 copies of "Towards a Black Theology" had been distributed – a huge number for a small student group.¹⁶⁰

The key step which launched Black Theology as a movement was the UCM seminar on the subject held in Roodepoort, west of Johannesburg, in March 1971, from which whites were excluded.¹⁶¹ The three-day seminar brought together 25 influential black churchmen, laymen, and students to discuss papers on the history, theology, and politics of the church in South Africa. It opened with an address sent by Cone, followed by papers by Manas Buthelezi, David Thebehali, and others. Though the attendance was small, the collected papers – published in South Africa, the UK, and US – circulated hand to hand in church circles in South Africa despite a government ban, becoming the touchstone of the Black Theology movement.¹⁶² After the national seminar, word of Black Theology was spread wider by seven regional seminars organized around the country later in the year, which drew scores of participants. Hearing the Word from a black perspective generated tremendous excitement among younger clergy and active laity, despite harassment by the authorities which forced organizers to call meetings at the last minute. "People would drop what they were doing and come," Moore recalled. "Individuals were uneasy, but the unease was sparked by Black Theology. It articulates the felt unease, which had not really been articulated before. That's why, when the UCM organizes a conference, people came out of the woodwork."¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ University Christian Movement, "Freedom '71," UCM Conference Report (n.d.), p.12

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 12, and University Christian Movement, UCM Newsletter, Second Semester, 1971.

¹⁶² The American edition is Basil Moore., ed. The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa (Atlanta, John Knox: 1973).

Interest in black theology was particularly strong at the black seminaries, where leading figures were often active in UCM, and the atmosphere somewhat less repressive than in the "bush colleges." St. Peter's of Hammanskraal, near Pretoria, the Catholic seminary for blacks, was run by liberal white Dominican priests, who brought in frequent visitors from overseas to acquaint its students with the theological ferment of the post-Vatican II era. The students were avid followers of the development of liberation theology overseas, and responded with interest to black theology.¹⁶⁴ Similarly, at the Lutheran Seminary for blacks in Maphumulo, outside Durban, students interested in Black Theology "started to ask questions never asked in college" before.¹⁶⁵ Some attacked church doctrine as "imported theology;" others challenged institutional rules requiring manual labor of students for the school's upkeep as demeaning. All these were elements of a dramatic change in the recruitment of the black church elite: the generation which entered the ministry from the late 1960s on was exposed to a radicalizing socialization, and a commitment to politics far different from the meek Christianity of their elders.

Yet while it was too militant for the Establishment, the UCM was riven by a growing race conflict, as blacks increasingly regarded its multi-racial character as politically inhibiting, much as they had in NUSAS. There was a rise in racial polarization at its 1969 and 1970 annual conferences, as those involved with the Black Theology project felt that by its nature it did not allow much white involvement. There was also a steady drain of black leadership from UCM into SASO, drawing off its most promising

¹⁶³ Interview, Moore. See also John de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans: 1979), pp.153-6.

¹⁶⁴ Interview, Bokwe Mafuna, Paris, September 1990.

figures.¹⁶⁶ The turning point came at the 1971 UCM conference, when the black students presented their "People's Manifesto," which declared that the role of whites was to engage in self-examination, while blacks organized themselves separately within the church and other institutions. After initially resisting it, the whites agreed to a compromise to save the organization: it would become a federation of four independent projects, including one on Black Theology.¹⁶⁷ But by 1972, the situation of the UCM had become untenable. The Black Theology project was passed on to SASO, but informally it became the project of black seminars and organizations subject to Black Consciousness influence, such as the Christian Institute and the SA Council of Churches. The end result was the decision to dissolve the multi-racial group in which Black Theology, like Black Consciousness before it, had been incubated.¹⁶⁸

Journalists who began work in the 1970s also represented a new generation – younger, brasher, more ambitious personally and politically. By 1977, more than two-thirds of the black journalists in a survey were young men in their twenties with matric or higher education.¹⁶⁹ Some had been involved with the Black Consciousness Movement at school or university. The look of the newsroom changed: a visitor would see dashikis, Afro haircuts, and women. So had the mood. According to Joe Thloloe, the youngsters were interested in issues, not literary style:

¹⁶⁵ Interview, Elise Nurnberger, Pietermaritzburg, September 9, 1992.

¹⁶⁶ Black Review, 1972, p.187; Sam Nolutshungu, Changing South Africa: Political Considerations (Manchester, Manchester University Press: 1983), p.156.

¹⁶⁷ "Freedom '71," op. cit., pp.36-7, and Freedom '71 Daily, No.6, Karis-Gerhart Archive..

¹⁶⁸ Race Relations Survey, 1972, p.31.

“The new generation were not sophisticated writers, like the Caseys or and Can Thembas. They were writing about Tsietshi Mashinini or what the Soweto Students Representatives Council were doing. There was a vast difference in quality, but also in impact.”¹⁷⁰

Among the youngsters at The World were Duma Ndlovu and future ANC guerrilla leader Siphwe Nyanda, friends, former high school activists, and members of the same Dube, Soweto social circle as ANC guerrilla-to-be Tokyo Sexwale. Those elsewhere included Rashid Seria, a long-haired youth from Port Elizabeth who joined the Cape Herald in 1973, and Thenjiwe Mtintso at the Daily Dispatch, an intense young woman who had belonged to Steve Biko's King William's Town activist circle. Of the young journalists of that day, Ndlovu recalls, "We came in young, with politics from BC."¹⁷¹ They had a tonic effect on some members of the older generation, who sobered up and got to work.

But black journalists still lacked any organizational outlet for their grievances. SASJ wage agreements with employers accepted racially discriminatory wage scales.¹⁷² In 1973, the white-majority and white-run South African Society of Journalists, which had accepted racially discriminatory salary scales, was finally challenged to de-register from the state-run labor relations machinery and admit all races by black journalists from the Cape Herald and white liberals from the Rand Daily Mail. At the 1973 SASJ Congress, hostility to de-registration was so strong it was dismissed without a vote. Furious, the 30 colored and

¹⁶⁹ Marion Whitehead, The Black Gatekeepers, BA Honors Thesis, Journalism, Rhodes University, Grahamstown 1978, p.77.

¹⁷⁰ Interview No.1, Joe Thlooe, Johannesburg, March 7,1991.

¹⁷¹ Interview, Duma Ndlovu, Johannesburg, November 12, 1991.

¹⁷² Llewellyn Raubenheimer, A Study of Black Journalists and Black Media Workers in Union Organization – 1971 to 1981, BA Honors Thesis, Sociology, University of Cape Town, 1982, pp.1-5; Hatcher, "Black Journalists in South Africa," Index on Censorship, vol. 8, no. 3, 1979, p.47.

African members of the Cape Western branch immediately quit the SASJ. Meanwhile, in Johannesburg, black and liberal white journalists had formed a non-racial South African Journalists Association three years before, but had organized little more than an annual drinking party. Ideological tensions within the organization came to the breaking point when one of the leaders, Patrick Laurence of The Star, put a South African flag on the platform at a meeting in late 1972 – and found that the symbol of the regime aroused the same hostility among black journalists as it had among black students. With the same result as well: the black journalists, like the black students who left NUSAS five years earlier, would soon be on their own.¹⁷³

By the time the black journalists reached the parting of the ways with their white colleagues, the BCM had come to have growing influence among them through professional and social networks of contact. No reporters had been invited to the SASO (South African Students Organization) 1969 founding conference to avoid making waves before the organization presented itself to students, but from 1970 on SASO's leaders (particularly Biko) courted press coverage of their conferences and activities and befriended journalists. As SASO and the other BC groups became more active, black journalists spent an increasing amount of time covering them, especially on the black-oriented papers. Contact became more regular after the 1972 student protests on the black campuses. "After that, you had to check with them on almost a daily basis," says Harry Mashabela.¹⁷⁴ In turn the black

¹⁷³ In 1962, the membership of the South African Society of Journalists (SASJ, officially non-racial but overwhelmingly white) had voted to register as a union under the Industrial Conciliation Act. This meant excluding Africans and relegating colored and Indian journalists to separate, segregated branches represented by whites on the National Council. Raubenheimer, A Study of Black Journalists, *op. cit.*, p.2, and Interview, Patrick Laurence, Johannesburg, October 21, 1991.

¹⁷⁴ Interview, Harry Mashabela, October 9, 1991.

journalists were increasingly drawn into the intense, bond-forming social gatherings of BC circles.

With the multi-racial SAJA in disarray, and growing awareness of Black Consciousness and other political movements among black journalists, by the start of 1973 the time was ripe for their discontent to take an organized form.¹⁷⁵ In January, the SAJA annual meeting was held at The World's offices, with no whites in attendance. They were addressed by Mafuna, who had dramatically resigned from the Mail during the 1972 SASO conference, and other BC activists. The BC men argued that black journalists should promote resistance to apartheid and the BCM, and urged them to reconstitute the organization without whites. Some older journalists in leading positions in SAJA opposed the plan, hostile to the militancy of the younger journalists, the involvement of "outsiders", and the racial exclusivity of the proposed organization. However, the majority backed the proposal, and the Union of Black Journalists (UBJ) was founded in Soweto on February 12, 1973, with Harry Mashabela as President. The SASO influence was evident: the UBJ constitution was initially based on SASO's, with "journalist" substituted for "student". The black Cape Town journalists who had left the SASJ decided early in 1974 to join the UBJ. At about the same time, the new union was also joined by several colored and Indian journalists in Johannesburg after the SASJ failed to keep a pledge to establish a non-racial training program.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Raubenheimer, A Study of Black Journalists, *op. cit.*, pp.2-3, Graham Addison, "The Union of Black Journalists: A Brief Survey," Unpublished Paper, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, n.d.

¹⁷⁶ Raubenheimer, A Study of Black Journalists, *op. cit.*, p.5, Interview, Rashid Seria, June 8, 1991, and Addison, "The Union of Black Journalists," *op. cit.*, p.2.

The late 1960s and early 1970s, then, were the years in which the emergence of circles of dissent within the social networks of black institutions blossomed into the beginnings of independent black organization. Led by Stephen Biko, black students frustrated by NUSAS split off to form SASO, mobilizing a hidden network of black leadership which had developed within the white-run student movement and the non-racial UCM. Within the churches the UCM and SASO were catalysts to the growth of the Black Theology movement among disgruntled black clergy, particularly within the networks of younger clergy still in or recently out of the seminaries. Last but not least were the journalists, who formed the UBJ after profoundly alienating experiences with the white journalists' union. Once these breaks had taken place, and as members of the new groups began to form a larger organized network working in opposition to the regime, the quest for an autonomous black civil society had begun.

V. POLITICAL CULTURE: THE GROWTH OF URBAN AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

The new ways in which urban black South Africans were coming together had among their consequences the construction of urban identities involving all black residents of the cities and townships. Mayer commented in 1973 on the relative decline of patrimonial identities: "Exclusive ethnic patriotism seems to have almost died in Soweto, if we consider explicitly formulated ideologies and main institutional forms. ...

This was one of the most clear-cut findings in the entire mass of research material."¹⁷⁷

Indeed, there was little difference between the comments of his respondents in cities in different parts of the country:

"In the next two generations, Soweto will be a pure African national place, with no Zulus, or Sothos, or Shangaan, or Xhosa, but only Africans." (Soweto)
"Does it really matter whether I am a Mfengu, Xhosa, or what not? I am concerned with the main grouping, which is African." (East London)¹⁷⁸

A 1975 survey in Mdantsane found that 53% of residents felt that tribal affiliation was "becoming less important," while only 28% disagreed.¹⁷⁹ Mayer comments that in Soweto, "the same formulae of resentment [of ethnic segregation] were encountered right down to the rank and file."¹⁸⁰ And the big-city glamour of Johannesburg rubbed off on Soweto, making it the envy of smaller townships like Sharpeville, one of whose residents described it as "Chicago and Hollywood rolled onto one." Even in such smaller cities, area rivalries declined and community solidarity grew, manifest in such things as shared loyalties among sports fans from different areas or the way they supported the bids of local musicians to outdo their Soweto rivals.¹⁸¹

Urban blacks' increasing consciousness of themselves as a group was underlined by the distinctions they drew between themselves and residents of the rural homelands assigned to Africans, and the bonds they referred to among themselves. Letters to the

¹⁷⁷ Mayer, "Class, Status, and Power," *op. cit.*, p.152.

¹⁷⁸ Quotations are drawn from Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, p.137; and Urban Africans and the Bantustans, *op. cit.*, p.11.

¹⁷⁹ Mdantsane Survey, Summary of Results, Rhodes University Library Archives, Grahamstown.

¹⁸⁰ Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, p.139, and "Class, Status, and Power," *op. cit.*, p.153.

urban black press showed a keen desire to differentiate themselves from the residents of the poverty-stricken regions of which Pretoria had declared them citizens. One in The World in 1968 praised UBC member P.Q. Vundla for a speech to a white official which stressed “that we can never go back to the homelands to die of hunger.” It concluded with an appeal to other UBC members to “work as sons of South Africa ... This is your chance not only to work as Zulus, Tswanas, Vendas, etc., but as Africans.”¹⁸² Others condemned as a betrayal the application of the white authorities’ ethnic segregation policies by black officials, particularly the expulsion of students of the “wrong” group from schools of another. “Why is there no part of the suburbs for every kind of white man in this country, e.g. Jewish zone, French section, English section, etc.?” asked C. Mogale. “It is simply because they have realized that united they stand, and divided they fall.”¹⁸³ These views went along with a positive affirmation of their common identity as urban Africans. Thus when Lobban asked Soweto high school students in 1970 to which groups they felt closest, 53% said other urban blacks, against just 10% who named rural blacks and 12% who mentioned English-speaking whites.¹⁸⁴ The same point was made by massive numbers of urban blacks on the Witwatersrand and in Cape Town, who abstained from the voting elections for their respective homeland governments. Of 1.7 million Transkeians living in “white” South Africa, only 39,000 voted in the territory’s

¹⁸¹ Jeffrey, Cultural Trends, *op. cit.*, pp.187, 185.

¹⁸² Letter of Henry Marora, The World, April 5, 1968.

¹⁸³ The World, March 23, 1973. See also the letter by “Wounded African” protesting similar actions, The World, February 23, 1973.

¹⁸⁴ Lobban, “Self Attitudes,” *op. cit.*

1973 election. Similarly, of 1.1 million Tswanas who lived outside their bantustan, Bophutatswana, only 4,000 voted in the 1972 poll.¹⁸⁵

Yet this was not a simple narrative of the triumph of modern identity over tradition. The case of the Ciskei is a reminder: despite the declining interest in ethnicity which residents described, voting in the 1973 territory-wide election was driven by ethnicity, as shown in Chapter Three (p.213ff). The reality is that this era was one in which average black South Africans voiced more than one discourse of identity. Thus in East London, a woman said with one breath that “we are all black” and with the next that she “likes Xhosa custom best.” An Mfengu man said “all tribes are the same” but added that the “Mfengu are more civilized than the other tribes.”¹⁸⁶ Even in cosmopolitan Soweto, Mayer’s research found many situations where ethnic considerations applied, including the use of ethnic labels for disloyal workers and ethnic stereotyping in day-to-day situations.¹⁸⁷ In other words, the new urban identities coexisted with the older patrimonial identities, which were also being reinforced by the circumstances and choices of black South Africans under the apartheid regime.

Hand-in-hand with the appearance of new urban identities among blacks went the growth of national consciousness, advanced by the same processes. Seizing the

¹⁸⁵ Roger Southall, South Africa’s Transkei: The Political Economy of an “Independent” Bantustan (New York: Monthly Review Press: 1983), p. 135; Jeffrey Butler, Robert Rotberg, and John Adams, The Black Homelands of South Africa: The Political and Economic Development of Bophutatswana and KwaZulu (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1977), pp.5, 53. As was noted in Chapter Three, in Lennox Sebe’s Ciskei the urban turnout was actually greater than that in rural areas in 1973 (p.215). However, Stanley Xaba estimated that voter registration might have been twice as high had all Ciskeians actually registered (especially those around Johannesburg) and indicated that urban Africans did not because of fear of repatriation to the rural areas, Daily Dispatch, February 22, 1973.

¹⁸⁶ Mayer, Urban Africans and the Bantustans, *op. cit.*, p.12.

¹⁸⁷ Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, p.142.

opportunities provided by new media, forms of entertainment, sport organizations, and inter-scholastic contacts, members of black civil society were overcoming the parochialism which had honeycombed it in the past, establishing a much clearer sense of themselves as part of a nation than had been the case in the poorly integrated black communities of the 1950s. Opinion studies conducted in cities around the country underlined this development. In Soweto, Mayer found that by 1975 the "predominant ideology" was "the melting pot [T]he reason given most consistently and emphatically was that of a common African identity or ... African nationalism."¹⁸⁸ In Durban, Schlemmer's survey results from polling Africans from 1970 to 1972 led him to conclude that it was "apparent that the majority inclination is towards an African consciousness or perhaps even an African nationalism within a broader South Africanism."¹⁸⁹ Mayer's work over the same period among Africans in the cities of the Eastern Cape led him to note their "longing to take their place in a united, non-racial South Africa with all of a citizen's pride in their country." He added that although his findings suggested that traditionalist loyalties and the offering of opportunities might legitimate the bantustans, if Africans were dissatisfied the potential existed for "an aggressive all-black, all-South African nationalism."¹⁹⁰ The latter nuance is underlined by another Eastern Cape study, a survey among Africans in Mdantsane in 1975 which found that an all-South African identity had come to predominate, but narrowly. When asked which of several identities was most important to them, 44% replied being "a South

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.139.

¹⁸⁹ Lawrence Schlemmer, "Black Attitudes: Adaptation and Reaction," in F.M. Orkin and S.E. Welz, eds., Society in Southern Africa, 1975-1978 (Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press: 1979), p.138.

African.” However, 43% – almost as many – chose more parochial alternatives, 37% choosing their homeland (“a Ciskeian”) and 7% their tribal grouping.¹⁹¹ Thus, by the first half of the 1970s, a national consciousness was emerging more clearly than ever before among black South Africans, but it remained far from universal.

Letters to black publications also pointed to a national viewpoint gaining the upper hand, but lively debate continued between blacks who rejected apartheid outright and those willing to accept it. In the early 1970s, the most frequently expressed opinions were strongly critical of official policy. Typical examples, drawn from Drum, include these:

“Why should we be discriminated against? You get to the pass office and you are told you can’t stay in Johannesburg. For Christ’s sake, every part of this country is my fatherland.”

“The homelands are too small to accommodate even a quarter of the black population. This makes me wonder why our bantustan leaders said yes to independence without making sure that they would get the land they are now claiming.”

“The so-called homelands are not and will never be economically viable.”¹⁹²

Yet there was also a steady stream of letters expressing the view that government policy should be accepted, either on principled or pragmatic grounds. Examples include these:

“It is not the white man in this country who divided us into ethnic groups. ... We divided ourselves. ... We are still different in many ways.”

“The official policy of the ruling National Party pursued to its logical conclusion [e.g. homeland independence], could be the only remedy for our present racial

¹⁹⁰ Mayer, Urban Africans and the Bantustans, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 18-19.

¹⁹¹ Mdantsane Survey, Summary of Results, *op. cit.* Similarly, when offered two alternatives regarding a future political order, 45% preferred a united South Africa with majority rule, but 28% plumped for the homeland system – even among urban Africans after a decade of political reawakening. (Some 2% preferred another system, while 24% gave no response.) *ibid.*

¹⁹² Letters to Drum from Solly Sewata, 1973, Sandy Mdingi, February 8, 1973, and K.Thomas Sonti, August 22, 1973.

issues. It goes without saying that as a Zulu I feel more at home amongst Zulu than Sothos, Pedis, Vendas, etc.”

“I say we blacks in South Africa are lucky to have whites at the top. Africans have no idea of freedom. If you want proof look at African countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, and even our neighbor Lesotho. I say to [Bophutatswana Chief Minister Lucas] Mangope: Keep it up!”¹⁹³

The terms of debate often reflected the intermediate stage reached by black thinking between the parochial past and the national position most accepted a few years later, rather than a unanimous, unequivocal hostility to apartheid and all its works. Not only were a significant proportion speaking in favor of the status quo, even those taking a more “national” position frequently regarded the homelands and their leaders as part of the solution rather than part of the problem. The notion of a federation of homelands and traditional leaders put forward by the leaders of the KwaZulu and Transkei homelands, Mangosuthu (“Gatsha”) Buthelezi and Kaiser Matanzima respectively, found some echo among the public. Thus a Witbank man wrote to Drum:

“Chiefs Buthelezi and Matanzima are striving for one big black nation. ... The whites don’t have different Prime Ministers. They are united and only have one. Why can’t we blacks unite? ... If we can have a black minister of ‘Bantu’ Administration and Development, all chiefs in the bantustans can combine and make one black nation.”¹⁹⁴

Indeed, Buthelezi’s outspoken opposition to the apartheid system, even as he gradually organized a power base within it, made him a pole of attraction and controversy for black opinion, including many outside his own Zulu ethnic group. For example, the same Drum letters page contained two sharply contrasting views of him from Tswana readers.

“All Blacks are with you, Chief Gatsha. From every angle of this country.”

¹⁹³ Letters to The World from Israel Lebotse, March 23, 1973, and Willard Memela, May 24, 1968, and to Drum from Hunter Kudumane, 1973.

¹⁹⁴ Letter from Ango Nthlane, in Drum, n.d. [72 or 73]

“The spotlight on Chief Gatsha is robbing Chief Mangope of the limelight that he deserves, but does not get.”¹⁹⁵

In short, black South Africans were gradually creating their own concept of themselves as a nation, as they learned about, competed against, and debated with each other.

While this was occurring, during the 1960s and 1970s black South Africans intensified their identification with blacks internationally, particularly black Americans. Media exposure to black Americans evoked a profound response among black South Africans, politically and culturally. Lunn traced this influence in his study of musicians, sportsmen, and young people in Soweto, noting the influence of black Americans on their music, dress, styles, and thinking (“Black is beautiful.”)¹⁹⁶ Black American political struggles – the civil rights movements, and the Black Power era which came after – also resonated powerfully with black South Africans. “The American Negroes are black as I am, and they have suffered more or less the same kind of oppression,” said one of Mayer’s respondents. Another added, “I feel closer to them than to the English[-speaking South Africans].”¹⁹⁷ Lobban’s research among Soweto high school students underlined this point: they were almost twice as likely to describe American blacks as possessing the traits they considered ideal than they were members of their own group (urban black South Africans). She said this was “largely because of the militant black nationalism which the subjects felt this group espoused.”¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Letters from Morrison Makau (Phalaborwa) and “Loyal” (Mafikeng), *Drum*, Dec. 8, 1972.

¹⁹⁶ Lunn, *Antecedents*, *op. cit.*, p.179.

¹⁹⁷ Mayer, *Soweto People and Their Social Universes*, *op. cit.*, p.163.

¹⁹⁸ Lobban, “Self Attitudes,” *op. cit.*, pp.170, 173.

These years also saw a marked increase among black South Africans of identification with and awareness of developments in independent Africa. The independence struggles, successes, and failures of black African states were a major focus of press and public attention. This awareness was largely political – South Africa had virtually no contact with the music or culture of emergent Africa, and little with its literature or journalism. But the sense of identification which resulted was palpable: for example, the Soweto students Lobban studied were likelier to attribute the qualities they idealized to Africans from independent states than to urban black South Africans by a margin of more than 3 to 2. The reason, she reported, was that independent Africans were seen by the black students as “relatively free and unoppressed, unlike themselves.”¹⁹⁹ The situation in Rhodesia was closely watched and frequently commented upon by letter writers, for whom it afforded an opportunity to comment obliquely on South Africa. However, other developments, such as those in Amin’s Uganda or Nyerere’s Tanzania, also drew a great deal of attention.²⁰⁰

Among urban youth, all the above trends ran even more strongly – but they also had distinctive sub-cultures of their own. Young black people were in the vanguard of social change; they were less involved in the older parochial and patrimonial order and steeped in the culture of the city. As Lunn put it, “For the children of the 1960s, their reference points were the city and peer group sharing. They were consciously and

¹⁹⁹ *Idem.*

²⁰⁰ Thus, K.R.B. Mmolawa wrote to *Drum* in early 1973 a letter which illustrated readers’ broad concerns within the black world: “I refer to an article in the November 22 [1972] issue of *Drum* about the war between Tanzania and Uganda. I feel that the situation there is the same as in Vietnam. The leaders of these countries sit in their comfortable homes while the people are killing each other. ... I congratulate Cassius Clay for standing up to his government and refusing to join the army”

unconsciously absorbing the influence of the modern media and were aspiring to standards that were urban and non-parochial.”²⁰¹ The overlaps between sub-cultures ensured that youth in general shared attitudes, as young people left school and then returned, belonged to both sub-cultures themselves, or had friends who did. Still, two distinct sub-cultural types of young people gravitated together, in the schools or on the streets.

The school sub-culture focused on the identity of young people as students. Political consciousness was a distinct part. When Edelstein surveyed Soweto high school pupils in 1970, he found their grievances were strikingly politicized rather than local or immediate. The top ones were inadequate political rights (73%), the pass laws (67%), low incomes (66%), inadequate educational facilities (65%), and poor job opportunities (50%). Traditional “youth” concerns – poor recreational and entertainment facilities – came last on a list of 20, mentioned by 7% and 3% respectively. Sharing these concerns was part of their social lives, as Indian BC activist Saths Cooper recalled:

“We would join with students from other high schools. We had social events – but we discussed the future, the lack of political representation, movement activity. This was the time when Moolah, Rajab, etc. [of the South African Indian Council] were state-appointed spokesmen and patrons. We had a poorly thought-out theoretical base, but a gut revulsion against what they stood for.”²⁰²

Within their subculture, students created two different styles: “Ivies” and hippies. Ivies – the name derived from the 50s Ivy League dress they were thought to imitate – were clean-cut types with neat sweaters, pants worn above the belly-button, and an odor of after shave and deodorant. While most students conformed to this style through the

²⁰¹ Lunn, *Antecedents, op. cit.*, p.112.

mid-60s, towards the end of the decade the hippie style grew rapidly in popularity among young people in South Africa, as elsewhere. "In Soweto, hippies seem to grow in numbers like mushrooms," wrote The World, while near Sharpeville – never to be left behind – a competition was held to chose "Mr. And Miss Hippie." Like hippies everywhere, in the townships, too, they wore bell bottoms, skinny tops, and mini-skirts; long hair and granny glasses were also common. And as elsewhere, hippies were likelier to become political activists than their squarer counterparts. What both groups had in common was a knowledge of English, their bridge to other races and, through the media, other places. Their musical tastes also ran to music in English, soul and rock. To some extent, the student styles were variations of those of the older "cats" who were the style-setters in the educated elite in the 60s, figures like playwright Gibson Kente or DJs like Cocky "Two-Bull" Thlothlalemajoe.²⁰³

Street youth culture, that of the petty criminals and a much larger number of poorly-educated, young unemployed and blue-collar workers, was different, more angry and immediate. Street youths saw Ivies as sissies and mocked the hippies for their elaborate greetings: "Hi-brother-man!" But the street youths saw themselves as urban and street-wise: their antithesis was the *mogoe*, the country bumpkin (literally, the migrant worker).²⁰⁴ They, too, created distinctive styles: the "clever" and the *pantsula*. Clevers affected a tough-guy style and wore pants resting on their hips, *pantsula* preferred expensive sweater, Florsheim shoes, and trousers above the waist. By the 1970s, most

²⁰² Interview, Cooper.

²⁰³ Glaser, "School, Street, and Identity," op. cit., p.7, and Jeffrey, Cultural Trends, op. cit., p.257, Diseko, "The Origins and Development of South African Students Movement," op. cit., p.44.

street youth communicated not in English but in *isicamtho*. (Indeed, the emergence of this language, the Zulu based “*tsotsi taal*” (gangster language), which had become the lingua franca of Soweto, was itself a sign of the emergence of an inter-ethnic and specifically urban identity.²⁰⁵) Musically, too, urban street youth were more African-oriented, fans of *mbaqanga*.

How can the modernizing forces described in this section be squared with the picture of the evolution of black political culture over the same period in the last chapter, which focused on the withdrawal and collaborative attitudes of the middle class, and the deepening of traditionalism and parochialism among the popular classes? To some degree, each concerned different people: the forces described in this chapter touched more city-dwellers, the young, men, and above all, the literate, while those in the last affected more powerfully the rurally-oriented, older people, women, and illiterates. However, to a certain extent, these changes were complimentary: in many respects the new types of community overlaid the older identities, with mobilization around either possible. To some degree, they also indicated the ambiguity and plasticity of change: thus traditionalist phenomena combined aspects of collaboration and resistance, continuity and change. Yet there was tension between them as well, for they also reflected the competition between different types of cultural patterns and narratives, as conservative populists tried to divert and contain the new collectivities and forms of self-understanding which black South Africans were creating for themselves even before large-scale social movement organization emerged.

²⁰⁴ Glaser, “School, Street, and Identity,” *op. cit.*, p.7, and Diseko, “The Origins and Development of South African Students Movement,” *op. cit.*, p.44.

The creation of new, larger identities by black South Africans in the 1960s and 1970s represented a major transformation of the country's political culture. As Lunn put it, "the more subtle changes that occurred ... are ... important, not only for the diversity and the tenacity of urban institutions, but also because they suggest some of the reasons for the emergence of the generational divisions, the growth of urban black culture in new directions, as well as the more sustained demand for the recognition of black people's rights."²⁰⁶ By creating the social foundations of citizenship, black South Africans laid the groundwork for new types of collective action and mobilization. The realization of this potential, however, was by no means automatic. Glaser notes, "Clearly, a black consciousness, reinforced by pass controls and other apartheid laws, was latent and potentially powerful throughout the 1960s and 1970s, but the process whereby this consciousness became a positive identity which united the youth needs to be plotted carefully."²⁰⁷

VI. COLLECTIVE ACTION WITHOUT FORMAL ORGANIZATION: RESISTANCE, PROTEST, AND IDENTITY

Although the white-controlled regime had inspired considerable fear and rallied significant support among blacks, the high apartheid era was also punctuated by popular

²⁰⁵ Glaser, *Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto*, *op. cit.*, p.135.

²⁰⁶ Lunn, *Antecedents*, *op. cit.*, p.187.

protest and resistance. Despite the conventional belief that mass opposition was stilled between Sharpeville in 1960 and the 1973 Durban strikes, there is evidence of widespread if small-scale collective action in those years. It was expressed in many forms, including acts of resistance in everyday life, cultural activity, anomic aggression, lawful protest, and public violence. None of these types of action united all the elements required for a large-scale opposition movement, able to directly confront the regime. All, however, testified to continued effervescence at the base, despite the absence of large-scale 1950s-style protests.

The persistence of resistance, despite the absence of formal organization, was made possible by the social networks and collective identities whose origins were so laboriously traced in the previous sections of this chapter. The existence of these networks and identities as constants relied upon in everyday life established a sense of solidarity that encouraged individuals to act together and protected those who acted alone, even without the formal structures and assurances offered by social movement organizations. As Scott has noted:

“A concept of co-ordination derived from formal and bureaucratic settings is of little assistance in understanding actions in small communities with dense informal networks and rich, and historically deep, subcultures of resistance to outside claims. ... While folk culture is not co-ordination in the formal sense, it often achieves a ‘climate of opinion’ which in other more institutionalized societies would require a public relations campaign. The striking thing about peasant society is the extent to which a whole range of complex activities – from labor exchanges to house moving to wedding preparations to feasts – are co-ordinated by networks of understanding and practice. It is the same with boycotts, wage ‘negotiations,’ the refusal of tenants to compete with one another, or the conspiracy of silence surrounding threats. No formal organizations are created because none is required, and yet a form of co-ordination is achieved that alerts us that what is happening is not just individual action.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Glaser, “School, Street, and Identity,” *op. cit.*, p.13.

²⁰⁸ James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1985), p.300.

With little modification, this argument would apply as well to black South African communities. In limited domains, all the types of resistance described below were channels through which the hidden transcripts of discontent normally repressed were expressed. They also represented grassroots elements which, combined in new ways, retained the potential to drive a popular challenge to South Africa's system of authoritarian rule and race discrimination.

In the traditional view of black protest politics in South Africa, the years after 1961 are seen as a long blank. Aside from brief, spasmodic mobilizations in support of the underground nationalist movements as they were ground down by the state, the standard accounts simply do not mention further above-ground resistance. (Indeed, remarkably, little has been published on internal opposition in this period during the past twenty years, despite the enormous outpouring of historiography on virtually all other aspects and eras of black opposition.) The prevailing view has been that due to repression by the regime, protest and opposition were simply stilled. Yet while these were indeed years of lowered voices, without large-scale, national organization and action, different types of collective resistance and protest nonetheless welled up continually in civil society.

Everyday resistance by members of civil society in their ordinary lives was also rife even when white rule in South Africa was at its most authoritarian. As an acute sociological observer, van den Berghe, noted,

"the 'invisible' and individual expression of anti-white and anti-apartheid hostility ... is by far the most common (type of opposition) and may well be the most efficacious, although most whites are unaware of its existence. Individual output restriction by 'going slow'; minor industrial sabotage by pretending incomprehension of orders or unfamiliarity with equipment; deliberate waste of raw materials; telling lies or otherwise deceiving white supervisors and officials; making fools of whites and undermining their authority through ridicule; ingenious intrigues; countless

methods of circumventing regulations; falsifying documents and sabotaging the administrative machinery from within are so many variants of this 'invisible' opposition."²⁰⁹

These "weapons of the weak" against white hegemony had social as well individual dimensions.²¹⁰ Often they were done in groups; at the least they depended on the silent complicity of others in the same workplace, school, or community. Consider some cases:

"White drivers are sometimes subjected to purposely aggressive and dangerous treatment by brown drivers. Non-racist white employers report persistent stealing, absenteeism, and negativistic work conduct. Some colored delinquents pride themselves on robbing only white pedestrians. Segregated colored sports spectators invariably support foreign opponents of local white teams, and often taunt and hurl missiles at white spectators and competitors when they can get away with it."²¹¹

Sometimes this type of resistance was literally an everyday occurrence. Every school day, the students of Orlando High in Soweto donned the black, green, and gold colors of the banned ANC – for these were also the school's colors, emblazoned on their uniform belts. In Cape Town, whenever the colored students of Trafalgar High School sang their school song, they knew that it had been penned by political prisoners on Robben Island.²¹² Nor was this constant passive resistance without impact. Restrictions on black use of liquor were abandoned in 1962, when the post-Sharpeville repression was at its height, due to the inability of police to enforce them in the face of massive black non-compliance. (Cynics

²⁰⁹ Pierre van den Berghe, South Africa: A Study in Conflict (Westport, CT, Greenwood Press: 1965), p.165.

²¹⁰ The phrase, of course, is drawn from Scott's Weapons of the Weak, op.cit.

²¹¹ Gerald Stone, "Identity Among Lower-Class Coloreds," in Michael Whisson and Hendrick van der Merwe, Colored Citizenship in South Africa (Cape Town, Abe Bailey Institute of Interracial Studies: 1972), p.31. In another instance, after an African crowd felt that an African team was being cheated by decisions by the white referee and linesmen at a match against a white team, they chanted "We are being robbed" and sang a freedom song, "Shosholoza," while the team refused to return to the field for the second half until the referee was changed. He was. Drum, May 22, 1974. (Ironically, twenty years later "Shosholoza" became the national sports anthem of the newly democratic South Africa – another example of symbolic inversion.)

²¹² Chisholm, "Education, Politics and Organization," op. cit.

suggested it was also because the authorities preferred to have blacks drunk in shebeens rather than marching in the streets.) A decade later, the refusal of vast numbers Africans to obey the pass laws as the undocumented streamed to the townships and created squatter camps in their hundreds of thousands increasingly strained the apartheid regime's design for urban segregation. Thus, despite its unorganized, private nature, everyday resistance acted as a constraint on the regime and a pointer to the potential for micro-mobilization in the social networks of civil society.

People in black communities also engaged in various types of cultural resistance against the white minority regime. The reassertion of traditional identities which took place in South Africa during the 1960s was not without its ambiguities, flowing as it did from both above and below. While it conformed in important respects with the balkanizing discourse of apartheid, it also implied the reaffirmation of the values of black cultures in the face of the dominant white ones. Among Africans, as Mayer noted, "School people argued and prayed for the removal of these patterns of dominance, and Red people designed ways of protecting themselves from their most undesirable effects. What consent black villagers gave to white dominance was at best obtained under duress, passive acceptance, lukewarm adherence, but rarely from shared conviction."²¹³ Similarly, Meer wrote that "desperate for security, and fearful of not obtaining it in the general social milieu," older Indians looked for it "in the intrinsically Indian cultural idiom. There is a lively revival of interest in Indian languages, religion, music, dancing, and drama."²¹⁴ This reflex among ordinary people — both defensive and assertive — lay behind the flourishing of numerous religious and cultural

²¹³ Mayer, "The Origin and Decline of Two Rural Resistance Ideologies," *op. cit.*, p.4.

societies in black communities, ranging from the Hindu Seva Semaj, the Jamaat-i-Islami, and other Muslim and Hindu groups, to the prodigious growth of Zionist and African separatist churches and the revival of traditional observances even among mainstream African Christians. As with public protests, discussed below, these re-assertions of traditional values were often led by individuals closely allied with the regime, neither willing to overtly challenge it nor interested in doing so. Yet in its potential for subversion through inversion of the discourse of power, and representing organized if private collective activity not under direct official control, these cultural activities too counted at least partially as sites of resistance.²¹⁵

Besides traditional forms of cultural resistance, this era also saw the stirrings of modern types, particularly on university campuses. While the theatrical and musical offerings for general audiences had important cultural consequences but avoided politics directly, some of the more adventuresome circles of student dissenters were being drawn towards more protest-oriented theater, as one of them who studied at the university for Indians on Salisbury Island in 1965, Strini Moodley, recalls:

“I was studying speech and drama, so I got involved in the theater. ... A group of us formed the café clan ... We occupied the cafeteria, smoked, played cards, ridiculed the lecturers and their politics. Somebody introduced the idea of a parliamentary debating society on campus. In our minds, it was a ludicrous idea: the only parliament we knew was the racist white parliament. We decided to ridicule it: we marched in with bodyguards, broke off branches and wrote “Special” on them, marched to the podium and gave Hitlerian speeches (‘Drive the Indians into the sea!’) The students loved it – it was the talk of the campus. At the end of the year, we got together and decided, let’s put on a variety concert for the students.”²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Meer, “Indian People,” *op. cit.*, p.30.

²¹⁵ For a less equivocal expression of this view, see Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*, *op.cit.*

²¹⁶ Interview, Moodley.

Another, displaced form of protest could be seen in much of the internalized violence and self-destructive behavior common in black communities in this period. Meer was the first to make the point in her classic study applying Durkheim to suicides among black South Africans, arguing that their anomie was generated by apartheid.²¹⁷ Frustration, poor prospects, and anger also led to a high rate of violent and aggressive behavior in black communities, along with widespread abuse of alcohol and drugs (particularly marijuana, known in South Africa as "dagga"). Stone's comments regarding the colored community apply more broadly. "Individual acts of violence, which taken for the colored people as a whole represent a serious social problem, are related to the political attitudes in much the same way that drinking and drug-taking are related. Violence and boasting of physical prowess is one of the means whereby men can compete with each other and assert their manhood."²¹⁸ Theft and burglary by *tsotsis* and career criminals, too, were worsened by the deepened poverty and indignity to which apartheid consigned blacks. Without organization or leadership, violence and criminality posed no overt challenge to the regime – yet these acts of "rebels without a cause," chiefly among the young, testified to rejection of its values and a smoldering anger against it.

A more direct method of expressing opposition was open public protest. The most frequent sort involved public campaigns intended to use the apartheid system's own norms and rules against it. A good example would be the campaign against forced removal to a segregated Oriental Plaza waged by the Indian traders of Fordsburg, Johannesburg, who feared that the move would stunt their businesses and shatter their community. As a result,

²¹⁷ Fatima Meer, Race and Suicide in South Africa (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul: 1976).

in 1962 they set up the Pageview Standholders and Traders Association. The traders' group spent a decade arguing against the removals on non-political, economic, moral, and technical grounds, while accepting the principle of the Group Areas Act. Its main claim was that removing the Indian businesses would hurt the neighboring white companies. However, the opposition collapsed in the mid-1970s, when a section of the group accepted prime sites in the Plaza while encouraging other members to resist. With its unity broken, official threats that those who refused to move would lose their trading licenses drove most of the remaining traders into the Plaza, and the few holdouts were moved by force. Thus, the long-standing solidarity of the community group was eventually worn down by constant pressure from the apartheid bureaucracy and the lack of outside support. In consequence, as Bulbulia notes, "the struggle regressed into an individualized and reactive approach to obstacles which confronted the community."²¹⁹

As in Pageview, in this era apartheid removals were the basis for public protest *par excellence*. Local leaders, no matter how accommodationist towards the regime at heart, were often compelled to act by concern for their base, while the opposition press offered a degree of public sympathy. Often the protest occurred in conjunction with court action challenging the technical validity of the removal, which, though rarely successful, helped delay the move and attracted further attention. There were also vast numbers of opportunities for such protest, considering that more than three million people were moved through measures such as Group Areas decrees in urban areas, the eradication of "black

²¹⁸ Stone, "Identity," *op. cit.*, p.61.

²¹⁹ Shenaaz Bulbulia, The Impact of the Group Areas Act, Sociology Dept., Wits University, 1990, p.39. The account of the Fordsburg struggle above is based upon her research.

spots" (freehold tenure areas) in the countryside, and the deportation of unneeded farm laborers and their families to the homelands.

In other instances, civic and community issues gave rise to local protests. For example anti-crime meetings organized by Advisory Board members in Soweto the length of the 1960s drew hundreds of residents to discuss police-community relations.²²⁰ In the Transkei, there were demonstrations in Pondoland in 1969 in opposition to cattle dipping and other aspects of so-called "betterment" schemes.²²¹ Obviously, there were limits to this sort of protest: the big issues concerning the regime were off limits, the leaders involved tended to be the very figures officially recognized in collaborationist politics, and results were usually few. Nonetheless, legally-sanctioned protest, albeit narrow in scope and local in scale, remained an element of public life in black communities even in the darkest days of apartheid.

Protest outside the bounds of the apartheid system, though rarer, also took place, most often involving high school students. From 1965 to 1972, at least 24 separate incidents of protests at individual African or colored schools were reported.²²² The issues which triggered them usually arose out of the authoritarian governance and limited resources of black schools: poor food, arbitrary discipline, and unfairly dismissed teachers.

²²⁰ Glaser, "Public Enemy Number One: Crime and Policing in the Era of High Apartheid," Seminar Paper, Post-Graduate Seminar, University of the Witwatersand, Johannesburg, 1992, p.3.

²²¹ Race Relations Survey, 1969, p.134.

²²² To reach this figure I have added together the incidents reported in Jonathan Hyslop, Social Conflicts Over African Education in South Africa from the 1940s to 1976 (Ph.D. Thesis, Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg: 1990), pp.391-395, Bond, Colored Education Struggles in South Africa, *op. cit.*, pp.70, 117, and Jonathan Holman, Colored Education in South Africa, 1948-1976, BA Honors Thesis, Sociology Department, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1984, pp.50-51, along with the two Soweto cases mentioned below.

Whatever the trigger, the common characteristic was that it resonated with a broader sense of injustice in their situation which the students shared. “It was this sense of injustice in the student experience of dealing with authority that fueled their anger around more concrete issues,” comments Hyslop.²²³ A second characteristic of these conflicts was that after meeting with a rebuff from the school administration, they often spiraled into violence, which frequently ended in the arson of school buildings and mass arrests of pupils.²²⁴ Protests were most frequent at the established, elite black schools – the older African boarding schools in rural areas (particularly the Transkei, where there was a sharp wave of unrest at a dozen schools in 1970-71), and the colored Unity Movement high schools in Cape Town – institutions with a tradition and repertoire of protest stretching back to the 1940s. In contrast, protests were relatively rare at the new schools with first-generation, working class pupils which were springing up in the African townships around Johannesburg, Durban, and Port Elizabeth and in the colored townships on the Cape Flats.²²⁵

There were a few protests in the 1960s and early 1970s involving urban high school pupils, which were pointers to a new potential for mobilization which was emerging in the township schools. The fifth anniversary of the declaration of the Republic, in May 1966 saw reports of widespread protests and refusals to participate in officially-ordained celebrations in colored schools in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and Kimberly. Organization for the actions was skeletal, but sufficient; the Unity Movement-aligned Teachers League of

²²³ Hyslop, Social Conflicts Over African Education in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.395.

²²⁴ *ibid.*, pp.391-5.

South Africa urged non-participation and influential students supported it, and the protest commanded spontaneous consent. This was shown when government school inspectors collected students' artwork without telling them it was for the Republic Day festival; when word leaked out, the students took their work home en masse.²²⁶ Some Indian schools also joined in the protests; Saths Cooper recalls his political initiation was when he and his friends organized fellow students at Sastri College to do so. "We even poured the 'Gold-Top' cold drinks they gave us in the gutter – or didn't take them, those who were brave enough."²²⁷ Among African high school students in Soweto, the first recorded protests took place in 1972, when students at two schools objected to the practice of unexpected changes in exam timetables, which confronted them with tests they had not been expecting. One, at Sekano-Ntoane High School, was sparked off by the handful of ASM activists at the school – the first protest action in which they had a hand.²²⁸ The other occurred at Orlando High, where students walked out when timetables were changed. A participant explained,

"The mutiny wasn't planned, it just happened like someone accidentally opening the sluice gates of a dam. We weren't refusing to write or anything like that. We hadn't prepared ourselves for history that day, and that was that. We wanted a good explanation, and didn't get one. Instead we were threatened and bullied – we all felt it was the last straw."²²⁹

Despite their diversity in place and cause, the high school protests displayed common threads. Their driving force was solidarity and shared outlooks among students within and between schools, engaged by issues with symbolic resonance, and catalyzed by thin

²²⁵ *ibid.*, p.390, and Bond, Colored Education Struggles in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.117.

²²⁶ *ibid.*, pp.70-71, and Holman, Colored Education, *op. cit.*, p.52.

²²⁷ Interview, Cooper.

²²⁸ Diseko, "The Origins and Development of South African Students Movement," *op. cit.*, pp.54-55.

networks of influential teachers and students – all indications of a new type of mobilization underway among a group which had been politically marginal a generation before.

Similar patterns of protest also began to emerge in this area among black university students in South Africa, as overseas during the 1960s. The most common were boycotts of official university ceremonies, such as the installation of the Rector (head of the administration) or the formal upgrading of the “bush colleges” into fully-fledged universities. Such protests took place at Fort Hare in 1968, Turfloop in 1970, and the University of Zululand in 1971, as students refused to participate in efforts to legitimate these segregated, second-rate institutions.²³⁰ In another instance, students held a mass meeting and marches at Turfloop in 1969 to protest suspensions and the lack of an institutional voice for students.²³¹ The same year, recently-graduate doctors at King Edward VIII, the teaching hospital for UNB, where SASO was hatching, resigned en masse to protest unequal pay with white doctors, winning a raise but losing nine colleagues who were not reinstated.²³² At the University of Durban-Westville in 1971, students wore black armbands in a protest over the banning of the campus newspaper.²³³ At the University of the Western Cape in 1970, the suspension of a student who refused to wear a tie to classes touched off a sit-in at the administration building, along with demands for an elected student council and better communication with the authorities. Bond observed. “The ‘tie-

²²⁹ Drum, October 22, 1972.

²³⁰ Episcopal Churchmen for Southern Africa, “A Report from South Africa on the Situation at Fort Hare,” op. cit., and Indicator South Africa, 1985.

²³¹ Race Relations Survey, 1969, pp.224-5.

²³² Race Relations Survey, 1969, pp.234-35.

²³³ Indicator South Africa, op.cit.

incident' was not crucial in itself, but enabled the students to stage a symbolic protest against the rigidity of university regulations. This was the first example of united UWC student protest and it portrayed the depth of tension with the student body.²³⁴ The precipitating factor, in this protest as in the others, served as a representation which brought students together against their powerlessness and the university's racist and authoritarian governance.

The incident which drew the most attention was the situation at Fort Hare in 1968, with which this chapter opened. The background to the protest began with the boycott of the installation of the new Rector in August of that year, which was followed by the painting of graffiti against both him and the government on university buildings. The administration interrogated 17 students about the graffiti, and most were subsequently questioned by the Special Branch as well. Angered by this, the students held a mass meeting, then staged a class boycott and sit-in at the administration building for a day. The administration's response – to ban campus the UCM, whom it held responsible for the action – raised the temperature further. On September 4, returning from a short school vacation, the students resumed their protest, and the administration's unyielding response led to the confrontation with police two days later described at the start of this chapter. Ultimately, 21 students were expelled, including Barney Pityana, who met Steven Biko after being sent home to Port Elizabeth.²³⁵

²³⁴ Bond, Colored Education Struggles in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.97.

²³⁵ The details in this account are drawn from Episcopal Churchmen for Southern Africa, A Report on the Situation at Fort Hare, *op. cit.*, *passim*. The protests followed a class boycott in 1966, which resulted in the expulsion of Thabo Mbeki and Sam Nolutshungu, among others, but on which few details are available.

Several aspects of the Fort Hare protests are noteworthy. The symbolic politicization of the events were grasped by all concerned: the students who identified the university with the governmental authorities who controlled it, as well as the administration and police in their response. Their symbolic response – boycotting classes and sitting in at the administration building – was similar to the widely-publicized student movements overseas at Columbia and the Sorbonne, which had taken place just months earlier. Second, the organization of the protest itself was striking, given the absence of an elected student council and the banning of the UCM on campus. However, while it was true that many of the key activists had belonged to UCM, the real basis of the leadership network on campus was the student clubs – chess, sport, religious, etc. – which the university could not eliminate without bringing extracurricular life to a halt altogether.²³⁶ The third striking feature about the students behavior is their solidarity as students. The initial trigger for the strike was the interrogation of the 17 students about the graffiti, which provoked such outrage among students in general that the majority were ready to protest. Even more striking is the fact that after police intervened on campus, even some of those who had hung back became so angry that they joined the protest, although it was clear that the action would be crushed and the protesters sent home or jailed. These dynamics would be replayed time and again in student action in coming years in South Africa.

The final area of legal public demonstrations – the rarest but also the largest – took place around the funerals of political figures, such as that of Imam Haron, also described in the introduction to the chapter. His was not the only such funeral: for instance, in 1970, the funeral of the popular but ambiguous Soweto leader James “Sofazonke” Mpanza, who

defied the authorities as squatter leader in the 1940s but collaborated with them on the UBC in the 1960s, attracted 20,000.²³⁷ But the greatest – and most politically charged – was that of Haron, Imam of the Stegman Road Mosque in Cape Town and an important figure the political life of the local colored Muslim community, both above ground and underground. A leader of the emergent Muslim Youth Movement, he also was involved in organizing religious study groups and protesting Group Areas removals, while distributing financial assistance to the families of political prisoners for the PAC and making contact with exiles from the group while abroad.²³⁸

The response to Haron's death in detention was particularly revealing of the emergent potential for urban protest. One of the most striking aspects after he was picked up by the Special Branch in May 1969 was the silence of the Islamic clergy and organizations on the subject, fearful of confronting the authorities. The void was filled by reports in the liberal English press and questions in parliament from the opposition MP, Catherine Taylor. (Ironically, his detention was not criticized by Muslim News, the community newspaper whose editorial board he chaired.) On September 27, 1969, after 128 days in detention without trial, Haron died, his body covered with the scars of his torture at the hands of the Security Police. Although no attempt whatever was made to mobilize via Islamic religious structures, his funeral procession two days later saw the largest political gathering in Cape Town between the march to Parliament after Sharpeville in 1960 and the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990. Moreover, contrary to

²³⁶ Interviews, No.1 Chris Mokoditso, February 19, 1991, and Isaacs.

²³⁷ Interview No.1, Leonard Mosala, Johannesburg, October 22, 1992.

Muslim tradition, the procession included many women and non-Muslims who joined to show their shared feelings of anger and grief. These continued to echo two years later, when a fast by a Protestant Minister, Rev. Thomas Wrangmore, at the Muslim shrine on Signal Hill to demand a judicial inquiry into the Imam's death drew a throng of 6,000 blacks and whites to hear him speak. Over the decade to come, funerals – events which the state could not repress without tearing deeply into the sinews of civil society – would become regular forums for popular political expression. Moreover, the combination of media and informal networks of popular solidarity with little or no formal organization would prove to be driving elements in urban popular protest in the decade to come.

Finally, unorganized outbursts of collective violence were also a constant feature of post-1965 South Africa. Despite the myth of cowed tranquillity which persists regarding this era, contemporary observers were under no illusions. Adam described "small-scale Sharpevilles" as "routine." He noted how, during one week in February 1970, the press reported three cases where police fired on African crowds. In the largest, African mineworkers visiting a farm on their day off confronted police with war dances and stones.²³⁹ Incidents also took place at sports matches, where excited spectators and players easily erupted into violence that at times spilled onto the field. These incidents could reflect inter-group rivalries between supporters of clubs with different ethnic, racial, or community bases, or the general state of tension within black communities.²⁴⁰ Sometimes sport riots

²³⁸ Details here and in the account which follows are drawn from Omar, The Impact of the Death in Detention of Imam Abdullah Haron, *op. cit.*, and Barney Desai and Charles Marney, The Killing of the Imam: South African Tyranny Defied by Courage and Faith (London, Quartet: 1978).

²³⁹ Heribert Adam, Modernizing Racial Discrimination: South Africa's Political Dynamics (Berkeley, University of California: 1971), pp.62-3.

had clear political overtones, as in the Kimberly rugby riot of 1969, when colored spectators went on the rampage during a match against a touring New Zealand team.²⁴¹ The most frequent source of violent protest was the everyday tensions of civil society: "the local and spontaneous manifestations generally arising from trivial and secondary causes, such as anger over working conditions, petty vexations, and provocations by the authorities; low quality of food or beer provided in government schools or municipal beer halls; and the unpopularity of particular officials. These spontaneous manifestations are much more frequent than organized ones, and often result in violence, rioting, and arson."²⁴² Ethnic and racial tension and competition could also result in unrest. Patrimonial and political disputes between clans supporting and opposing the "betterment Rangers" in Lebowa continued up to the early 1970s, while African-Indian suspicion in Durban remained high enough that the death of an African child in an Indian shop sparked a riot as late as 1974.²⁴³ In all these cases, immediate issues in daily life sparked unorganized, unconstrained micro-mobilization

²⁴⁰ Regarding the first, Bernard Magubane writes that inter-tribal football club faction fights "occur among people who are denied political, economic, and social rights. In such a situation, faction fights and factional organization may serve to let off steam and provide a kind of a war game for the energies of those who might otherwise engage in the more responsible control of public affairs." Sport and Politics in an Urban African Community: A Case Study of African Voluntary Organizations, MA Thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1963, p.28. As to the second, in May 1972, 300 angry spectators and official clashed after a soccer match in the Western Cape. The fight began when the linesman hit a spectator over the head with a flag and punched another opposing supporter. In September of that year, irate, drunken fans stormed the field, angry at the referee, during another soccer game in Cape Town, and police fired in response. Cape Herald, May 20, 1972, January 6, 1973.

²⁴¹ This was mentioned in a conversation with Elaine Salo, who grew up in Kimberly, and I found scattered references to it in newspaper files, but did not see a full account.

²⁴² van den Berghe, South Africa, op. cit., p.164.

²⁴³ Interview No.1, John Nkadameng, Johannesburg, July 27, 1992, Kogila Moodley, "The Ambivalence of Survival Politics in Indian-African Relations," in Bridglal Pachai, "Aliens in the Political Hierarchy," in Bridglal Pachai, ed., South Africa's Indians: The Evolution of a Minority (Washington, DC, University Press of America: 1979), p.451.

of members of primary social groups, expressing tensions ordinarily held back under South Africa's authoritarian regime.

The Ceres riot of 1970, with which this chapter opened, affords as good an example as any of the origins and consequences of this type of protest. Almost five months earlier, an earthquake had leveled hundreds of homes and left the small Western Cape town without water. Whites had been allocated pre-fab houses, but the town's colored majority still had to sleep in tents.²⁴⁴ Two weeks before the riot, a journalist described Ceres as a "discontented and unhappy town."²⁴⁵ Another grievance of longer standing was the racism and brutality of local police towards black residents. A particular manifestation was the "hit first – talk later" policy applied towards colored drunks, while inebriated whites were treated with indulgence.²⁴⁶ The events leading to the riot began with the arrest of a colored man for drunkenness around 7:45 p.m. on the night of Saturday, February 21. A crowd of around 30 gathered around the police van and refused to let the man be put inside, shouting, "Why are you arresting him?" A policeman hit one of the group with a nightstick, and arrested him, too.²⁴⁷ The police then marched both men off to the station, drawing the crowds of blacks and whites who faced off later than night. Three weeks after the riot, the government finally promised the colored residents of Ceres financial aid to repair their earthquake-damaged homes.²⁴⁸ Yet their victory proved bittersweet: three months later the

²⁴⁴ Cape Times, February 23, 1970, The Argus, January 19, 1970.

²⁴⁵ The Argus, February 5, 1970.

²⁴⁶ The Argus, July 24, 1970.

²⁴⁷ The Argus, July 24, 1970, August 12, 1970, March 12, 1971.

²⁴⁸ The Argus, March 14, 1970.

government announced that the entire colored population of Ceres would be moved five miles out of town, in line with the government's apartheid policies.²⁴⁹ Nine residents were ultimately sentenced to long jail terms for their part in the riot.

There were a number of noteworthy aspects of the Ceres incidents. One is the how general background of tension left by the earthquake and the specific grievances of police brutality were precipitated into a simulacrum by the arrest outside the Majestic Hotel. Another was the immediate process of micro-mobilization, in which onlookers were drawn in through the primary solidarity among friends and neighbors in a small community. The limitations of the events should also be noted. The lack of organization and leadership meant there was no campaigning on behalf of those charged or for change outside the official system. While the English-language press published some sympathetic reports, no organizational linkages outside Ceres developed. Nor did linkages develop between these and other issues facing Ceres, or between local coloreds and Africans around these issues. Finally, once the moment of rage was over, the cone of silence descended again on the community, and reporters found resistance to even discussing the moments when the community had screamed its hidden transcript aloud.

What is most significant about black protest and resistance in South Africa during the late 1960s and early 1970s was not its absence, but its failure to cohere into a larger-scale social movement. Each type had some of the requisites of such a movement, as noted in Chapter One, but lacked others essential to grow beyond the status of local movements, as the Figure 4.1 shows. Thus, legal protest, though it had the advantages of media access and public leadership, could not challenge the values and practices of the

regime. Cultural resistance, while indigenously led, was not a public phenomenon and was ambivalent in its relation to the regime. Everyday resistance was clearly subversive in intent but neither public nor formally led, and much the same applies to violent and aggressive behavior. Unorganized collective violence, while a challenge to the regime and recognized by the media, also lacked the leadership elite that could have turned a riot into a campaign. All these forms of protest and resistance also suffered from the fact that they were localized in nature, due to the regime's success in breaking down the national networks the nationalist movements had maintained among local elites. In other words, events during the 1960s showed that the grassroots possibility of mobilization remained, but that it never cohered into large-scale collective action. Instead, what was present were the disarticulated elements of what Touraine has called a "potential social movement."²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ The Argus, June 3, 1970.

²⁵⁰ Alain Touraine, The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1981).

Figure 4.1: Elements of Disarticulated Social Movements in Protest Activity

	Rejects Regime Values	Public Sphere Access	Formal Elite
Legalistic Protest	No	Yes	Yes
Cultural Resistance	Yes/ No	No	Yes
Everyday Resistance	Yes	No	No
Violence/ Aggression	Yes	No	No
Unorganized Collective Violence	Yes	Yes	No

CONCLUSION

For black South Africans the years from 1965 to 1971 were far from a time of silence, even if they were rarely punctuated by the sort of large-scale protest which marked earlier and later eras. The growth of urbanization and new communications institutions created both new fields within which new identities could be constructed and new sources of racial tension and conflict for those working or studying within them. It was in these circumstances that Steven Biko and his friends and peers formed SASO and began to sound out the inversionary discourse of Black Consciousness. This discourse itself represented a re-working of the hidden transcripts which circulated within the networks submerged in

black South African neighborhoods, schools, and streets. At the same time, blacks were forming new urban, national, and youth identities which arched above the persistent but parochial identities tied to the past and reinforced by apartheid. These identities and networks in turn were the foundation-stone of almost constant small-scale, private and occasional large-scale, public resistance to the regime. They were the foundation-stone of a process of social mobilization led by the Black Consciousness Movement against the regime through discursive competition with the pro-regime mobilizing efforts chronicled in Chapter Three.

The structuralist approaches dominant in the literature on this period tend to explain these developments quite differently or to obscure them altogether. In general, they do not focus on change in values or identities among black South Africans; at most the issue is one of change in the political opportunities open to them, reflecting change in the class structure and the growth of new communications institutions. Yet the mere existence of newspapers, musical and theatrical groups, religious or sporting organizations, schools and the like did not ensure by themselves the formation of new collective identities. Rather there were two other crucial components in the process: the active search by black South Africans for discourses and practices resonant with their experiences among those proposed by these groups, and the ways those who exposed themselves to them spread their ideas among their own primary social networks. It was anything but a random process: people sought out discourses and practices that expressed what they felt and held back, including their own ambivalence and contradictions. Structuralist approaches would explain the protests described here through the grievances complained of, emphasizing increasing social strain or political opportunities, and would look to institutional networks to explain participation.

But the incidents of resistance and protest described here did not reflect growing economic strain or political opportunity: they occurred at a time of increasing if unequally shared prosperity and when South Africa's white-controlled regime was at its most repressive. While limited political opportunities tended to shift protest towards more covert forms, there is no evidence that the more overt forms – such as resistance to removals, student protests, or riots – occurred in circumstances where there was any reason to believe that chances for successful outcomes were particularly great. Rather, their outbreak reflected moral and identity considerations: the unpredictable moment in which a situation was perceived as a simulacrum for the larger society, bringing to bear all the suppressed emotions and anger held back in normal circumstances. Indeed, the fact that participation at times grew in the face of repression is further evidence that individual rational choice cannot be seen as the principal explanation of participation, even if it helps to explain the rarity of participation. The very absence of formal organization in most protest in this period underlines the roles of other drivers for protest, both local identities and broader ones.

So it was that between the mid-1960s and the early 1970s, the seeds of the crisis that would shake the South African regime in succeeding years were sown. During this period we can trace the emergence of new identities on the fault lines which later gave rise to explosive conflict with the regime: urban vs. rural, national vs. parochial, black vs. white, youth vs. elders, and school vs. street. While these emerged among those connected to new communications institutions in civil society, they were also the product of the popular discourse through which black South Africans sought to understand their changing society and integrate its new elements with the old. This syncretic understanding, in which the new

identities were incorporated atop the old rather than simply overriding them, is evidence that the course the process took was the product of collective human agency instead of the mechanical consequence of structural change. The new discourses themselves were the produce of the emergence of urban black communities under the apartheid regime, with new micro-social networks as well as macro-social connections being created by their residents. Dissident parts of these networks, frustrated by white control of the black-oriented institutions in which they worked, studied, and prayed, became starting points for the growth of the black-run organizations that would form the core of the Black Consciousness Movement. The development of that movement, its growing success against its opponents, and the emergence of the regime crisis that resulted – form the subjects of the next chapter.

**Civil Society vs. the State:
Identity, Institutions, and the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa**

VOLUME II

**A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of
Yale University
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

**by
Craig Russell Charney**

Dissertation Director: William Foltz

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Chapter Five

THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIME CRISIS: The Black Consciousness Movement, Institutional Struggles, and Public Discourse, 1972-1976

SASO President Henry Isaacs faced a packed stadium in Cape Town on the afternoon of Sunday, July 8, 1973. There had never been a gathering like it in South Africa: 12,000 colored people and Africans, young and old, answered his call for solidarity with student protesters from the University of the Western Cape. Beside him, eight other speakers - the cream of black leadership in the country, inside and outside "the system" - denounced apartheid in ringing terms. Chief Mangosuthu (Gatsha) Buthelezi, head of the KwaZulu homeland, declared, "We are living in a society structured on real violence - with men of color at the receiving end." Sonny Leon of the Labor Party demanded, "Are you going to stand firm in the struggle for political, academic, and economic freedom?" Sociologist Fatima Meer, a friend of ANC leader Nelson Mandela, told the crowd that "separate development is separation for the purposes of effective domination," and Dr. Jakes Gerwel, a UWC lecturer sympathetic to Black Consciousness, condemned the "complete neglect of black history and culture" in education. The crowd applauded wildly, waved signs, and raised fists in Black Power salutes. At the end of the four-hour meeting, parents, neighbors, friends, and younger brothers and sisters stood and joined the students in singing, "Freedom isn't free, you've got to pay the price." A colored journalist observed that the speakers and audience both believed that "the Black

people's salvation lies in their solidarity which in turn can come about only through Black Consciousness."¹

The development of the regime crisis in South Africa in the mid-1970s was driven by the development of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and the impact of its organization and discourse on black civil and political society. After it emerged on university campuses, its most important contributions were to articulate a novel identity frame for blacks – which raised the hidden transcripts of popular grievance to the public status of inversionary discourse – and to reconstitute black oppositional elites nationally – in civil society and especially among the young. The BCM did this through novel approaches, drawing on New Left and Third World thinkers who stressed mass conscientization, black solidarity, and the creation of an autonomous black civil society. Members of these BC networks, in turn, struggled to co-opt three key institutions for social communications – the university, the church, and the press – dramatically re-opening the public sphere in the process. After students, church people, and journalists raised their voices, a new oppositional discourse could be heard around the land for the first time in a decade. The result was a dramatic change in the political and social discourse to which urban blacks were exposed. The black press was re-politicized and spoke the language of BC; so did black dramatists and poets. Even the movement's opponents were forced to echo its terminology, acknowledging its hegemony in public opinion even as they sought to compete with it. And black paid attention: exposure to Black Consciousness ideas and organization had an electric impact on township opinion.

¹ This description is based on accounts in the Rand Daily Mail, July 9, 1973, Muslim News, July 13, 1973, Cape Herald, July 14, 1973, and Sunday Times, July 15, 1973.

The case of the Black Consciousness Movement is an illustration of the linkages between the development of opposition movements in civil society and the development of crisis in authoritarian regimes. This chapter focuses on the forces driving the process, the three independent variables of particular concern in our account. The first of these is the growth of social movement organization, which occurs as circles of dissent form into networks of opposition within the free spaces available in civil society. They formulate an inversionary discourse that challenges the values and discourse of the regime, based on the common experience of subordination and its connection to a collective narrative of domination and overcoming, drawing strategies and tactics from it. Public communication institutions are among the most potent of the free spaces touched, because they reach mass audiences, constitute elite networks, and possess substantial resources. Thus, the second major factor involved in movement development is struggles over the discursive institutions of dominated groups. The effort to co-opt these institutions is central to a bid to establish the autonomy of civil society from the regime. But the amorphous basis of the movement – based more on personal ties and shared ideas than formal structures – makes it difficult for even a repressive state to combat. The third key factor is the change which occurs in the public sphere as the movement develops and its discourse spreads. The public sphere is filled by a new discourse, linking the grievances felt at mass level to the larger political struggle, challenging the regime at every turn. The movement becomes the interlocutor of the power – in every newspaper article, play, poem, even in efforts to co-opt its language. In these ways, the development of an oppositional mass movement awakens public opinion even as it wins over

institutional power bases. In this way, a basis forms for a potent if unconventional opposition, based in small formal organizations but so deeply rooted in the institutions and grassroots networks of the society that it is impossible to crush

I. THE TERRAIN OF CHANGE: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

The first half of the 1970s witnessed important developments inside and outside South Africa that changed the context in which internal opposition to the regime had to work. Anti-colonial wars engulfed the neighboring white-ruled colonies, while a decade of prodigious economic growth came to an end. Social control frayed, as blacks refused to stay put where segregation law required. Divisions appeared among the white elite and population. The economic factors were common to new industrial countries buffeted by the economic crisis of 1973; the others resulted from Southern Africa's racial order. All affected the terrain on which social movements would operate.

The most dramatic developments took place over the borders, as African guerrillas breached the *cordon sanitaire* of white-ruled territories around South Africa. In 1971, the South West African People's Organization launched its low-level but costly war against South African occupation of Namibia. Two years later, the decisive phase of the war for Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) began. In 1974, Mozambique's radical FRELIMO guerrillas won their independence from Portugal. The greatest shock of all came in Angola in early 1976, where a South African army aiming to install the UNITA-FNLA

alliance in power was defeated by Cuban troops backing the newly-independent Marxist MPLA government.

The economic boom, which had lasted since the mid-1960s, was followed in the early 1970s by soaring prices and wages, then a drop into recession in 1975. Real growth ran at a rapid 5% in 1972/73 and 1973/74, but it slipped to 3% in 1974/75, before falling to 1% in 1975/76. But inflation surged above 10% in 1973 and stayed there. Macro-economic causes included the 1973 oil shock, surplus liquidity from soaring gold prices, and overheating due to infrastructural spending. But there were also belated gains in black wages, thanks partly to skills shortages created in part by apartheid, as well as workers' collective action. Indeed, in 1973, material optimism was widespread: 42% of Sowetans expected to be better off in a year, just 18% to be worse off. Despite the surge in inflation, average black household incomes rose from 1973 to 1975 – up 26% in real terms in Soweto, for instance. Some two-thirds of urban blacks country-wide reported in a survey that their household incomes had kept up with or stayed ahead of inflation over that period. The young, well-to-do, and better-educated blacks – the new middle classes and literate working class – scored the greatest gains, while older, poorer, less-educated blacks lost ground. But the slowdown to growth recession darkened the economic mood: by late 1975, 41% of Sowetans expected to be worse off in a year, just 20% better off.²

Even as wages rose, state regulation of black movement and residence began to break down, as enforcement of the pass laws declined and informal settlements mushroomed around the cities. Although growing numbers of blacks were moving to the cities in defiance of the pass laws, prosecutions for breaking those laws fell from 615,825

² All figures are from Markinor Homeland Survey, QUOTSO 75 (Johannesburg, 1975), pp.11-15.

in 1971-72 to 386,414 in 1974-75. Meanwhile, blacks who could not obtain township houses began to create arcs of shack settlements around the big cities. Near Cape Town, their battles against government bulldozers put the names of Unibell, Modderdam, and, above all, Crossroads on front pages around the world.³ The official freeze on building for Africans in “white” South Africa led others seeking homes to put up shacks in township backyards.

Last, but not least, the white elite and population began to split over how to manage the tensions facing the regime. Much of the English-speaking minority drifted behind the traditionally Afrikaans National Party in the 1974 whites-only election, while a left-wing fringe moved towards the Progressive Party.⁴ Some intellectuals in the universities, press, and churches sympathized with Black Consciousness, though they had little influence in the larger white community.⁵ These divisions were paralleled in the Afrikaans-speaking majority of the whites by the cracks which emerged between so-called *verligte* (“enlightened”) and *verkrampste* (“narrow”) factions over social and economic issues (petty apartheid, segregated sport, colored-Afrikaner relations, and black advancement in education and the workplace).⁶ The divisions forced Prime Minister

³ See The World, April 9, 1976, Cape Herald, March 13, 1976, and Die Burger, July 28, 1973, along with Josette Cole, Crossroads: The Politics of Reform and Repression, 1976-1986 (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1987).

⁴ See Theodor Hanf, South Africa: The Prospect for Peaceful Change: An Empirical Inquiry into the Possibility of Democratic Conflict Regulation (London, Rex Colling: 1981) (data on white attitudes).

⁵ In the Students for Social Democracy campaign of 1974, leftist candidates backed by students and intellectuals ran in several of the country’s most liberal white areas but won negligible support.

⁶ See Hennie Serfontein, Die Verkrampste Aanslag, (Cape Town, Human and Rousseau: 1970) and Dan O’Meara, Forty Wasted Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994 (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1996), chapter 8. But the terms were relative: even the repressive Justice Minister James Kruger was counted a “*verligte*.”

John Vorster to balance delicately between the two camps. This led him, in early 1976, to name Andries Treurnicht as Deputy Minister in charge of “Bantu Education” (African schooling), setting the stage for a test of wills between the growing black social movements and the hardest of the regime’s hard-liners. Those hard-liners were behind another important event planned for October 1976: the declaration by Pretoria of the “independence” of the Transkei, which would strip 4-million black South Africans of their citizenship and menace the rest with the same fate.

The implications of these factors for the developing social movements among black South Africans were profound. They were alive to the implications of spreading anti-colonial warfare around the region, and how to respond became an issue for the press, church, and university. Relative prosperity bred economic optimism in the early 1970s among better-educated workers and the new middle classes, while inflation also created economic stress for older, more traditional blacks, and economic hope was dashed by the recession of 1975. The battle for freer migration and settlement politicized housing and squatter removal, while presaging diminishing state control over the urban black population. Finally, the splits among whites left the regime paralyzed, just as the political initiative shifted to blacks.

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT

In the early and mid-1970s, the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) became the driving force of black political and civil society in South Africa. Yet it did this in a way different from that of the political parties and groups of earlier generations. The BCM's key contribution was its narrative work, popularizing a new framework of black identity that redefined South African politics for blacks. This new ontology, building on the hidden transcripts of oppression blacks ordinarily choked back, inverted the regime's legitimating discourse while suggesting strategy and tactics for a politics of civil society. The BCM's other major achievement was to use this discourse to bring together the elite networks of black civil society. While their formal organizational ties to the BCM were often diffuse, it incorporated most of the country's urban black leadership into a consensus against the regime. At the grassroots, BCM affiliates were weakly organized, amid a welter of competing groups (with the important exception of school pupils and youth). But despite its lack of strong mass structures, as well many blows from state repression, by 1976 the BCM had succeeded in injecting its ideas into the leading institutions and individuals of black civil and political society. It had also defined a position in opposition to the bantustan and township politicians who proclaimed their opposition to apartheid, and its leadership was increasingly sympathetic, and connected, to the re-emergent underground nationalist movements, particularly the ANC.

A. The Discourse of Black Consciousness

The ideology of the Black Consciousness Movement had been elaborated in two phases – first incidentally, as part of the process which led to the formation of SASO from 1966 to 1968, then more deliberately by Biko's and his colleagues in the organization's formative years from 1969 to 1971, through their writings, debates, conferences, and personal discussions. They drew on a cosmopolitan mix of sources, including writers on African nationalism and culture, the American Black Power movement, and other New Left thinkers in the Third World. The independence-era leaders of Africa in the 1960s had been heroes for Biko and his friends in high school.⁷ At university, they also came under the spell of the Negritude writers of West Africa and the West Indies, such as Leopold Senghor and Aime Cesaire, who emphasized the primacy of culture and asserted black self-worth.⁸ The Black Consciousness activists were also electrified by the emergence of the Black Power movement in the US. launched, like SASO, when their American peers in the Student Non-Violent Co-

⁷ Gail Gerhart, Interview with Stephen Biko, Durban, October 24, 1972.

⁸ Biko's own writings – which achieved canonical status in Black Consciousness circles – drew on Leopold Senghor's *Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poesie Negre et Malgache* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France: 1948) with its verse extolling Africa and its introduction by Jean-Paul Sartre suggesting that a dialectic of race fit Africa better than a Marxist dialectic of class, and on Aime Cesaire, the black Martinique poet who quit the French Communist Party in frustration at its insensitivity to blacks, as well as on Negritude concepts and quotes from African leaders in Kenneth Kaunda's *A Humanist in Africa*. Sartre's formulation, ("thesis white racism, antithesis black solidarity, synthesis non-racialism" was repeatedly quoted without attribution by Biko in his writings to support his argument that black solidarity was not racism and was the right response to white domination: see *I Write What I Like* (London, Bowerdean Press: 1978) pp.54, 90. He also cited Cesaire's "Letter of Resignation from the French Communist Party," see "White Racism and Black Consciousness," *I Write What I Like* op. cit., p.67, and was alternately intrigued by and skeptical of Cesaire's claim that there will be "room for all" (black and white) "at the rendez-vous of victory", *ibid.*, pp.60, 77, 79. Biko quotes or closely paraphrases Kaunda's description of Negritude (*A*

Ordinating Committee (SNCC) also broke with their white colleagues. The Black Consciousness activists were profoundly influenced by the writings of Stokely Carmichael, Charles Hamilton, and the theologian James Cone; while American blacks dreamed of self-determination, Biko and his colleagues set out to attain it.⁹ However, Black Power was only one of the New Left influences on the BCM, which also drew on other Third World thinkers to whom the young activists gained exposure, including Frantz Fanon, who saw the colonized as suffering from an inferiority complex and revolutionary violence as the cure, and Paolo Freire, who viewed psychological liberation as preceding political liberation and urged community organizing through literacy campaigns.¹⁰ Within all these intellectual tendencies, the readings of the Black Consciousness core group tended to examine a few texts in depth rather than display intellectual breadth, reflecting the difficulty in coming by radical literature under heavy

Humanist in Africa, *op. cit.*, check pages), see I Write What I Like, *op. cit.*, p.44, 46, 71, as well as lifting a quote (p.32). from Sekou Toure used in a chapter frontspiece in Frantz Fanon's Wretched of the Earth.

⁹ The single most important programmatic influence on the BCM was Black Power, written by the former Student Non-Violent Co-Ordinating Committee leader Stokely Carmichael and black political scientist William Hamilton, which called for black autonomy and solidarity as a precondition for dealing with white power. Stokely Carmichael and William V. Hamilton III, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America (New York, Vintage: 1967). Biko cites their work with and without attribution, see I Write What I Like, *op. cit.* Biko also relies on their view that racism is the use of power by a racial group to subjugate another, and that the powerless (blacks) cannot therefore be racist, on behalf of his argument that Black Consciousness is not racism. *Ibid.* p.25. The writings of the American Black theologian James Cone, his Black Theology and Black Power, (San Francisco, Harper & Row: 1989), became the touchstone of the Black Theology movement. See Biko, "The Church as Seen by a Young Layman", I Write What I Like, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, (New York, Grove Press: 1963) is cited or paraphrased by Biko, I Write What I Like, *op. cit.*, pp.29, 69, 72. Along with underpinnings for the movement's concepts, the catch-phrase of "conscientization" is drawn from Paolo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York, Penguin Books: 1972) and both Biko and Pityana took classes in Freirian literacy techniques with Catholic lay worker Ann Hope in 1971 (Interview, Ann Hope, Cape Town, July 7, 1991). Indeed, the movement's own appellation – Black Consciousness – reflects its debt to Freire, as well as tactical caution in the repressive South African context which made it seem unwise to refer to it as "Black Power." (Interviews, Henry Isaacs, Washington, DC, September 23, 1989.

censorship.¹¹ Nonetheless, Biko and the other young activists came up with the most original and compelling synthesis of political ideas which black South Africans had yet produced.

While they drew on overseas ideas, the Black Consciousness thinkers interpreted them in the light of South Africa's own black political traditions, as well as their own lives stories. The country's political traditions were passed on by fellow students, family members, or friends who had participated in the older political movements.¹² At the same time, the activists read the few authors in print on the topic – notably Edward Roux, the ex-Communist critic of Moscow on the Communist Party and ANC – and sought out writings by South African black nationalists of earlier eras from scholars collecting them

¹¹ The readings entered South Africa by tortuous routes. American black writings were sent by US sympathizers with visiting American students or sailors, or obtained in some cases from a sympathetic source at the US Information Agency office. Much of the work on Negritude and Sartre must have come from Richard Turner, a Natal University lecturer and friend of Biko's who had recently completed a doctorate at the Sorbonne on Sartre's Marxism (Personal discussions, Edward Webster, Johannesburg). Radical Catholic priest Colin Collins brought back a copy of Freire's *Pedagogy* after visiting colleagues in Latin America, and after its banning the UCM mimeographed sections of the book and circulated them country-wide (Interview, Alan Mabin, New Haven, 1989). Eventually SASO built up its own "library" with writings by well-known African and Third World authors, but its secret nature and the limited access imposed by security considerations and the difficulty of circulating books around the country meant that only a small proportion its members – chiefly its leaders – had much access to them (Thomas Karis and Gail Gerhart, eds. *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990*, vol. 5, *Nadir and Resurgence, 1964-1979* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press: 1997).

¹² For instance, Pityana had joined a study group of the ANC-aligned African Students Association while at Lovedale (Lindy Wilson, "Steve Biko: A Life," in Barney Pityana et. al., eds., *Bounds of Possibility*, (Cape Town, David Philip: 1991). Aubrey Mokoape, one of Biko's friends at UNNE, was the son of an ANC member and had himself belonged to the PAC (Interview, Aubrey Mokoape, Durban, September 1992; Strini Moodley, who was becoming involved in political theater circles at UDW, was the son of an SACP-linked trade unionist (Interview, Moodley, Durban, September 7, 1992); and Biko himself was the brother and friend of PAC activists. Unity movement ideology – particularly non-participation in government institutions (including graduation boycotts at "non-white" institutions) and hostility to liberals, also was heard from on the campuses in the Western Cape, at Fort Hare, and in Durban (Interview, Henry Isaacs, Washington, DC, September 1989, Interview, Johnny Issel, Cape Town, June 4, 1991, Interview, Chris Mokoditso, Johannesburg, 1991, and Leo Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie* (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1965).

for publication.¹³ Yet for those constructing the Black Consciousness account of South African society, personal experience of racism and oppression had done far more to shape their ideas than anything they had read. It is striking that without exception, Black Consciousness activists said their politicization grew out of their own encounters with racial inequality and injustice under apartheid. It is this background that ensured that Black Consciousness discourse would parallel the hidden transcripts of rank-and-file blacks, because it was from this stratum that the student activists emerged and their lives and resentments which the BC activists shared. Indeed, in expounding their ideas, Biko and his friends began from common experiences and feelings which normally found no public outlet, while placing them in a broader context, which makes it easier to understand why other blacks responded so immediately and powerfully to their mere mention.¹⁴ At the same time, it clarifies how the activists saw themselves. Though they were seeking ways to change the regime, they felt they were engaged in a process of self-discovery, a search for truth – a far cry from the image of the rationally calculating “political entrepreneur.”

If the result of the Black Consciousness Movement seems above all to be “words, words, words,” their significance lies in the elaboration of a new identity frame for black

¹³ Edward Roux, Time Longer than Rope: A History of the Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa (Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press: 1964) is mentioned as an influence by Biko (Gerhart Interview, Biko).

¹⁴ In this context, it enjoyed what Apter terms “a self-evident logic of freedom and equity;” David Apter, “Democracy and Emancipatory Movements: Notes for a Theory of Inversionary Discourse,” Development and Change, vol.23 (1992). It can also be seen as a partial public declaration of a hidden transcript, and invested with the power of such repressed statements. James Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1990).

South Africans.¹⁵ This frame can be analyzed in terms of four broad categories of thought:

- the “meta-narrative” or “long story,” the master narrative that gives a broad, teleological sense to historical process;
- the “ontological” or “intermediate story,” which gives an account of the opposing social actors;
- the “conceptual” or “short story,” which describes the immediate context and terrain of struggle; and
- the “public” or “expressive story,” which represents the narratives attached to cultural and institutional establishments.

At each levels, the narrative work done by the movement was to invert the existing discourse of power, while expressing ideas privately voiced by ordinary blacks and connecting them to a broader ideology. Thus, for each, we can establish the relationship between the BC narrative (“inversionary discourse,” in Apter’s phrase), its roots in “hidden transcripts,” the strategic implications, and the tactics derived from the strategy. (See Figure 5.1.) This will chiefly draw on the writings of Stephen Biko as the movement’s leading thinker. However, while this analysis draws on BCM documents

¹⁵ The concept of “identity frame” used here is borrowed from Snow and Benson (CITE). However, rather than following their analysis of the emergence of such a shared frame through “frame alignment processes,” this chapter analyzes the discursive and conceptual categories of the Black Consciousness frame, drawing on the work of David Apter (“Yena’an and the Narrative Reconstruction of Reality, *Daedalus*, Spring 1993, vol. 122), Margaret Somers and Gloria Gibson, “Reclaiming the Epistemological ‘Other’: Narrative and the Social Constitution of Identity, in J. Craig Calhoun, ed, *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (Oxford, Blackwell’s: 1994), and James Scott, *Domination, op. cit.*

Figure 5.1: The Structure of the Black Consciousness Narrative

Categories:	Narrative/ Framing Approach/ Discourse (Hidden Transcript)	Strategy	Tactics
Somers & / Apter & Johnson / Scott Meta- / Long Narrative/ Story	National / Conquest Liberation / & Dispos- & True / session Humanity //(pol,cult,econ) (HT: Popular memory of loss, longing for change)	Psychological, then Physical Liberation	1) concentrate on cultural/public sphere initially 2) growing revolutionary orientation
Onto- /Intermediate logical/ Story	Redefinition / White of Blackness Hegemony (HT: Common experience of white domination)	Black Solidarity	1) black autonomy / self-determination 2) conscientization of blacks
Conceptual / Short / Story	Rejection of / Divide & Institutionalised - / Rule: Racism / in-System / politics (HT: Experience of bantustan and township politics)	Autonomous Black Civil Society	1) co-opt or replace civil society institutions 2) unite black elite outside of gov- created bodies
Public / Hidden / transcript	Affirming /Inferiority Black /Complex, Fear & Tradition / Repressed Rage (HT: Revival of tradition, assertion of worth, dehumanization, anger and fear)	Affirm Tradition, Challenge Fear	1) reassert and reshape black tradition 2) ignore restriction, avoid unnecessary confrontation

and their underlying concepts, this demonstration of their coherence is retrospective; while the specific individual links mentioned all figured prominently in Black Consciousness thought, no single document produced by Biko or anyone in the movement ever spelled them out in this way. The meta-narrative of Black Consciousness concerned the attainment of national liberation and “true humanity,” in Biko’s memorable phrase. While he sought a free and democratic society, it was to be dominated by the black majority, enshrining black dignity, pride, values, and solidarity; he rejected “white man’s integration – an integration based on exploitative values.”¹⁶ This ideal, black-controlled society was an inversion of the state of conquest and dispossession (political, cultural, and economic) in which black South Africans found themselves. It drew on hidden transcripts of ordinary blacks – on popular memories of dispossession and longings for change.¹⁷ Oppression was seen first as internalized – mental and cultural – and only then as political and institutional. From a strategic viewpoint, therefore, the response was first “psychological” and then “physical liberation.”¹⁸ The tactical consequences were an initial focus on the cultural and intellectual – or, in the broadest sense, on re-opening the public sphere to assertions of black views and values. (“The first step is to make the

¹⁶ Stephen Biko, “Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity,” in I Write What I Like, *op. cit.*, p.91

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Black Consciousness documents from the early- to-mid 70s frequently refer to liberation from “psychological and physical oppression” as the aim of the movement. “SASO is a black student organization working for the liberation of the black man first from psychological oppression by themselves through inferiority complex and secondly from the physical one accruing out of living in a white racist society” (Resolution at the 1971 General Students Council, cited in Biko, I Write What I Like, *op. cit.*, p.100) See also see the statements announcing the formation of the Black People’s Convention (Black Review, 1972), p.11, or the National Youth Organization (Black Review, 1973), p.64, or the comments of SASO president Muntu Myeza at the 1974 General Student’s council that the “first phase was psychological, second phase practical implementation of BC” (SASO Trial Documents, Microfilm Reel 2, Carter-Karis-Gerhart collection, University Microfilms).

black man come to himself; to pump life back into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth.”¹⁹ This was followed, from 1973 on, by an increasingly overt orientation towards revolutionary action, the unmistakable meaning of “physical liberation.”²⁰

At the ontological level, the cardinal point of Black Consciousness was the “redefinition of blackness”: black meant not just African but all three “non-white” groups, Africans, Indians, and coloreds – anyone who was oppressed because of their race. “Being black is not a matter of pigmentation – being black is a matter of mental attitude.” Although it clashed with the racially defined “common sense” of South Africans, this point was tirelessly driven home by Biko and the other exponents of Black Consciousness. To make the central ontological category “black” in this sense inverted white hegemony – in which whiteness was the norm – as well as the subordinate places it assigned to coloreds and Indians. “We are all oppressed by the same system; that we are oppressed to varying degrees is a deliberate design to stratify us.”²¹ The root of the concept lay in the hidden transcripts all blacks possessed of their experience of white domination in their own lives. Strategically, it suggested an emphasis on black solidarity

¹⁹ Stephen Biko, “We Blacks,” *I Write What I Like, op. cit.*, p.29. Elsewhere, Biko took up James Brown’s refrain, “Say it loud, I’m black and I’m proud!” “Some African Cultural Concepts,” *ibid.*, p.46

²⁰ Sam Nolutshungu, who examined BC documents closely and enjoyed the confidence of activists, concluded that “although ‘physical liberation’ was never publicly defined, most SASO activists meant by it, and thought they were clearly understood by their followers to imply, an armed struggle.” He added that “in the inner core of SASO’s leadership it has always been understood that conscientization would proceed to about 1973, when the second phase of mobilizing and training for armed struggle would occur” *Changing South Africa* (Manchester, Manchester University Press: 1983), pp.171-2, 182.

²¹ Stephen Biko, “The Definition of Black Consciousness,” *I Write What I Like, op. cit.*, pp.48, 52.

in order to negate white hegemony. From a tactical standpoint, Biko drew out two major implications: 1) black autonomy to achieve black solidarity; this meant unity based on the independence of blacks leaders and groups from both the state and white liberals²² and 2) the importance of “conscientization” for black solidarity – at its most basic, the diffusion of the new definition of blackness; in a broader sense the diffusion of a shared political outlook based on the tenets of Black Consciousness among blacks.²³ Biko cited approvingly Stokely Carmichael’s dictum that “blacks must close ranks before they enter the open society.”²⁴

In conceptual terms, the focus of the Black Consciousness discourse is rejection of institutionalized racism, a turn away from the apartheid regime’s politics of divide-and-rule towards the black majority and its ethnic political institutions (or “politics within the System,” as the BCM described it). Biko wrote that the bantustan leaders “can shout their lungs out trying to speak to Pretoria through the phony telephone (of official institutions). No one is listening in Pretoria because the telephone is a toy.”²⁵ This drew upon the hostility to patronage- and ethnically-based homeland and township politics felt by many – though far from all - educated urban blacks.²⁶ Yet white liberal institutions were no

²² Thus even at the founding of SASO in 1969 Biko wrote, “The blacks are tired of standing at the touchlines to witness a game that they should be playing. They want to do things for themselves and all by themselves.” “Letter to SRC Presidents,” in *I Write What I Like*, *op. cit.*, p.15

²³ Biko wrote, “Black Consciousness is an attitude of mind and a way of life.” “Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity,” *ibid.*, p.91.

²⁴ Biko, *I Write What I Like*, *op. cit.*

²⁵ Biko, “Let’s Talk About Bantustans,” *ibid.*, p.85.

²⁶ Indeed, the energy Black Consciousness leaders placed into their campaigns against government-created institutions reflected the breadth of their opponent’s support: Biko himself acknowledged in 1971 that

better: while disagreeing on detail, most still accepted the principle of white supremacy, and all sapped blacks' initiative and reinforced their sense of inferiority. If the political outlets offered by the white regime and white liberals were to be shunned, then the only strategic alternative available was the formation of an autonomous black civil society, whose institutions would be black-staffed and black-run. To achieve this, in turn, two tactics followed: co-opting existing institutions of black civil society ("infiltrative politics") or establishing alternatives, while working to build and bring black elites together outside the ambit of official government bodies to form an autonomous black leadership force.²⁷ Biko summed this up in the phrase that became a trademark of the BCM: "Black man, you are on your own!"

Finally, the public level of the Black Consciousness narrative centered on the affirmation of black traditions and human worth. Drawing on the legacy of Negritude, Biko argued that African culture, unlike Western, was inherently humanistic: "One of the most fundamental aspects of our culture is the importance we attach to Man. Ours has always been a Man-centered society."²⁸ This was the inversion of the inferiority complex regarding themselves and their culture and the constant sense of repressed rage at their condition which flowed from white domination. It built upon the combination at popular level of the revival of tradition, assertions of self-worth and endurance, and a sense of fear and lack of self-confidence. The strategic consequences of these ideas were to affirm

"what in fact is happening is that the black world is beginning to be completely fragmented and that people are beginning to talk sectional politics." Biko, "Fragmentation of the Black Resistance," *ibid.*, p.36.

²⁷ Biko discusses this in connection with the Church in "The Church as Seen by a Young Layman," *ibid.*, in which he suggests that the "most important area to which we should perhaps direct ourselves is gaining the control that is rightfully ours within these churches", p.58.

²⁸ Biko, "Some African Cultural Concepts," in *I Write What I Like, op. cit.*, p.41.

tradition and challenge fear. At a tactical level, this led the BCM to seek both to reassert and reshape black cultural traditions (“We must relate the past to the present and demonstrate a historical evolution of a modern black man”)²⁹ and to ignore restrictions and combat fear (“The most important thing is to challenge fear – find exact Biko quote”).³⁰

Together, these narrative elements produced by the Black Consciousness Movement formed a new identity frame for blacks, one which contrasted sharply with that shared by the state and the older political movements during their era of legality before 1960. The tenets of Black Consciousness directly challenged the legitimacy of the regime, particularly the principles of traditionalism and white superiority on which it rested. Yet they likewise rejected what had been the dominant elements of legal black political opposition – integration, assimilation, moderation, participation, and inter-racial co-operation. Although it could not be trumpeted, for obvious reasons, the Black Consciousness perspective also approved revolution and violence against the state, another sharp contrast with both official politics and that of the previous generation.³¹

²⁹ Biko, “Black Consciousness and the Quest,” *op. cit.*, p.95.

³⁰ However, while they tried to act as if free, SASO members made a point – particularly in the organization’s early years, conscious of its vulnerability – of avoiding unnecessary confrontations, which SASO members referred to as “NUSAS-style protest politics,” attracting repression while achieving little.

³¹ “It was always widely recognized by SASO-BPC militants ... that no organization engaged in violent subversion could long survive to carry on propaganda inside the country against collaboration with apartheid South Africa. But it was equally widely understood that the desired overthrow of apartheid could not be brought about by public non-subversive politics and the wizardry of consciousness, without the intervention of the nationalist movements. ... BC militants were always conscious of an impending armed confrontation.” Sam Nolutshungu, *Changing South Africa: Political Considerations* (Manchester, Manchester University Press: 1982), pp.180-1. Though this was never formally acknowledged as movement policy, it did become increasingly overt by the mid-Seventies, as can be seen by numerous statements made by important BC figures in that era. For instance: at a SASO meeting at Turfloop in September 1974, the organization’s Commission on Bantustans recommended that people in rural areas

Indeed, Black Consciousness created a new moral order, one in which those honored by the regime were denounced as sellouts or “non-whites,” while those officially despised as “savages” and “terrorists” were revered as “heroes” and “freedom fighters.”³² Ironically, the public face the BCM had to adopt to survive – culturally-oriented, verbally aggressive, but avoiding physical confrontation – let hostile commentators portray it as soulful, elitist dilettantes out of touch with the masses.³³ In fact, however, the ideological achievement of the Black Consciousness Movement was to devise a theory and strategy for creating an opposition social movement under the repressive conditions of apartheid South Africa, in a language that gave it a profound resonance to both black elites and masses.

should be “conscientized to help freedom fighters.” At a SASO rally there days later a speaker said that Frelimo fought in Mozambique and “we should also fight for our own liberation.” SASO President Muntu Myeza told colleagues in private in March 1974 that blacks would “leave the country to obtain arms and return to fight against the whites.” SASO Permanent Organizer Patrick Lekota was alleged to have declared at a Turfloop meeting that “people who are willing to kill are needed to liberate the blacks.” His predecessor, Nkwenkwe Nkomo, called on blacks to “fight and let them pigs shed your golden blood” at a BPC National Council Meeting in March 1974, told a Venda meeting in June 1974 that “if necessary, violence would be considered” and warned a September Durban seminar that “violence is meted to us daily by whites and we have to do the same” (SASO Trial Documents, Microfilm Reel 1).

³² “Africa was the Dark Continent. Religious practices and customs were referred to as superstition. The history of African society was reduced to tribal battles and internecine wars. Part of the approach envisaged in bringing about ‘Black Consciousness’ has to be directed to the past, to seek to rewrite the history of the black man and to produce in it the heroes who form the core of the African background.” (“We Blacks,” *I Write What I Like*, *op. cit.*, p.29).

³³ These have tended to be buttressed by public statements to racially mixed audiences by Black Consciousness spokespeople, which avoided references to revolution, such as the widely-publicized papers Biko and Pityana presented at the University of Cape Town in 1971, (Stephen Biko, “White Racism and Black Consciousness,” in H.W. van der Merwe and David Welsh, eds., *Student Perspectives on South Africa* (Cape Town, David Philip: 1972), or the testimony for the defense in political trials, particularly the SASO-BPC trial of 1975-76, where the explicit aim was to deny any revolutionary intent imputed by the prosecution. While there was some truth in this claim concerning the rump who still rallied to Black Consciousness a decade later, this claim is clearly wide of the mark for South Africa in the 1970s, as should become clear from this chapter and the next.

B. The Practice of the Black Consciousness Movement

The Black Consciousness Movement did not just formulate a new ideology of resistance; it practiced it – in ways which were novel in several respects. (Summary graph here.) In short, what Black Power theorized in America, what Fanon dreamed of in Algeria, Black Consciousness tried to realize in South Africa.

The Movement's main aim – flowing from Black Consciousness ideology – was to establish an autonomous black civil society. As D.A. Kotze noted: "Their overriding objectives of black unity and self-realization in various fields led them to realize that they would only succeed if their activities permeated to all levels of black society. They were accordingly the first political organizations in South African history consistently to employ voluntary associations to building a following and achieve their objective."³⁴

As urban black society developed, the growth of numerous local-level urban voluntary organizations operating outside the patrimonial frameworks used to recruit for homeland parties created alternative opportunities for mobilization. However, there were few national associations uniting the local interest groups in black civil society. Prominent among those which did exist were church, educational, and business groups – notably the YMCA/YWCA, the Inter-Denominational African Ministers Association of SA (IDAMASA), the African Independent Churches Association (AICA), the Association for Educational and Cultural Advance (ASSECA), and the National African Chambers of

³⁴ D.A. Kotze, African Politics in South Africa, 1964-1974: Parties and Issues (New York, St. Martin's Press: 1975), pp.39-40.

Commerce (NAFCOC).³⁵ SASO believed they had mobilization potential: an early strategic document called for efforts to redirect, infiltrate, and re-orient black educational, cultural, welfare, religious, and business groups towards black solidarity and away from support for apartheid institutions.³⁶ (Operating through other organizations was a strategy already familiar to SASO activists: they had used drama societies, sports clubs, and the like as bases before campuses affiliated or after they were barred from them.³⁷)

The organizational development of the Black Consciousness Movement can be understood as a deliberate attempt tie its activities to as many voluntary organizations as possible. As soon as SASO opened an off-campus office in Durban in 1970, its first move was to contact with all existing black religious, welfare, and cultural organizations and publish a directory of them.³⁸ Soon after, SASO launched a series of conclaves with many of the leading black groups, including ASSECA, the YMCA, AICA, IDAMASA, and the St. Peter's Old Boys' Association (despite its mild title a group of radical Catholic ex-seminarians), to discuss forming a confederation of organizations working for community development.³⁹ Ultimately, in December 1971, more than 400 black leaders from over 40 educational, youth, sporting, cultural, and religious organizations met and established the Black People's Convention, amid high hopes that it could bring

³⁵ ibid., p.66.

³⁶ It urges "direct engagement with groups that do not necessarily subscribe to the ideology of Black Consciousness but are sufficiently receptive to this type of influence as to warrant attention." "Practical Application of the Ideology of Black Consciousness," mimeo, n.d., Carter-Karis-Gerhart archive. (From internal evidence the document appears to be from 1969 and the style may be that of Biko himself.)

³⁷ Interviews, No.1, Chris Mokoditso, Johannesburg, February 19.1991, Isaacs.

³⁸ Handbook of Black Organizations (Durban, 1973).

together their memberships into a mass following. Although the BPC was founded as a political movement, its leaders stressed an immediate agenda focused on building organization and community projects in the areas of education and labor, while avoiding confrontations with government that could lead to its suppression.⁴⁰ Most of the burden of running the BPC fell to SASO alumni, because most of the older, more moderate elements, such as World editor M.T. Moerane, were nervous about the group's militant tone. Most of the groups whose leaders had participated in the consultative conferences did not affiliate en bloc, as had been hoped, but the BPC became a significant spur (and frequent irritant) for the leadership of black civil society. Besides the BPC, the Black Community Programs, or BCP – an outgrowth of the SPRO-CAS religious project set up in the wake of the “Message to the People of South Africa” – became an arm of Black Consciousness directly charged with outreach to voluntary organizations in civil society. It strove to bring their leaders into contact with BC activists, organized leadership training programs for young people, and printed and circulated the movement's publications.⁴¹

By building linkages and consensus among existing black groups, and forming new ones to represent unorganized interests, the BCM sought to cumulate the mobilizing power of the networks of black civil society. Over several years, the growth of “working relations and spiritual understandings” among major black organizations, along with

³⁹ See Karis and Gerhart, eds., From Protest to Challenge, vol. 5 (Stanford, Calif., Hoover Institution Press; Bloomington, Indiana University Press: 1972), p.132, Kotze, African Politics in South Africa, op. cit., p.61.

⁴⁰ Airgram, American Consulate Johannesburg to Department of State, A-07, January 23, 1973, State Department Archives.

⁴¹ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol. 5, op. cit., p.127, Nolutshungu, Changing South Africa, op. cit. p.170.

overlapping memberships and mutual aid (sharing offices, helping expelled university students) pointed to the development of an “intertwined network of voluntary organizations around SASO.”⁴² At its core were a number of established organizations with considerable influence in the townships – IDAMASA, SASO, ASSECA, UBJ, AICA, BPC, BCP, allied groups such as the SACC and Christian Institute, and various youth and cultural programs whose leaders gave a degree of active support to the movement, and whose members provided a growing base of diffuse support. The periphery was comprised of other black organizations more closely tied to the regime, such as the teachers,’ nurses,’ and sporting groups and the homeland parties, whose leaders, under challenge from SASO, toughened their posture towards apartheid, while a portion of their supporters – particularly younger ones – came under the influence of Black Consciousness. Where important interests were unorganized (journalists, workers) or only locally organized (pupils, youth), BC sought to create organizations to bring them together, build support, and mobilize their resources. Beyond the leaders of the formal organizations stood the general urban black public who attended their churches, read their newspapers, sent their children to their schools, and followed their sporting leagues, and through these and other connections in civil society were exposed Black Consciousness ideas. The result of all this networking was that, even though the formal memberships of the official Black Consciousness organizations never numbered more than a few thousand, they stood at the center of a set of concentric networks of

⁴² Kotze, *African Politics in South Africa*, *op. cit.*, p.68. The American Consul General in Durban commented, “The inter-relationships and staffing of the Black People’s Convention, the South African Students’ Organization, and the Black Community Programs have grown increasingly complex. It is often difficult to determine for which organizations some individuals work and to what extent the activities of the

influence, which expanded to include most of the opinion leaders of South Africa's urban black population.

What proved the most crucial a aspect of this organizational work was the BC activists' use of their institutional and social contacts to spread Black Consciousness among students and youth in general. SASO made a deliberate effort to reach students who were preparing to become teachers.⁴³ By the early 1970s, young, Black Consciousness-oriented teachers, fresh out of black universities and teacher training colleges, spread the word to students and encouraged political debate inside and outside the classroom. The best-known of these was O.R. Tiro, the former Turfloop SRC President who taught at leading Soweto high schools after his expulsion from university for a militant graduation speech. But year by year, during the 1970s, lesser-known young teachers with similar views entered schools around the country by the score.⁴⁴ Of course, pupils' contacts with SASO were not limited to teachers: when older friends and relatives studying at university came home, vacations became times of excited political discussion. "The whole thing was very electric," recalls a pupil who became a BC-oriented

three organizations overlap." Airgram, American Consulate Durban to Department of State, A-19, February 27, 1973, State Department Archives.

⁴³ A document from a committee meeting at the 1974 SASO General Students' Conference says that "teacher training institutions should be our top priority target of infiltration" in order to "get all teachers on any side." Handwritten document, Carter-Karis-Gerhart Archive, n.d. SASO workshops even included role-playing sessions on how to "go about inculcating BC" in a school where the principal "is totally against SASO." Clive Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, 1958-1976 (Ph.D. Thesis, Cambridge University, Cambridge: 1994), p.290.

⁴⁴ Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, *op. cit.*, p.297 and Jonathan Hyslop, Social Conflicts Over African Education in South Africa from the 1940s to 1976 (Ph.D. Thesis, Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg: 1990), p.455, discuss Black Consciousness teachers in Soweto, though Glaser's estimate of 30 seems low given the number of students leaving the black universities and teachers' colleges in the 1970s, who numbered in the hundreds annually. BC-oriented teachers in other regions were mentioned in interviews (Pandelani Nefolovhodwe (Lebowa), Mathata Tsedu (Venda), Ziba Jiyane (Empangeni),) and in

journalist.⁴⁵ Black Consciousness thus fanned out from Fort Hare to schooled youth in the Eastern Cape, Transkei, and Ciskei, from Turfloop into Northern Transvaal townships and Lebowa and Venda, and from both those institutions and the University of Zululand to greater Johannesburg.⁴⁶ Within the schools, pupils themselves spread BC ideas further through contacts via student activities, such as music and drama societies, interscholastic competitions, and school debate societies. "I can't recall a single debate in which the topic was not political," recalls a former student.⁴⁷ Outside the schools, youth groups also offered forums for political ideas. One of the most prominent, East London's Border Youth Union, organized by a former ANC political prisoner friendly with BC circles, regularly drew 200 to 300 young people to musical, theatrical, and sporting events with a political flavor.⁴⁸

However, Black Consciousness activists did not just expose young people to the movement's discourse: they promoted, federated, and politicized youth and pupils' groups across much of South Africa. The best-known pupils' group was the South African Students' Movement (SASM), formed in 1972 when the small, Soweto-based

Durban by an American Consular official who saw African teachers at a BC conference (Airgram, American Consulate Durban to Department of State, A-99, October 2, 1974, State Department Archives).

⁴⁵ Interview, Mathata Tsedu, No.1, Johannesburg, 1992.

⁴⁶ Roger Southall, South Africa's Transkei: The Political Economy of an "Independent" Bantustan (New York, Monthly Review Press: 1983), p.185, Interview, Peter Mokaba, Johannesburg, July 24, 1992, Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, *op. cit.*, p.290, and Hyslop, Social Conflicts Over African Education in South Africa, *op. cit.* p.455.

⁴⁷ Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, *op. cit.*, p.302-3, David Bond, Colored Education Struggles in South Africa: Education Boycotts in the Western Cape, 1976 (Master of Social Science Thesis, University of Cape Town, Cape Town: 1992), p.114, Interviews, Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, Johannesburg, September 25, 1992, Monde Tolwana, Cape Town, November 11, 1992.

ASM changed its name and linked up with SASO.⁴⁹ In its new incarnation it grew rapidly, expanding within a year from four high schools to eighteen, half around Johannesburg, the rest in the Eastern Cape and Durban. In Soweto, its members largely took over the high school debate societies, to build followings and hone rhetorical skills. (In these groups, two young men who would be much in the public eye in 1976 became prominent: Tsietsi Mashinini and Khotso Seathlolo.) A similar but less well-known development took place in Cape Town in 1973-74 with the rise of the South African Black Scholars Association (SABSA), which split off from a liberal, multi-racial high school pupils' group much as SASO had from NUSAS.⁵⁰ Under the wing of the BC leaders at the University of the Western Cape, SABSA grew from a core of 4 colored high schools previously dominated by the Unity Movement to as many as 25 schools around the Western Cape, including two African high schools in Cape Town. Its leadership discussed a merger with SASM, but these talks were halted after SASM President Mathe Diseko was banned in 1973, disrupting contact with the organization.

Besides these overtly political and BC-oriented student groups, Black Consciousness influence spread widely among non-tsotsi township youth – both in school and out – through youth clubs and religious organizations. Of the latter, the most

⁴⁸ Interviews, Mzimkhulu Gwentshe, East London, December 5, 1991, Alfred Metele, King William's Town, December 6, 1991, Mthembu Makapela, East London, May 26, 1992, and Bangumzi Sifingo, Johannesburg, November 14, 1991.

⁴⁹ Nozipho Diseko, "The Origins and Development of the South African Students' Movement (SASM): 1968-1976," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 18 (1991), Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, op.cit., p.160, Glaser, *Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto*, op. cit., p.300, Alan Brooks and Jeremy Brickhill, *Whirlwind Before the Storm: The Origins and Development of the Uprising in Soweto* (London, International Defense and Aid Fund: 1980), p.86.

⁵⁰ Brooks and Brickhill, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, op. cit., p.160. Interviews, Ashik Mani, Cape Town, July 8 1991, Monde Tolwana, Cape Town, November 11, 1992.

important was the Student Christian Movement (SCM), the youth wing of the UCM, which was profoundly marked by Black Theology and rivaled the influence of SASM in its heyday. Though little has been written of its role, many interviewees testified to its importance.⁵¹ Its church ties, as well as the mix of faith and politics that it offered, made its reach wider (if less deep politically) than SASM's; SCM enjoyed a wide presence in the homelands and townships of the Eastern Cape and Northern Transvaal, as well as the Johannesburg region. (In the latter, the two groups clashed for a time, though the relationship was eventually smoothed over.)⁵² Besides SASM, there was also a welter of local youth clubs and associations, many tied to the church (or in the Western Cape, the mosque), which attracted both students and school-leavers oriented who rejected the gang sub-culture.⁵³ During 1972-73 SASO strove successfully to bring a large proportion of them together into regional federations and a national body. The most important of these were the Transvaal Youth Organization, or TRAYO, a network of 100 key activists in townships across the province, the Western Cape Youth Organization, or WCYO, which brought together youth groups previously divided by racial (colored/African) and religions (Christian/Moslem) divisions, and the country-wide National Youth

⁵¹ Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, op. cit., pp.295-6, Interviews, Saki Macozome, Monde Mditshwa No. 2, Elleck Nchabeleng No.1, Johannesburg, August 10, 1992, Peter Mokaba, Johannesburg, July 24, 1992, Daniel Montsitsi, Johannesburg, August 5, 1992.

⁵² Diseko, "The Origins and Development of the South African Students' Movement," op. cit., p.52, Interview, Montsitsi.

⁵³ Brooks and Brickhill, Whirwind Before the Storm, op. cit., p.110, Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, op. cit., p.295, and Bond, Colored Educations Struggles in South Africa, op. cit., p.113.

Organization, or NAYO, whose leadership overlapped with that of SASM but which became an important network for activism outside the schools.⁵⁴

These affiliates and friends gave the BCM with substantial influence among pupils and urban youth, not through their size, but because their membership consisted of young leaders who possessed their own local networks of influence. The formal membership of even the largest of the youth groups, SASM and SCM, never ran to much more than several hundred or a thousand. Their influence was much more widespread, however, because these groups recruited popular young figures with local followings, as a SASM member from Port Elizabeth noted:

“SASM was small but influential: organizations like SASM attracted the more politicized and enlightened young people. People who were members of SASM were the leadership in their respective areas. ... When you visited their areas you saw how they were supported and popular even if students in their areas were not members of SASM.”⁵⁵

The growth of these networks of networks enabled BC leaders and ideas to connect up with many the grassroots networks and groupings which urban youth had formed on their own as part of the evolving urban political culture. Thus, Bond describes how in the Western Cape, the growth of youth organization meant that “a core of organized [pupils] established a loose network of communications which enabled issues discussed at

⁵⁴ Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 5, *op. cit.*, p.157-8, Interview, Mathe Diseko, No.1, August 26, 1991, Johannesburg. Specifically on TRAYO see: Diseko, “The Origins and Development of the South African Students’ Movement,” *op. cit.*, p.58-9, Brooks and Brickhill, *Whirwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p.82-4, Interview, Billy Masetla, August 17, 1992, Johannesburg. On WCYO see: Bond, *Colored Educations Struggles in South Africa*, *op. cit.*, p.114, and Interview, Henry Isaacs.

⁵⁵ Interview, Monde Mditshwa. Similar comments can be found in Interviews, Saki Macozome, June 26, 1992, Peter Mokaba, Johannesburg, July 24, 1992, and Monde Totwana, Cape Town, November 11, 1992.

meetings to reach a wider audience.”⁵⁶ Much the same happened in the Eastern Cape, the Johannesburg region, and the Northern Transvaal. Thus an important part of the BCM’s effort to mobilize civil society was its unprecedented and largely successful effort to mobilize black youth into political consciousness, giving it influence among schooled youth in township and country far beyond the formal ranks of its organizations.

The Black Consciousness emphasis on civil rather than political society also explains the Movement’s organizational differences with pre-1960 political organizations, as well as its focus on conscientization rather than mobilization. The legal ANC had a formal, hierarchical structure, territorial organization, office bearers, mass membership, organized cells (where the M-Plan or Communists were active) – in short, all the forms and paraphernalia of a nationalist party organized on the lines of the Old Left. The PAC had followed suit as far as possible in its short legal lifetime.⁵⁷ Their tactics were also classic nationalist ones: public campaigns of mobilization and protest against apartheid laws and regulations, fomenting peaceful confrontation with the authorities to change them and demand a place in the political order. Black Consciousness, in contrast, was a social movement – at its center a set of rather small social movement organizations seeking influence over the institutions and grassroots networks of black society, functionally oriented (to universities, schools, churches, press, etc), non-hierarchical and participatory in nature – in short, the organizational repertoire of the New Left. Its principal activities were oriented at conscientization and

⁵⁶ Bond, Colored Education Struggles in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.116.

community development, that is, spreading Black Consciousness ideology and preparing black elites and institutions to work for liberation. In other words, while the older movements had sought overtly to win a place for blacks in politics, Black Consciousness in structure and method practiced the politics of anti-politics.⁵⁸

Formal movement activity for conscientization centered on programs to create a new black elite capable of leading the liberation struggle. These consisted of “formation schools” for up-and-coming SASO members and leadership training programs under the aegis of BCP for young people in school, church, or community groups.⁵⁹ These were held at a rapid clip: SASO alone ran six national and regional formation schools in its first three years. During the 1970s the pace picked up, as hundreds of young blacks passed through dozens of workshops sponsored by SASO, BCP, and SASM, with up to 60 people at a time together for as long as four days in church or university facilities.⁶⁰ The programs covered topics such as the “totality of the white power structure,” “the need for closer co-ordination of youth groups for Black Solidarity,” and an “introduction to the theory of Black Consciousness.” The courses also offered training in the practical

⁵⁷ Tom Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945 (London, Heinemann's: 1982), ch.2-3,9; Edward Feit, Conflict and Communication: An Analysis of the Western Areas and Bantu Education Campaigns of the African National Congress, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Michigan, 1965.

⁵⁸ Here of course the reference to anti-politics comes from David Ost, Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics (Philadelphia, Temple University Press: 1990), who uses it to describes Solidarity's focus on building an autonomous civil society and New Left style in Communist Poland.

⁵⁹ The awkward term “formation school” is another sign of the New Left influence on BC. A mistranslation of the French term “*ecole de formation*” (training school), it was introduced into South Africa by the local branch of the Young Catholic Workers, a left-wing, Belgian-based Catholic group, and picked up by NUSAS before its adoption by SASO. More generally, the idea and practice of leadership training was learned from NUSAS, but applied widely by SASO outside of university student ranks for the first time. Interview, John Daniel, Grahamstown, December 3, 1991, and Wilson, “Steve Biko: A Life,” op. cit., p.25-26.

problems of running formal organizations – budgeting, planning activities, running meetings and keeping minutes, and leadership.⁶¹ The events themselves, run as workshops, were steeped in the egalitarian and participatory ethos of the New Left. Papers were presented and debated in plenary sessions, small groups sent to analyze problems and report back, and simulations and games conducted, providing opportunities to deepen understanding, develop political skills, and build consensus through discussion and peer pressure.⁶² Beyond this, the mood of the gatherings was one of defiance: they encouraged a mix of self-assertiveness, swagger, and machismo among BC followers, most of whom were too young to have been scarred by the defeats of the 1960s, and engendered a style exuding youthful optimism, bravado, and sometimes suicidal bravery.

Beyond seeking to form a new elite, Black Consciousness groups sought incessantly to influence the existing elite and to lead public opinion. At an endless stream of meetings, conferences, and professional workshops, as well as the creation and running of the BPC, they interacted with and pressured the older elites of civil society institutions. They were constantly networking with and lobbying the blacks who controlled churches, newspapers, organizations, and resources; Biko, for instance, became a favorite of World editor M.T. Moerane even as other activists scorned him. Their approaches were not

⁶⁰ "Leadership Training Program," 1972, pp.7-8, Carter-Karis-Gerhart Archive, and Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, *op. cit.*, p.112.

⁶¹ Permanent Organizer's Department, SASO, "SASO Leadership Training Programs, Black Youth Groups and Schools," n.d., apparently 1972, Karis-Carter Archive.

⁶² As Lindy Wilson wrote, "There grew into being a particular style of leadership which recognized the enormous advantage of widespread consultation. This did not only mean consultation to win over a proposal but the creation of an atmosphere where individual opinions were considered and taken seriously. They were valued equally. It was time-consuming and costly in energy but it ensured true development and growth, both politically and in terms of human advance, so that people became more efficient and confident." "Steve Biko: A Life, *op. cit.*, p.27.

always welcomed: when SASO sought to radicalize discussions at the 1971 ASSECA conference, they were refused recognition to speak.⁶³ Nonetheless, through their own gatherings and those of other voluntary organizations, the BC groups were always a presence, both an irritant and an influence on the black elite. Their influence reached a wider audience as well through activities the organizations opened to the general public. These included cultural activities (theater, poetry, and music,), social activities, and public events, particularly commemorations of Sharpeville and other politically-charged anniversaries. They regularly drew audiences in the hundreds, representing a large share of both the youthful political activists and the older elite in the areas where they were held. Through all these efforts, as in their work with young leaders, the BCM sought to undo the perceptions of powerlessness and worthlessness prevalent after the defeat of the earlier movements, achieving what Nolutshungu termed “the socialization of courage.”⁶⁴

In addition to formal organizational activity, conscientization was also a product of informal activities that injected Black Consciousness ideas into other social activities and relationships. Social gatherings and friendship circles offered safe spaces for political talk and supportive environments for BC ideas. Township gumbas (parties) were also vehicles for political ideas, as Monde Tolwana, then a leader of SABSA in Cape Town, recalled. “Students were ignorant of politics then. We drew them into parties, gumbas, where we stressed conscientization, we are all blacks.” Bokwe Mafuna, a Rand Daily Mail journalist who met Biko at one such party, added, “They were social

⁶³ Mamphela Ramphele, “Empowerment and Symbols of Hope: Black Consciousness and Community Development,” in Barney Pityana et. al., eds., Bounds of Possibility, (Cape Town, David Philip: 1991), p.156.

events with a lot of political significance, where people met one another from all over the country, where you could speak out, pour out your souls to one another.”⁶⁵ In Soweto, for instance, one such social circle in the elite Dube neighborhood produced future ANC guerilla commander Sphiwe Nyanda, fighter, politician, and businessman Tokyo Sexwale, and playwright and publisher Duma Ndlovu, all school friends and activists. The most pervasive form of discussion was those on a day-to-day basis – bull sessions, tea-room chats, arguments with fellows, colleagues, or editors, or in shebeens after work. The participation of delegations of one BC group at meetings and social gatherings of others also meant that they were exposed to the movement’s ideas, activities, and – at times – its criticism. (For instance, the journalists smarted at the nickname some SASO members gave the UBJ: Useless Black Jacks.)

Besides the movement’s organized and social activities, another form of conscientization was the least planned and most intensive: struggles within black institutions which created solidarity within them. Black educational, religious, and media organizations were riven with the internal tensions flowing from white domination, and the appearance of nuclei of opposition within them set the stage for fierce, high-stakes conflicts. The conflicts themselves will be discussed in more detail in the next section, but now we are interested in understanding the social processes they unleashed. By drawing stark us-vs-them lines and forcing individual to take a stand against or with white authority, they crystallized black solidarity and forged it in the heat of danger. Those who were seen as “sellouts” to the black cause faced severe and long-lasting

⁶⁴ Nolutshungu, *Changing South Africa*, *op. cit.*, p.

⁶⁵ Interview, Tolwana, and Wilson, “Steve Biko: A Life,” *op. cit.*, p.31.

sanctions, while those who came together in the struggle often forged new, powerful bonds of emotional and intellectual solidarity which lasted long after the conflict. For example, among Fort Hare students, it was the strikes and conflicts with the administration in the early 1970s that spread support for BC beyond its initial base of city slickers to students from the rural Transkei and Ciskei as well.⁶⁶

Together, powerful discourse, well-chosen and sympathetic institutional and social settings, and the ties born of struggle proved effective in promoting BC. The discourse of self-worth and self-reliance resonated strongly, because it placed the personal experiences of blacks into broader ideological contest. "The literature told me what I knew, and I agreed with what was being said" says Mathata Tsedu, who became a BC-oriented journalist. "The question of who was suffering, who was responsible for the suffering, was all logical to me."⁶⁷ Voiced in excited movement gatherings, by self-assured, articulate leaders, it was electrifying. Mosibudi Mangena recalled, after hearing Biko and his SASO colleague Charles Sibisi for the first time, how "these early visitors made a powerful impression on us. ... I had never seen such confident young black men before."⁶⁸ The informal ties which came from social and informal activities also had a transformative impact. Mafuna said, "I had grown up in an environment of conflict all my life and here, for once, I was with people with whom I could be at ease, among whom I could start believing in myself."⁶⁹ Struggle, too had an impact, as a former journalist

⁶⁶ Interview, Thenjiwe Mtintso, Johannesburg, 1991.

⁶⁷ Interview, Tsedu.

⁶⁸ Mosibudi Mangena, On Your Own: The Evolution of Black Consciousness in South Africa/Azania (Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers: 1989), p.10.

and UBJ member at The World recalls, “It brought a sense of comradeship. We were isolated individuals – it brought us together. We realized how powerful we could be.”⁷⁰

BC’s emphasis on civil society politics also explains the movement’s other major thrust, towards development projects rather than overtly political struggles, another important difference between the BCM and other black political movements.⁷¹ Black Consciousness activists invested an enormous amount of effort into formally non-political projects, making the movement difficult to understand if politics is understood principally as challenging state power. However, from the movement’s own perspective, these initiatives made good sense, because they served to promote both the solidarity of the black elite with the community at large and black solidarity in civil society in general. Development projects helped to bridge the deep class divisions separating the middle classes from the rest of the black community by exposing black students at a formative stage of their lives to the realities of poverty and by lending prestige to efforts to put the elite at the service of the underprivileged. They fostered the solidarity of the black community as a whole by delivering aid and services in a way that dignified the beneficiaries, instead of denigrating them, and that provided a sense of black achievement and potential through practical examples of self-reliance. The BCM’s development efforts were never thought to be a substitute for those of the state, nor were they intended to be a substitute for the struggle for political change. Rather the community projects were a compliment to the programs aimed at conscientization, a rebuttal in practice of the

⁶⁹ Wilson, “Steve Biko: A Life,” *op. cit.*, p.31.

⁷⁰ Interview, Mthobi Mutloatse, Johannesburg, July 30, 1991.

hegemonic ideologies of the regime – black incompetence, atomization, and powerlessness. “Everything undertaken by BPC and SASO is calculated to promote the ideology of Black Consciousness, an integrative ideology, and to politically activate the black population. In this sense,” Kotze shrewdly observed, “the various programs and projects are interrelated.”⁷² Or as one Black Consciousness activist put it, to the movement, “development means liberation.”⁷³

The BCM’s community projects themselves fell into several categories which would reflect this very broad understanding of “development,” including service, demonstration, micro-enterprise, and cultural and publication projects. The service projects involved spare-time and vacation work by students. These included tutorial and winter school projects in the townships, school building projects in the homelands, and free clinics and plans to lay in piped water in the New Farm and Dududu settlements near Durban. Such one-on-one projects gave students a first-hand look at the realities of black South Africa, and encouraged them to use their skills for the poor. The service projects were larger-scale efforts involving more planning and resources. These included attempts at Freirean literacy and community organizing projects, such as efforts in the Winterveld, a vast informal settlement in the Bophutatswana homeland, and in the migrant workers’ hostels of Johannesburg, as well as the best-known and most successful of the projects, the Zanempilo community health center near King William’s Town. These projects offered examples of new and different ways to provide services to black

⁷¹ This paragraph and the next two draws heavily on Ramphele, “Empowerment and Symbols of Hope,” *op. cit.*, and Interview, Ben Khoapa, Alice, May 22, 1992.

⁷² Kotze, *African Politics in South Africa*, *op. cit.*, pp.246-7.

communities, while seeking to empower recipients through respect and collective activity. The micro-enterprise projects included a series of sewing, handicraft, and small-scale industries aided by grants, loans, and technical assistance to groups of women and former political prisoners in rural areas of the Eastern Cape and Transvaal. Here the aim was to break with the dependency-inducing tradition of handouts and welfare projects and experiment with ways to re-integrate groups which were socially excluded and politically marginalized. Finally, cultural projects ranged from picnics to sport, drama and music. It also included the stream of publications flowing from all the BC groups – such as SASO's Newsletter, SASM's grittier Thrust and SASM Newsletter, and the BCP's annual Black Review and highbrow Black Viewpoints. All these sought to give voice to blacks' ideas, feelings, and pride – BC discourse – in a black owned, black-managed context.

Like the programs of the BCM, so too its development activities helped distinguish it in organization and methods from the black political organizations which came before. First and foremost among these differences was the project orientation itself: rather than protesting around issues and demanding state action, the BCM sought through the projects to take the initiative and attack problems itself. Second, the BCM through its projects succeeded in mobilizing much larger resources than any other black political movements operating legally in the country. By 1976 the BCP alone employed over 60 people, and SASO had a full-time staff of several more – a much larger permanent establishment than that enjoyed either by any of the homeland parties or by the

⁷³ Vincent Mafungo, "Some Aspects of Community Development," n.d., Karis-Carter Archive, p.9.

ANC in its legal period.⁷⁴ BC organizations were also the first black organizations to tap into overseas funding sources – albeit against some initial resistance, because South Africa was considered a developed country and funders were reluctant to deal with little-known new black groups rather than established white ones.⁷⁵ Yet budgets for BC groups show that year after year, various BC programs extracted grants for tens of thousands of dollars, far more than black organizations before (if far less than the flood which would flow into the country a decade later).⁷⁶ The development programs did more than pay for themselves, of course; they also provided infrastructure for the more overtly subversive conscientization programs and post-university jobs for activists.⁷⁷

But although the BCM's conscientization and development initiatives won considerable elite support and mass influence, its ambitions for mass membership and large-scale projects were frustrated by the political, organizational, and social limitations it faced. The political constraint flowed from the narrow public sphere open to political activity outside the relatively privileged educational and communications institutions.

⁷⁴ Interview, Khoapa; Nolutshungu, *Changing South Africa*, *op. cit.*. For the comparison with the establishments of homeland organizations see Kotze, *African Politics in South Africa*, *op. cit.*. The late David Webster once said that the ANC never had more than one part-time typist in its Johannesburg office prior to its banning in 1960.

⁷⁵ Ramphela, "Empowerment and Symbols of Hope," *op. cit.*, p.175. She reports that the Ford Foundation, for instance, preferred funding the *Annual Surveys* of the established, liberal Institute of Race Relations, refusing to aid BCP in funding *Black Review*. The principal sources willing to take a risk on BC groups in the early years were church groups in the US and Europe, and a Dutch development NGO. In this period funds were raised under the aegis of groups like the Christian Institute, whose white control and greater familiarity with the formalities of funding reassured grantmakers.

⁷⁶ For instance, the funding request for just one program, leadership training, ran to R20,800, or almost \$25,000 at then-prevailing exchange rates. South African Students Organization, "Leadership Training Program," *op.cit.*

⁷⁷ Thus BCP funded many of the youth leadership training programs as well as movement publications, and BCP offices provided work for activists in Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town, and above all for the large

The reality and fear of repression hobbled the BPC's founders' dream of recruiting one million members; at its peak its membership numbered no more than a few thousand, in more than a score of branches thinly spread around the country. Minutes of BPC meetings make sad reading, full of plaintive complaints that intimidation by "the system" has made yet another attempt to gain a following come to naught. Likewise, thought the BCM was supported by quite a few individual teachers – whose conscientizing role gave them a significance far beyond their numbers – the corporatist institutions which dominated the teaching and nursing professions continued to restrain active participation in opposition politics by most of their members.⁷⁸ In organizational terms, Black Consciousness groups were restricted in their accomplishments by the limited organizational skills, experience, and leadership available to them. These deficiencies, along with the banning of key activists, crippled the BC programs intended to organize black workers, SASO's Black Workers Project – which never had any dues-paying members – and the Black and Allied Workers Union – which had no more than 1,000 at its peak. The black students and activists were simply unable to cope with the demands of building large worker organizations, including systematic factory organization, large-scale dues collection and record-keeping, or legal support and the provision of worker assistance.⁷⁹ The social context also made itself felt: given the pervasive tradition of

community of Eastern Cape activists which grew up around Biko in King Williams Town after his banning there in 1973.

⁷⁸ See Hyslop, Social Conflicts Over African Education in South Africa, *op. cit.*, and Philip Vilardo, "Contemporary Conflict in Black Teacher Politics: The Role of the Africanization of the Apartheid Education Structure, 1940-1992, Seminar Paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1992.

⁷⁹ Interview, Lindelwe Mabandla, Johannesburg, May 14, 1991; Peter Walshe, Church Versus State in South Africa: The Case of the Christian Institute (Maryknoll, Orbis Books: 1983), p.157, Steven Friedman,

patrimonialism, clientelism, and competition for resources in black society, these could not but affect the BC organizations emerging within it, leaving them vulnerable to the same splits and big-man tendencies which had traditionally characterized township politics. This tendency made itself most clearly felt when the BCM reached out to the mass-membership African Independent Churches Association, creating a program of theological education intended to inject Black Theology into these traditionally conservative institutions. Amid a series of factional disputes and struggles over resources, the program collapsed.⁸⁰ Within SASO and SASM, there was a tendency toward the development of personal followings around leaders and disputes over the distribution of resources available to the organizations. In the argot of the time, the movement's leaders became its "gurus," and dispensed resources to their petitioners and favorites.⁸¹ Indeed, perhaps inevitably given the strategic reliance of the BC groups on the recruitment of individuals heading local social networks, they had something of the older groups' tendencies to become coalitions of "little big men." Thus, together,

Building Tomorrow Today: African Workers in Trade Unions, 1970-1984 (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1987), pp.44, 61. As Friedman notes, the black students' failure in this field left worker organization largely to white former NUSAS activists, who had turned to it in search of a political strategy after their black colleagues had broken away to form NUSAS, and were able to draw on both the greater social and organizational capital they enjoyed as whites and the experience of older radical white unionists.

⁸⁰ See Martin West, Bishops and Prophets in a Black City: African Independent Churches in Soweto, Johannesburg (Cape Town, David Philip: 1975).

⁸¹ Ashik Mani of SABSA recalls, "It was a period of charismatic leadership. You wanted to copy the way he speaks, the way he walks, everything. People molded themselves on them. There was a big emphasis on personal admiration and support. The word 'guru' was a big concept. They [the SASO leaders] were the gurus." Interview, Belleville, July 8, 1991. Former SASO activist Monde Mditshwa commented, "Resources weren't always used appropriately – they were in the hands of individuals, and certain areas were benefiting at the expense of others – King William's Town and Johannesburg, depending on who's there [eg Biko in King William's Town.] As a result, the politics of SASO/BPC revolved around Johannesburg and King. Activists who wouldn't go to King or Johannesburg suffered as a result, they didn't have access to resources. We had to make a journey to King, speak to the right people to get resources for youth and student projects—money, duplicating facilities, etc."

political repression, organizational inadequacies, and social divisiveness ensured that when it sought organized mass support, the BCM's reach exceeded its grasp.

Yet their limitations should not obscure the substantial accomplishments of Black Consciousness movement organizations, of which the most notable was a reinvigorated and highly politicized black elite, which, for the first time in South African history, supported a challenge to the very legitimacy and survival of the white minority regime. It is important to remember that despite the existence of an activist fringe, before 1960 the bulk of the black middle class was largely conservative in outlook and uneasy about militancy in tactics, and its distance from the popular classes was only deepened by the apathy and collaboration which flourished after the nationalist movements were banned. Through the organizations, leadership training programs, and informal processes of conscientization it established, the Black Consciousness Movement created a new process of elite formation and socialization. At the same time the leaders of older groups received constant pressure and encouragement to shift their ground from the younger militants, and by the mid-1970s there was a marked convergence of their views. Those who did not follow the trend – such as the leaders of the teachers' groups – suffered a slump in their prestige.⁸² Just how far the black elite as a whole had moved can be seen from the record of the Black Renaissance Convention, which brought together over 300 representatives of black religious, educational, civic, labor, sport, and welfare organizations at a seminary near Pretoria on December 16-17, 1974.⁸³ The rhetoric and

⁸² Hyslop, Social Conflicts Over African Education in South, *op. cit.*

ideology which dominated the conference was that of Black Consciousness. By the end of the conclave, the gathering – the most broadly representative of urban black leaders yet held – had approved resolutions calling for one person, one vote, the redistribution of wealth, the release of political prisoners, and economic sanctions against South Africa – the most radical program such a group had ever endorsed. Equally telling, the gathered notables had voted to exclude from the conference homeland and township leaders – a stinging repudiation of the politics of collaboration. The contrast was sharp with the founding conference of the BPC, three years earlier to the day, where a similar meeting had been deeply split over such questions, and the older elements had largely left the SASO militants on their own. The Black Renaissance Convention revealed, as Gerhart noted, that the “militancy of the student movement had now permeated the wider society ... The Black Consciousness organizations had achieved their aims of becoming opinion leaders far beyond student circles.”⁸⁴

Beyond winning over members of the black elite as individuals, the Black Consciousness Movement also mobilized a large part of organized black civil society against the regime. People who had been trained, challenged, or pressured by the BCM occupied key posts in the most important black religious institutions, voluntary organizations, and membership groups. The Black Consciousness influence and example

⁸³ The very date of the gathering was a form of symbolic inversion: like the meeting three years earlier to launch the BPC, the Convention was held on the weekend of the Day of the Covenant, a national holiday established to celebrate the victory of white settlers over the Zulus in 1838.

⁸⁴ Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, op. cit., p145. For the resolutions and papers presented at the conference, see Thohlane Tholane, ed., *Papers from the Black Renaissance Convention* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1974). For discussion of its deliberations, see “The Black Renaissance Convention in Perspective,” *Pro Veritate* (Johannesburg), April 1975, pp.18-22, *The World*, December 13, 1974, December 14, 1974, December 18, 1974, *Weekend World*, December 15, 1974, and *Cape Herald* December 21, 1974, and December 28, 1974.

fostered belief in the importance of the autonomy and independence of black organization, made them willing to think about the broader political situation as well as the immediate interests of their members, and encouraged them to look at solutions through collective action as well as individual relief. Within their own disciplines it encourage the emergence of a new model of professionalism dedicated to serving the underprivileged, based on modes of service delivery that recognized their dignity and a willingness to play a role in political struggle.⁸⁵ The impact of these changes on programs and ideas was felt profoundly in the church, and to varying degrees in other organizations, but almost every group in the highly networked world of urban black society was touched by them in one way or another. (Even those that did not agree with Black Consciousness, like the teachers groups, stepped up their criticism of government and had to be increasingly careful not to be seen as “sellouts.”) Important as the establishment of access to foreign funding was, the financial, physical, and social resources that Black Consciousness mobilized through connections to domestic black voluntary organizations, educational institutions, and communications media were far greater, and held an enormous potential for power. Moreover, an angry new force in civil society was called into being by the BCM, politicized youth – doubly dominated as juniors in the lineage world and unemployed or novice workers in the capitalist state.

Together, the re-politicization of the elite and the establishment of connections throughout institutional civil society gave the Black Consciousness Movement access to a larger mass audience of urban blacks than any of its predecessors every enjoyed. Its ideas

⁸⁵ Ramphela provides an excellent discussion of these developments in “Empowerment and Symbols of Hope”: Black Consciousness and Community Development,” *op. cit.*, pp.173ff.

reached the new urban public directly through its own events, as well as cultural and commemorative events its followers staged. They were relayed to a vastly greater number of people by the communications institutions – the press, churches and mosques, universities and schools – where it enjoyed sympathizers. The major black membership organizations, whether they were sympathetic to Black Consciousness or reacted against it, could not ignore it. Finally, the politicization and federation of youth and pupil movements would prove the most potent of all the organized forces unleashed by Black Consciousness, becoming the mainspring of resistance that would drive the rest of civil society forward. Black Consciousness was a very different kind of movement from its predecessors; rather than card-carrying members operating under bureaucratic structures, it had followers moved by its words flowing through their own social and institutional worlds. But its discourse and networks proved enormously significant, because they enabled the BCM to catalyze the emergence of a new national political identity among blacks and to generate black popular mobilization on a scale South Africa never before had seen.

C. The BCM and Other Black Political Movements

But the Black Consciousness organizations were not the only legal black groups in South Africa proclaiming opposition to apartheid – and despite its disdain for them, the BCM had a complex relationship with the moderate opponents of apartheid working “within the system.” Rather than overly collaborating like the conservative Sebe in the Ciskei or Swartz of the colored Federal Party, these figures argued that they could safely

speaking out against the regime precisely because they occupied places in the representative institutions it had created.⁸⁶ Though their institutional power bases were no different from those of others in state-created bodies – patrimonial chiefly coalitions and management committees – their rhetoric, and the public response to it, was. Mangosuthu (Gatsha) Buthelezi gained the spotlight when he assumed leadership of the KwaZulu bantustan in 1970 (with covert ANC approval). He became the first African leader in a decade to voice a forceful critique of apartheid, mixed with Zulu cultural nationalism, drawing crowds numbering in the thousands in Johannesburg and Durban.⁸⁷ By 1973, polls and observers agreed that Buthelezi was the most popular leader active among black South Africans.⁸⁸ Among coloreds, the Labor Party grew in support in the early 1970s as

⁸⁶ Heribert Adam explained the theory they held at the time: “By allowing for the airing of grievances and popular feelings, they functioned as mouthpieces as well as instigators of demands formerly suppressed. The power of a Buthelezi lies in his very powerlessness, as he himself was the first to recognize realistically. Symbolic challenges to white domination that have by now acquired institutional protection and therefore cannot be silenced as easily as before have created new visions, hope, and confidence.” “Internal Constellations and Potentials for Change,” in Leonard Thompson and Jeffrey Butler, eds. Change in Contemporary South Africa (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1975), p.316.

⁸⁷ Gerhard Mare and Georgina Hamilton, An Appetite for Power: Buthelezi’s Inkatha and the Politics of “Loyal Resistance” (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1987), p.145. Buthelezi drew crowds of 10,000 in Soweto in October 1973, and over 5,000 in Natal in September 1973 and January 1974, among the largest political gatherings of the day. Lawrence Schlemmer and Tim Muil, “Social and Political Change in African Areas: A Case Study of KwaZulu,” in Thompson and Butler, eds., Change in Contemporary South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.111. The ANC also smiled upon political insurgents in the Transkei (Sabata Dalindyebo) and Lebowa (Collins Ramusi), but neither succeeded in winning control of the bantustan or achieving Buthelezi’s prominence. On Sabata, see Mare and Hamilton, An Appetite for Power, *op. cit.*, p.145, and Black Review 1974 (Johannesburg, Black Community Programs: 1975), pp.74-5, while on Lebowa this claim draws on interviews, John Nkadimeng, Johannesburg, July 27, 1992, Marian Lacey, Grahamstown, December 3, 1991, and Collins Ramusi, Lebowa, July 1993.

⁸⁸ Surveys found that he had the most support in his own homeland of any homeland leader, and that he was the only homeland (or non-homeland) politician to be openly admired in Soweto, where his support ran across tribal lines. Respondents said he “fights for our rights” and sought “to help the black man.” Markinor Homelands Survey (Johannesburg, 1974), Table 130, Quadrant International, Quotso 73 (Johannesburg, 1973), p.92. Despite his subsequent loss of public favor, Buthelezi’s popularity in the early 1970s was acknowledged even by sources who could not be suspected of sympathy for apartheid, such as BC-leaning colored journalists (“Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi is truly the people’s choice,” Muslim News, Cape Town, February 23, 1973), radical sociologist Richard Turner (“It is people like Chief Buthelezi who are recognized by the bulk of Africans as their present leaders,” The Eye of the Needle,

it sharpened its tone and backed protests against apartheid. Buthelezi and the Labor Party (particularly its Youth League) proclaimed their sympathy for Black Consciousness.⁸⁹ The feeling was reciprocated by many in the BCM in its early years. SASO members from the University of Zululand flocked to hear Buthelezi's inaugural address in 1970, which "set the house alight."⁹⁰ Others in the movement were open to using bantustan institutions as flags of convenience.⁹¹ Over the next few years, BC activists and the opposition-minded bantustan, township, and colored leaders co-operated discreetly, appeared at each other's meetings, and enjoyed cordial personal relations.⁹² The high point was the 1973 Cape Town mass meeting, where Buthelezi, SASO President Henry

Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 2nd ed. 1973, Postscript, p.127), and his liberal colleague Michael Savage ("opinion polls, even among urban Africans, indicate he [Buthelezi] is the most popular African leader," "Major Patterns of Group Interaction in South African Society," in Thompson and Butler, eds. Change in Contemporary South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.287).

⁸⁹ Mangosuthu Buthelezi wrote, "Among the so-called homeland leaders there are some like myself who believe in Black Consciousness," "Foreword," in D.A. Kotze, African Politics in South Africa, 1964-1974, *op. cit.*, p.ix.

⁹⁰ Mangena, On Your Own, *op. cit.*, p.15. At a 1971 meeting "virtually the whole student body" of Zululand opposed SASO's criticism of Buthelezi. Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5 *op. cit.*, p.258.

⁹¹ An undated SASO strategy paper, but which appears from its title and content to be from December 1970 reads, "If the people demand something and get it because they have an 'UBC' or 'territorial authority' to talk for them then they shall begin to realize the power they wield as a group. Political modernization of the black people may well find good expression in these institutions which at present are repugnant to us." "Introduction to Formation School," Karis-Gerhart Archive.

⁹² For example, SASO activists requested a meeting with Buthelezi seeking his intervention during the 1972 university crisis (Drum, Johannesburg, October 8, 1972) and worked with the Labor Party to get resolutions they favored passed by the CPRC (Interviews, Richard Stevens, Belleville, July 4, 1991, Johnny Issel, Cape Town, June 4, 1991). Buthelezi addressed one of the preparatory meetings for the foundation of the BPC in 1971 (Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, *op. cit.*, p.258) and a SABSA conference in Cape Town (Interview, Mani), while Black Theology activists from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Maphumulo spoke at a pro-Buthelezi youth workshop in northern Natal (Interview, Ziba Jiyane, New Haven, August 20, 1989). Biko personally drove then British Foreign Secretary to Ulundi, the KwaZulu capital for a meeting with Buthelezi in 1971 (Interview by Kumi Naidoo, Saths Cooper, New Haven, 1988), and Buthelezi arranged for SASO members to pick him up at the airport in Cape Town before addressing the July 1973 City Park meeting (Interview, Stevens).

Isaacs, and other leaders shared the platform at the country's largest black political gathering in 13 years.

However, by the mid-1970s, relations the BC groups and in-system opposition had soured, as the BC groups grew increasingly hostile towards any stance implying legitimacy for the regime's institutions. As early as 1971, there was a "fiery debate" at a SASO leadership training seminar in Natal between those implacably hostile to bantustans and those who felt that leaders like Buthelezi were "doing good work."⁹³ At the 1972 SASO conference, when President Themba Sono called on the organization to change its "aloof attitude" to opposition elements within the apartheid system such as Buthelezi and the Labor Party, Biko sat with his head in his hands and others murmured their disapproval. After the speech Biko and other SASO leaders offered a motion, which carried, repudiating the speech, expelling Sono, and instructing the organization's executive to have nothing to do with "so-called leaders of white racist institutions."⁹⁴ In 1974, SASO helped push through the exclusion of homeland leaders from the Black Renaissance Convention, and its members at the University of Zululand clashed bitterly with a pro-Buthelezi student group.⁹⁵ During 1975, SASO activists called for a boycott of the CPRC election in which the Labor Party was running, and after the poll blasted

⁹³ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, *op. cit.*, p.489.

⁹⁴ On this episode see *ibid.*, pp.128-29, Nolutshungu, Changing South Africa, *op. cit.*, pp.172-3, South African Institute of Race Relations, Survey of Race Relations in South Africa (hereafter, Race Relations Survey, 1972, pp.29-30, World, Johannesburg, July 6, 1972, and American Embassy Pretoria to Department of State, Airgram A-107, July 12, 1972, State Department Archives. Despite the success of the 1973 Cape Town meeting, Isaacs later came under heavy criticism for violating this resolution.(Interview, Isaacs).

⁹⁵ World, Johannesburg, December 17, 1974, Cape Herald, Cape Town, December 21, 1974, and Black Review 1974 (Johannesburg, Black Community Programs: 1975), pp.178-79.

Labor Council members' willingness to take up their seats – breaking pre-election pledges to refuse them – and to set up businesses with government help.⁹⁶ By 1976, tension had reached the point where even at Buthelezi's former stronghold, the University of Zululand, students stoned his car when he visited to receive an honorary degree.⁹⁷ The episode symbolized a broader parting of the ways: by 1976, the ties largely had been broken between the BCM and all those within the white-run political system, its exponents and opponents alike.

Besides the moderate opponents of the regime working within its institutions, the BCM also had to define its relationship with another emerging black political force: the nationalist movements, the ANC and PAC, moribund after the 1960s repression, which were reviving their internal organization underground. Their revival was spearheaded by former political prisoners, released in the early- to mid-1970s after completing their sentences, working together with the movements' external operatives to begin, painstakingly, to re-establish clandestine organizational networks within the country.⁹⁸ The movements also intensified their propaganda activities within the country, circulating clandestine leaflets and publications, broadcasting on short-wave radio, and making use

⁹⁶ Sunday Times, Johannesburg, September 7, 1975.

⁹⁷ World, Johannesburg, May 6, 1976, May 12, 1976, Race Relations Survey, 1976, op. cit., p.370.

⁹⁸ Among the most important of these for the ANC were Joe Gqabi, John Nkadimeng, and Martin Ramokgadi in Johannesburg, Harry Gwala, Jacob Zuma, and Griffiths Mxenge in Durban, Tom Chalmani, Joe Mati, and Mzimkhulu Gwentshe in East London. Zola Nogwene in Uitenhage, and Silas Ndonga in Port Elizabeth. Howard Barrell, MK: The ANC's Armed Struggle (Johannesburg, Penguin: 1990), p.29. Interviews, John Nkadimeng, No. 1, July 27, 1992, No.2, August 10, 1992, Johannesburg, Martin Ramokgadi, October 4, 1992, Johannesburg, Mathe Disek, Johannesburg, 1991, John Daniel, Grahamstown, December 3, 1991, Joe Mati, East London, December 9, 1992, Mzimkhulu, Alfred Metele, King William's Town, December 6, 1991, Stanley Mabizela, Johannesburg, August 13, 1992. For the PAC, Zephania Mothopeng was the most important internal figure.

of front organizations and public events.⁹⁹ By the mid-1970s they were able to move their forward bases closer, expanding operations in Swaziland, Botswana, and Lesotho and, in the case of the ANC, moving into newly-independent Mozambique, all of which facilitated the movement of couriers, documents, and funds into South Africa.¹⁰⁰

Through these means they built up underground organizations formed of "cells," small, independently-operating groups. The cells had several roles: indoctrination, imparting organizational history and viewpoints by circulating publications, group study, and listening to broadcasts; expansion, by drawing friends, family, and former activists into the network; linkage, by connecting to members and leaders of other organizations; and, ultimately, recruitment of potential guerrillas for military training outside the country.¹⁰¹

Although no firm estimates are available of their size, by the mid-1970s it would appear that the ANC activists in the major urban areas and bantustans numbered in the hundreds, with sympathizers in the thousands, while the PAC had a smaller and patchier network.

⁹⁹ The 1970s saw a veritable boom in the circulation of underground materials in South Africa, including the ANC monthly *Sechaba* and various leaflets, as well as two new publications, the SACP's *African Communist* and *Inkululeko*, and the PAC's literature. In 1968, the ANC and PAC began to broadcast on Radio Tanzania, and from 1971 the ANC's Radio Freedom could also be heard on Radio Zambia. Despite the government's effort to promote short-range FM radios, 53% of urban black households still had short-wave receivers, so the potential audience was large. Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, *op.cit.*, p.51, *Rhodes Journalism Review*, Grahamstown, July 1992, p.41. ANC sympathizers were involved in several groups and events, including the unveiling of former ANC President Albert Luthuli's tombstone in 1972, where ANC uniforms and songs surfaced for the first time in a decade, the revival of the Natal Indian Congress in 1971, and the campaign for the release of political prisoners under the auspices of the Human Rights Committee (Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, *op. cit.*, pp.51, 44-45, *Drum*, 1972, Interview, Glenn Moss, Johannesburg, 1992. PAC front activities, though energetic, were more limited, principally centering on a group called the Young African Christian Movement based in Kagiso on the West Rand. Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, *op. cit.*, p.287, and Glenn Moss, *Political Trials, South Africa: 1976-1979* (Johannesburg, Development Studies Groups: 1980), pp.82ff.

¹⁰⁰ Interviews, John Daniel, Grahamstown, December 3, 1991, Stanley Mabizela, Johannesburg, August 13, 1992.

whose adherents probably numbered several score and active sympathizers at most a few hundred.¹⁰² They reached out to politically active young people, and younger activists most politicized by the BCM – reached out to them and the nationalist movements.

Even as the Black Consciousness Movement steadily distanced itself from the elites working “within the system,” the BCM was in growing contact with, and increasingly embraced, the nationalist movements – especially the ANC. The ANC targeted BC activists, both through mailings of literature and in face-to-face recruitment efforts, aided by a number of Black Consciousness activists who had gone into exile and joined its ranks. As time passed, a widening trickle of BC activists contacted the ANC as well, to seek advice from more experienced activists, involve themselves in the underground, or join the armed struggle.¹⁰³ Within the country, a growing number of BC activists, individually or in small groups, came into touch with the movement when they received literature, joined study circles, or participated in Radio Freedom listening groups.¹⁰⁴ By the mid-1970s, the trickle had turned into a stream, as people involved

¹⁰¹ Information on ANC cell activities comes from Interviews, Billy Masethla, Johannesburg, August 17, 1992, Mathemba Makapela, East London, May 26, 1992, Joe Mati, East London, May 26, 1992; Afrigue-Asie, May 16, 1977.

¹⁰² Howard Barrell estimates ANC underground strength in mid-1976 at around 200, but this appears to be a low estimate, perhaps reflecting his focus on Umkhonto we Sizwe, the ANC’s armed wing, and sources within it. Given the spread of ANC activism within various BC groups (see below), as well as the growing recruitment activity reflected in political trials dealing with 1974–76, an estimate of two or three times as many activists and many more sympathizers seems to fit the evidence better. Pre-1976 PAC activity, on the other hand, appears to have been concentrated in the Kagiso area and in sporadic guerrilla recruitment efforts, as the trials reported in Moss, Political Trials, *op. cit.*, indicate, as well as some activity in its 1960 Cape Town stronghold, Interviews, Johnny Issel, Cape Town, June 4 1991, Isaacs.

¹⁰³ These included Keith Mokoape, who left the 1972 SASO conference after calling on delegates there to join the nationalist movements, Sibusiso Ndebele, a former SASO activist from Turfloop and the University of Zululand, and Mosima “Tokyo” Sexwale, a Johannesburg SASM activist recruited by the ANC while studying at the University of Swaziland. Interviews, Sibusiso Ndebele, Durban, Sept. 11, 1992, Mosima Sexwale, Johannesburg, August, 1992.

with BC groups began aligning themselves with the ANC *en masse*. Under the pretext of sporting events or other inter-collegiate exchanges, students went by the busload – as many as 300 at a time – for weekend “safaris” in Swaziland to meet with representatives of the local ANC mission.¹⁰⁵ The leaders of the youth wings of the BCM – the National Youth Organization (NAYO) and the South African Students’ Movement (SASM) – moved increasingly into the orbit of the ANC, and in exile virtually all the members of the SASM executive joined the Congress.¹⁰⁶ The PAC also recruited among BC activists, but its efforts were a shadow of the ANC’s. It had sympathizers within the movement – such as Henry Isaacs and a few other prominent leaders, including – on some accounts – Biko, as well as contact with the movement’s leaders, Sobukwe and Mothopeng. But the PAC could not match the activist base, the organizational structure, or the resources that allowed the ANC’s clandestine organizational networks increasingly to connect with the social networks from which the BCM’s leadership, nor the morale, born of a combination of radicalism and tradition, that gave force to their bond.¹⁰⁷

The search for ways to join in armed struggle against the apartheid regime was one of the most powerful forces propelling BC activists towards the nationalist movements, and in particular the ANC. While the notion of a “second phase” of violent

¹⁰⁴ Interviews, Daniel Montsitsi, Johannesburg, August 5, 1992, Sexwale, Welile Nhlapo, Johannesburg, July 21, 1992, Sibusiso Ndebele, Durban, Sept. 11, 1992, *Rhodes Journalism Review*, Grahamstown, July 1992, p.41. BC-oriented journalists reported frequently receiving literature sent by the nationalist movements (Interview, Joe Latakomo), and a few participated in nationalist movement activities, such as Harry Mashabela of the Rand Daily Mail, involved in preparing an underground ANC publication, and Joe Thlooe of Drum, a PAC activist

¹⁰⁵ Interviews, Sibusiso Ndebele, Durban, Sept. 11, 1992, John Daniel, Grahamstown, December 3, 1991, Stanley Mabizela, Johannesburg, August 13, 1992, and Diliza Mji, Durban, September 11, 1992.

¹⁰⁶ Interview, Diseko; Nolutshungu, *Changing South Africa*, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁷ Interview, Henry Isaacs.

confrontation with the regime was always part of BC thinking, the subject was raised openly at the July 1972 SASO conference, when four activists, led by Keith Mokoape, who argued heatedly that the movement's work of conscientization was done and that the time had come to join the nationalist movements.¹⁰⁸ Such arguments, together with the repression hammering movement organizations in 1973-74 and the growing momentum of guerrilla warfare in neighboring countries, left younger activists in SASO and BC youth groups increasingly convinced that the only way forward was military training – which the BCM could not provide.¹⁰⁹ Efforts to set up an armed wing by BC activists who went into exile in Botswana, notably Bokwe Mafuna, Abram Tiro, Harry Nengwekhulu, and Welile Nhlapo, came to naught. They were unable to obtain external support because of the international legitimacy accorded the ANC and PAC, and, despite considerable effort, could not establish viable underground machinery within the country or overcome divisions on BC ranks outside it.¹¹⁰ (The PAC accepted small groups of BC cadres for training, but the experiences ended disastrously.¹¹¹) As a result, the quest for opportunities for guerrilla training largely led BC activists to the ANC, which refused to train fighters for other organizations but invited them to join its ranks instead. By 1974,

¹⁰⁸ Wilson, "Steve Biko, a Life," *op.cit.*, p.32.

¹⁰⁹ Diseko, "The South African Students' Movement," *op. cit.*, pp.60-61. Keith Mokoape, Thenjiwe Mtintso, and Welile Nhlapo, "Towards the Armed Struggle," in Pityana et. al., *Bounds of Possibility*, *op. cit.*, p.138, Interviews, Macozoma, "Socks" Socupa, East London, December 5, 1991, Stanley Mabizela, Johannesburg, August 13, 1992.

¹¹⁰ Nolutshungu, *Changing South Africa*, *op. cit.*, p.184, *World*, Johannesburg, March 18, 1976, Interviews, Bokwe Mafuna, Paris, September 22, 1990, Welile Nhlapo, Johannesburg, July 21, 1992, Sibusiso Ndebele, Durban, September 11, 1992, Thenjiwe Mtintso, No.2, June 10, 1991, Johannesburg.

¹¹¹ Those sent to Libya were expelled, in Uganda the BC activists were mired in factional infighting within the PAC, and a handful sent to Syria were made to fight for the local faction of the Popular Front for the

handfuls of individuals and small circles of activists from BC ranks sought to do this on their own initiative.¹¹² The subject also became an active topic of discussion at SASO and SASM meetings, and a systematic effort at recruitment for ANC guerilla training began within the circles of NAYO, which overlapped considerably with SASM.¹¹³ One NAYO leader estimated that at least 200 Black Consciousness activists had left the country by late 1975, and the numbers were growing steadily.¹¹⁴ By the middle of 1976, the ANC was ready for small-scale guerilla operations within the country, largely due to the infusion of new blood it had received from the BCM.¹¹⁵

The radicalization of the BCM – reflected in the growing prevalence of Marxism, socialism, and anti-imperialism in its discourse – also brought it closer to the nationalist movements. (Like other Third World movements in the 1970s, the South African nationalist movements had moved left and chosen sides in the Sino-Soviet split, with the

Liberation of Palestine-General Command, an extremist splinter group which had broken away from the Palestine Liberation Organization.

¹¹² The best-known cases were failures which resulted in political trials, such as an attempt by a group of SASM activists at the Healdtown boarding school in Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Cape to leave the country for guerilla recruitment, which led to the trial of State v. Ndukwana (Interview, Stone Sizane, Port Elizabeth, May 18, 1992), or the involvement of a small circle of colored BC activists in Johannesburg in recruiting attempts. Less well known, for obvious reasons, were successful escapes, but there is evidence of some; for example, Mapetla Mohapi, a member of Biko's circle in King William' Town, is believed to have taken a couple of carloads of boys out of the country at their request prior to being detained and tortured to death by the Security Policy (Interview, Thenjiwe Mtintso, No.3, Johannesburg, June 20, 1991.)

¹¹³ For instance, at a SASO meeting in 1974, one of the problems posed for discussion in a workshop on the homelands was how to conscientize rural Africans to co-operate with guerrillas (see notes in SASO trial file/NB database), and in June 1975 a meeting was proposed at the Middelburg - Witbank SASM branch advocating recourse to armed struggle (Nolutshungu, *Changing South Africa*, *op. cit.*, p.181. Similar accounts were given in Interviews, Macozoma, and Montsitsi. Sources on NAYO include Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p83, reports on the Moletsane trial in *World*, Johannesburg, March 26, 1976, March 30, 1976, March 31, 1976, April 2, 1976, and April 6, 1976, as well as Interviews, Diseko.

¹¹⁴ Jairus Kogong testifying in the NAYO trial, cited in Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, *op. cit.*, p.155.

ANC, allied to the South African Communist Party, leaning to more orthodox Marxism and pro-Soviet alignments, while the PAC termed itself “Maoist” and favored the Chinese.) One major source of the growing radicalism of the BCM was the growing availability of literature on Marxism and publications of the nationalist movements, despite the regime’s censorship.¹¹⁶ Another was the influence of respected BC figures aligned with the nationalist movements – notably Diliza Mji, SASO President in 1975-76 – and, in Cape Town and Johannesburg, the indigenous, Trotskyite radicals of the Unity Movement.¹¹⁷ The success of movements in neighboring countries proclaiming Marxist sympathies – particularly Frelimo in Mozambique – gave added luster to the ideology.¹¹⁸ But the strongest impulsion towards more radical views, participants in the BCM say, was escaping the intellectual *cul de sac* in which the movement was trapped. Its discourse, focused on race only, seemed unable to explain its failure to actually organize the black working-class masses, despite the links it had established to organizational leaders in civil society. Nor could it explain the behavior of those who backed the “wrong” side: whites in the student movement, press, and church who were sympathetic to the BCM, or blacks who worked for South Africa’s minority government. This latter point was brought home most dramatically in early 1976, when it was revealed that Jonas Savimbi and his UNITA movement in Angola were supporting the South African military intervention which unsuccessfully sought to keep the Marxist MPLA out of power. Savimbi had been

¹¹⁵ Interview, Nyanda. This future ANC military commander was himself a former BC activist, having been involved with SASM in high school and worked at The World as a reporter.

¹¹⁶ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, *op. cit.*, p.148.

¹¹⁷ *idem.*, Diseko, “The Origins and Development of the South African Students Movement,” *op. cit.*, p.59, Interview, Johnny Issel, Cape Town, June 4, 1991.

respected by BC activists as a freedom fighter (particularly the anti-Communists among them, because of his hostility to the MPLA), and his open collaboration with Pretoria discredited him in the movement's eyes and did much to give credence to the view that the only consistent foes of apartheid were Marxists.¹¹⁹

Increasingly radical discourse at public events sponsored by the BCM offered indications of the outcomes of intense behind-the-scenes debates and struggles within the BCM. At the Black Renaissance Convention in December 1974, Mafika Pascal Gwala was cheered when he called for "an economic interpretation of our struggle" (a thinly veiled call for class analysis), while black business leader Sam Motsuenyane was booed.¹²⁰ At the SASO conference in July 1975, Mji called on students to align themselves with the working class.¹²¹ Tensions came into the open within the movement at the BPC conference in Mafeking in November, 1975, when a proposed economic policy for the movement termed "Black Communalism" was presented and challenged by the radical wing, which regarded it as "plain, unapologetic capitalism."¹²² The younger, post-1973 leadership of SASO organized and cultivated support for this view on the campuses, and decisively carried the day at the 1976 SASO conference. "We stopped

¹¹⁸ Interview, Diliza Mji, Durban, September 11, 1992.

¹¹⁹ Mathe Diseko, "The Origins and Development of the South African Students Movement," *op. cit.*, p.59, and Interview, Masetla.

¹²⁰ Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, *op. cit.*, p.147.

¹²¹ Nolutshungu, *Changing South Africa*, *op. cit.*, p.164, Anthony Marx, *Lessons of Struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960-1990* (New York, Oxford University Press: 1992), pp.76-7. An article published in the *SASO Newsletter* for May-June 1975, signed by "Black Student Leader," declared that "the black people are not only suffering from dominance by a foreign white minority race ... but they suffer repression and exploitation from capitalism and the various forms of imperialism. ... We quest for socialism and denounce capitalism," *ibid.*, p.159.

¹²² Wilson, "Steve Biko: A Life," *op. cit.*, p.54, Interview, Diliza Mji, Durban, September 11, 1992.

people like Steve (Biko) in their tracks,” Mji commented, adding that Biko later complained that “Durban is red” (a reference to Mji’s base at his old campus, the black section of the University of Natal).¹²³ Though these debates had little immediate impact on BC practice, they were the public manifestation of an increasingly sharp cleavage between the pre-1973 leadership of SASO, somewhat marginalized by having moved on to the organizationally weak BPC, and their successors in SASO and the youths leading SASM. Although the differences were papered over, the shift to “class analysis” helped strengthen the sense of the younger leaders that they were in tune with the nationalist movements, particularly the ANC, and put the issue of large-scale black mass organization on the agenda. These differences contained in filigraine the division which would split 1979 black politics in the 1980s between the United Democratic Front, pro-ANC and concerned with mass working-class organization, and the Azanian People’s Organization, which would hew to the original Black Consciousness line.

Yet Black Consciousness activists’ attraction to the nationalist movements was more than a practical matter of access to arms or mere intellectual argument: their response was visceral, deeply emotional, and ethical. The fearsome sense of risk and intense hope that contact with the ANC or PAC inspired offered a powerful outlet for the self-confidence and desire to participate in the liberation struggle that the BCM had aroused. Materials, broadcasts, or envoys from the illegal movements were read and

¹²³ At the GSC Mji proclaimed, “If BC must survive as a viable philosophy and continue to articulate the aspirations of the masses of the people, it must start interpreting our situation from an economic and class point of view ... This will lead us to the point where we ask ourselves the question whether our struggle is an isolated struggle or part of a bigger struggle of the Third World that wants to shake off the yoke of imperialism and replace it with socialistic governments.” Cited in Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p.78. Other sources used here include Interviews, Mji, Mtintso No.2 (“the general

heard with an almost religious fervor. Copies of Sechaba which reached them, even long after their publication, were read “cover to cover” and xeroxed for further distribution, one activist said.¹²⁴ More than 15 years later, another former SASM member recalled “vividly” his first encounter with ANC literature, an anonymously mailed pamphlet, and the excitement and fear it provoked in him and his friends.¹²⁵ “We were being mobilized by Radio Freedom, then a person would recruit you,” recalled an Ngoye SASO activist.¹²⁶ The very clandestinity of the movements and the opprobrium heaped on them by Pretoria helped promote the mystique of the struggle and the image of power they were developing. Merely possessing ANC documents gave prestige in activist circles.¹²⁷ The literature, broadcasts, and meetings – along with political trials of their members – also provided proof of the existence of the movements, despite a decade of suppression: “they made you feel the ANC was real.”¹²⁸ This, in turn, gave an outlet for the sense of political capacity BC had awakened, while the acceptance of political responsibility it encouraged made adherents feel a duty to participate in the activities of the movement when asked. BC activists thus experienced contact with the nationalist movements as transformative moments in their lives.¹²⁹ Co-operation with the movements, above all the

feeling was that the 76 GSC [General Students' Council] ‘went red’.”), and Marx, Lessons of Struggle, *op. cit.*, p.77.

¹²⁴ Interview, Mditshwa

¹²⁵ Interview, Macozoma

¹²⁶ Interview, Sibusiso Ndebele, Durban, September 11, 1992.

¹²⁷ Interview, Mditshwa.

¹²⁸ Interview, Silumko Socupa, East London, December 5, 1991.

¹²⁹ Elleck Nchabeleng recalled that “If a person listens to Radio Freedom or Mozambique, after that you become a new person.” Interview, Johannesburg, August 10, 1992.

ANC, became an extension and deepening of the fevered intensity, excitement, and comradeship which marked BC circles.

While there were growing links to, and sympathy for, the nationalist movements, particularly the ANC, in BC ranks, the ANC did not dominate or dictate the activities and struggles of the diffuse but pervasive Black Consciousness Movement. The strength of ANC links varied greatly from region to region. ANC ties were earliest and strongest, dating from 1972-73, in the Johannesburg and urban areas, major cities in regions near the borders, where external radio and pamphlets reached audiences most easily, the movement of persons in and out of the country was less difficult, and networks of ex-prisoners were actively rebuilding networks and reaching out to BC activists.¹³⁰ Ties appeared lesser and somewhat later in the Eastern Cape, around 1974-75, impelled by the growing ex-prisoner networks and the development of ANC organization in Lesotho, in the face of opposition from Biko and others in his King William's Town circle.¹³¹ ANC organization, and ties to BC, were weakest of all in the Western Cape, a traditional ANC weak spot, where underground activity was made more difficult by distance of the borders, and the ANC presence appears to have been limited to tiny, largely white, propaganda units under constant Security Police pressure. The only area where there

¹³⁰ Daniel Montsitsi, then a Soweto SASM activist, recalls that by 1973 it was "quite easy" to get Sechaba, along with the radio and written programs of the ANC. "Some of our fellows were going in(to Swaziland) and going back (with material)." (Interview). Sources supporting this conclusion also include Diseko, "The Origins and Development of the South African Students Movement," *op. cit.*, as well as Interviews, John Nkadimeng, Martin Ramokgadi, Johannesburg, October 4, 1992, Daniel, Isaacs.

¹³¹ Thenjiwe Mtintso, then a member of the King group hostile to the ANC, recalls beginning to see ANC materials around 1974-75. The growth of the underground spearheaded by the charismatic, Lesotho-based Umkhonto we Sizwe / SACP leader Chris Hani, who had spurred underground development in the Eastern Cape during a secret tour there in 1974. Other sources on this point include Howard Barrell, *MK: The ANC's Armed Struggle*, *op. cit.*, p.29, and Interviews, Charles Nqakula, Johannesburg, 1991, Mati, and Isaacs.

seems to have been substantial overlap between PAC activity and that of the BCM was on the West Rand, where the Young African Christian Movement front organization rode on the backs of BC networks and techniques.¹³² Moreover, while the development of ANC ties increased recruitment into the movement's cells and loyalty to the organization and its ideology, it did not mean that the BC organizations were pushed to fulfill an ANC internal political strategy, chiefly because the ANC did not then have one. The ANC's emphasis on guerrilla recruitment, combined with its belief in its own propaganda regarding the impossibility of above-ground internal political activity outside apartheid structures given the repressive power of the regime, meant that it made no effort to engage in the internal struggles in South Africa during the first half of the 1970s, even in the localities where it had some capacity to do so.¹³³ It would have been difficult in any case to "steer" the tenuously structured BC movement organizations in any case, since, while they were important propagators of ideas and discourse, they had not established mass structures. Decisions on internal struggles were taken by small circles of activists entrenched in local social networks and fiercely jealous of their independence.¹³⁴

¹³² See the sources on YACM cited in n.14 above. Although the PAC enjoyed some residual strength in Cape Town, this appears to be a carry-over of its 1960s presence rather than the consequence of cultivating ties to the BCM a decade later.

¹³³ See Barrell, *MK: The ANC's Armed Struggle*, *op. cit.*, pp.24-27. This was confirmed by Joseph Mati, one of the leaders of the ANC's internal underground organization in East London. He said that the principal aims of its activity were guerrilla recruitment rather than involvement in internal politics, and explained that while he cultivated ties with student activists, once they had been recruited he advised them to keep a low profile and monitor rather than lead BC organizational activities (Interview No.2, East London, December 9, 1992).

¹³⁴ For instance, although he one of the SASM members with ANC ties, Daniel Montsitsi emphasizes that SASM's Afrikaans campaign was its own initiative, and says SASM activists "were not at all ready to serve under the whip of bosses." He says they kept ANC operatives informed but did not receive instructions from them. Interview. Similar comments were made by an East London BPC activist also involved in the ANC underground there. Interview, Mathemba Makapela, East London, May 26, 1992. Likewise, one of his SASM colleagues recalls that there was a "heavy ANC presence" among members at the May 1976

Thus the development of the Black Consciousness Movement involved the elaboration of a novel discourse of conscientization, the forging of practices centered on the attempt to create an autonomous black civil society, and a steady movement away from government opponents operating from the regime's platform and towards the revolutionary opposition of the nationalist movements. Drawing on the rhetoric of the Black Power movement, the ideas of the New Left, and South Africa's own black political traditions, the movement articulated a narrative to explain the oppression blacks experienced in South Africa and derive from it a strategy and tactics centered on consciousness-raising and the building of institutional autonomy among blacks to prepare for an ultimate confrontation with the regime. In practice, BC activists worked to link existing black organizations and create new ones, particularly for politicized youth, to create a new, militant black elite while spreading movement dogma as far and wide as possible. Their activities brought them first into contact and later into growing conflict with black politicians opposing apartheid "within the system," notably Buthelezi, as their thoughts and networks moved increasingly into touch with those of the nationalist movements, particularly the ANC. They also provoked struggles with country-wide consequences within the institutions of civil society where BC activists worked and studied – the universities, churches, and newspapers – and it is to these we now turn.

SASM conference, this was not felt as any conflict with BC loyalties. Interview, Billy Masetla, Johannesburg, August 17, 1992.

III. INSURGENCY IN THE INSTITUTIONS: THE POLITICIZATION OF THE BLACK UNIVERSITY, PRESS, AND CHURCH

One of the Black Consciousness Movement's most important achievements was the largely successful struggle to gain influence over key black social communications institutions – the universities, press, and churches. While the structural transformation of the public sphere which had accompanied urbanization and industrialization had created new political opportunities, they meant little unless seized by social actors. These key organizations linked together a black society which had developed broader identities, stretching beyond the older world of face-to-face relations, but this, by itself, did not mean that these new identities would be infused with an oppositional or political consciousness. The BCM, which had begun among the black intelligentsia, grew most widely and deeply in the institutions of higher education, religion, and print journalism. Shielded by the partial autonomy these bodies possessed, BC activists struggled to challenge white control over them, change their workings, and express alternative values through them, and draw on their resources. Despite the ham-handed efforts of conservative white leaders and the state to quash them, the BCM activists achieved a remarkable degree of success in building influence and power over these opinion-leading institutions of black civil society. As a result, these ostensibly non-political and private bodies increasingly became part of the political struggle in the public sphere.

Why were these institutions, in particular, the first major parts of civil society won over by the BCM? As we saw in Chapter Three, all these institutions reflected the

pervasive pattern of white control within the apartheid regime, which existed over the major black public sphere organizations in civil society as well as in the structure of the state itself. As a result, there was a perpetual stream of grievances generated by the racial inherent inequality in their workings. Yet if all organizations where blacks were to be found were marked by the anger bred by white domination, in these institutions challenges took shape first and most effectively. In part this is because BC began as a movement of the intelligentsia, and so grew first and fastest in the institutions where they were to be found. This was partly by design as well, since, as noted in the last section, part of the object of “infiltrative politics” oriented towards civil society organizations was to gain power in these important institutions of communication. But it was also due to their institutional character. The black universities and colleges, churches and mosques, and newspapers and magazines were discursive institutions of an urbanizing and industrializing society. They enjoyed autonomy institutionally through their private status or traditional privilege and functionally because debate and dissent must be tolerated to fulfil their functions of educating and forming public opinion in an urbanizing, industrializing society.¹³⁵ (This was particularly true in a clientelist oligarchy such as South Africa, where the state’s legalism meant that the overt censorship or security force intervention, as practiced in dictatorships, ran counter to the constitutionalist tradition.¹³⁶)

¹³⁵ The argument here is influenced by Sidney Tarrow, Power in Movement: Social Movement, Collective Action, and Politics (New York, Cambridge University Press: 1994) (discussion of abeyance structures). It is paralleled in the US literature by Mary Fainsod Katzenstein’s argument on how social movements survive hostile environments within social institutions, “Feminism in American Institutions,” Signs, vol. 16 (1990), and Mayer Zald and Michael Berger on “Social Movements in organizations: Coup d’Etat, Insurgency, and Mass Movements,” American Journal of Sociology, vol. 83 (1978).

¹³⁶ On this point see Craig Charney, “Vigilantes, Clientelism, and the South African State,” Transformation, no. 15, (1991).

The movement also succeeded in mobilizing sympathetic allies in the institutions – black leaders and a few sympathetic whites – who used their influence on its behalf. The institutional autonomy the possessed should not be exaggerated, and certainly did not translate into impunity for individual activists or their organizations, for the state frequently took action against them. These institutions did, however, afford enough free space to enable the BCM to implant itself within the professional and social networks of black civil society too deeply to be up rooted by individual acts of repression. Consequently, the movement would largely succeed in its efforts to win influence within these communal organizations, and through them, in the larger urban black community.

In these black opinion-leading institutions, challenges by the fast-growing BCM provoked major internal crises which became organizational turning points. It was surely inevitable that “irresistible force” of the quest for black power would collide with the “immovable object” of the white grip on black communications organs. Within each, the confrontations opposed black activists aligned with BC against the white institutional authorities and their black collaborators. Some developed over symbolic issues, others over substantive concerns – but in every case they escalated into major battles over the essential issues of power within the institution and how it would be operated. They were fought out openly within the organization, and, in the case of the universities and the church, in public as well. They resulted in important shifts in power, resulting in changes in leadership, line, and activity – though not without substantial casualties as well.

Yet though the explosions the BCM set off opened breaches in white power within black institutions, the gains were consolidated in many more, smaller struggles – daily resistance through attrition, almost invisible to outsiders, but whose important was

profoundly felt by those involved. These were constant battles against the reluctance of the white-controlled structures of power to alter practices, express views within the institutions, and speak through them to a broader public outside. They ranged from disputes over curriculum to quarrels over pay, the use of facilities, or the information and opinions published or voiced from the pulpit. Each was usually small in itself, but symbolic in character, with implications concerning the status or power of blacks within the organization or the values, authority, and legitimacy of the apartheid regime. While this war of attrition was an everyday phenomenon, it is not the same as Scott's "everyday resistance" or Bayart's "popular modes of political action," because unlike those "weapons of the weak," in this case the opposition to power was overt, explicit, and perceived as such by all concerned (explaining the intense edge which animated these otherwise minor quarrels.)¹³⁷ They involved constant pressure in the internal political life of the organizations, in order to wear down the authorities, like the steady drops of water that cracked the rock. Cumulatively, they produced major changes in the place of blacks within the institutions, in their ways of operating, and in the discourse they voiced in black communities, despite the efforts of the state to hamper BC activity and stamp out BC organizations.

Indeed, repression by the state and its institutional allies in response to BC struggles hampered movement organization and deeply affected the lives of the individual it touched, but it proved unable to stem the rise of the movement's influence within the black social institutions. BC organizations, particularly SASO, were clearly weakened by

measures directed against the organization and its leaders, reflecting the unremitting hostility government displayed towards BC groups. The impact was particularly cruel on the talented, gregarious individuals who were themselves made to suffer the “social death” of detention, banning, and internal exile. Yet while BC organizations were battered by the state, the social networks out of which they had sprung had already absorbed their ideas, and within the structural shelter provided by their institutions’ private or privileged character, they sustained the flames of BC even after the bearers of its initial sparks were removed. By 1975-76, this let the BCM get a second wind, recovering much of its strength and influence over civil society despite the constant pressure of the state on formal movement organization.

With the establishment of SASO on all the black campuses by the end of 1971, the stage was set for conflict between increasingly militant students and inflexible white administrations. In its initial years, SASO had shunned “protest politics,” which it associated with the white-led NUSAS and condemned as ineffective and dangerous. Nevertheless, there were a number of incidents of protest on the black campuses between 1969 and early 1972 which underlined the near-inevitability of protest as student solidarity developed under prevailing conditions. In 1969, students at the University of Durban-Westville called three mass meetings to protest the administration’s refusal to permit them an autonomous Students Representatives Council (SRC).¹³⁷ The following year, students staged a sit-in at the administration building of the University of the

¹³⁷ In Apter’s terms, the situation within the institution became a “simulacrum,” in which both challengers and power-holders perceived the stakes as symbolic challenge to the *status quo* as well as the specific issues in dispute.

¹³⁸ Kumi Naidoo, Interview with Saths Cooper, Boston, 1989.

Western Cape over various grievances, including a demand for better channels of communication with the administration, while those at Turfloop boycotted the ceremony celebrating the institution's elevation from college to university status.¹³⁹ The early months of 1972 saw clashes on two campuses. In March, at the University of the North, the university ordered the removal of the SASO Manifesto from student diaries printed by the SRC; the student preferred to burn them publicly instead.¹⁴⁰ In April, at the University of Zululand, students staged a successful one-day sit-in to protest the wording and limited information on their degree certificates, and they later boycotted graduation ceremonies because the small hall used could not accommodate their families and friends once white official and dignitaries – who were given priority – had been seated.¹⁴¹ These incidents pointed to the deepening tension on campus between black anger and white power.

In an unprecedented show of strength, SASO launched protests country-wide in May-June 1972 that paralyzed the black institutions and even rocked white campuses – but at high cost. Students began boycotting classes at Turfloop May 6, protesting the expulsion of former SRC President O.R. Tiro for a graduation address damning the black universities as inferior and urging black graduates “to bear greater responsibility in the

¹³⁹ Race Relations Survey, 1970, pp.247, 291. Students admitted at Turfloop in 1971 were required to sign a declaration that they would not “participate in activities implying a rejection of the university,” an indication of the way the question of the legitimacy of racially segregated institutions (and the broader regime of which they formed part) was always highly sensitive.

¹⁴⁰ Race Relations Survey, 1972, p.387.

¹⁴¹ SASO Trial Documents, file 2. An American diplomat commented, “That so small a matter can result in a major confrontation points out the total lack of communication between the students and administration. Students at the university regard the largely Afrikaans-speaking teaching and administrative staff (about 80%) as their sworn enemies. The administration seems to totally lack any feel for the students

liberation of our people.”¹⁴² Three days later, after the Turfloop administration had responded by expelling the entire student body, students at the University of the Western Cape began their own boycott. On May 13, the SASO leadership and black SRC Presidents decided to launch a “test of strength” and called for a country-wide class boycott at black colleges and universities from June 1, later issuing vague but ambitious “minimum demands.”¹⁴³ On the campuses, SASO activists reached beyond their traditional networks of supporters, mobilizing students around local and national grievances while polarizing the conflict in broader us-vs.-them moral terms by invoking black solidarity as well as inter-personal solidarity.¹⁴⁴ The result: by June 1, all South Africa’s black universities were on boycott or closed one after another, including Turfloop, UWC, UDW, UNB, Zululand, and Fort Hare, and smaller institutions such as Durban’s Springfield College of Education and M.L. Sultan Technical College for Indians, the Transvaal College of Education in Johannesburg (also for Indians), and the Maphumulo and Federal Theological Seminaries. Conflict spilled over onto white

and to be unable to diplomatically handle even the most modest of student demands.” Airgram A-057, American Embassy Pretoria to Department of State, April 28, 1972, State Department Archives.

¹⁴² Tiro’s speech can be found in Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, *op. cit.*, pp.497-499. Except where otherwise noted, the account of the protests which follows draws on *Race Relations Survey, 1972*, pp.387-392, and *Black Review, 1972*, pp.174-180.

¹⁴³ The phrase quoted comes from Kumi Naidoo interview, Cooper. The “Alice Declaration” issued by SASO on May 13, which notes that the situation “can be escalated into a major confrontation with the authorities,” can be found in Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, *op. cit.*, p.499.

¹⁴⁴ The effective use of grievances was noted by in a cable from the American Embassy in Cape Town: “In each case, leaders at black universities have utilized [a] skillful blend of local grievances and solidarity with expelled students at Turfloop to produce large numbers of students openly in conflict with administrations of those universities” (Telegram to State Department, Cape Town 489, May 23, 1972, State Department Archives). These local issues included student expulsions, the “dictatorial attitudes” of the administrations, and police activities on campus at Fort Hare, and poor qualifications of lecturers at UWC. The moral polarization of the issues around racial lines larger than the social networks which form SASO’s core was described at Fort Hare by Mtintso. The mood also touched non-African students: thus a speech proposing a

campuses, with a solidarity march in Johannesburg by Wits students, a picket at the University of Natal-Pietermaritzburg, and a demonstration by University of Cape Town students, all broken up with baton charges, teargas, and arrests. (In Cape Town shock at the police action against the students, who were on the steps of St. Mary's Cathedral in the city center, brought 10,000 demonstrators – in majority white, but also colored and African – back to the cathedral June 5 for the largest multi-racial protest South Africa had ever seen.)¹⁴⁵ At the black institutions, the administration response was uniformly inflexible, refusing negotiations with students, apparently under pressure from a government which, like SASO, saw the protests as a challenge to its authority.¹⁴⁶ The students' concerns and the mass expulsion threats issued in response gave the crisis resonance in urban black communities, aided by wide press coverage and parents' meetings organized by students in Johannesburg and the Western Cape. But negotiations between parents and ASSECA representatives and the authorities at Turfloop and UDW yielded few concessions, while SASO, driven more by moral imperative than clear strategy or specific negotiable conditions, was unable to channel the movement it had set off to achieve concrete gains.¹⁴⁷ After a few days to a couple of weeks of protest, the

class boycott at the Indian University of Durban-Westville declared, "We are not voting as Indians but as blacks. ... We need solidarity to eradicate this repugnant system."

¹⁴⁵ *The Argus*, June 4, 1972, June 5, 1972, June 7, 1972, June 12, 1972. An indication of the government's panicked reaction to the crisis was the banning of the imposition of a nation-wide ban on open-air protests, after an unsuccessful attempt to ban the June 5 Cape Town gathering (which the protesters evaded by going inside the cathedral). *The Argus*, June 7, 1972, June 5, 1972.

¹⁴⁶ A US Embassy cable noted that the South African government's "heavy stake in this aspect of apartheid as well as multiplicity of student demands at various campuses limits its flexibility in responding to [the] black student challenge." Another noted that Turfloop rector C.J. Boshoff could offer few concessions, "probably on instructions from Pretoria." American Embassy Cape Town, Telegram to State Department, Cape Town 489, May 23, 1972, American Consulate Johannesburg, Telegram to State Department, Johannesburg 306, May 23, 1972, State Department Archives.

students returned to classes. Administrators banned SASO activity at several campuses, and many activists were victimized for their part in the boycotts through expulsion or refusal of registration. (At Turfloop, Fort Hare, UWC, and Zululand, hundreds of student walked out in sympathy with those expelled, abandoning their studies.) Thus, in the 1972 student protests, SASO “showed sharp teeth”¹⁴⁸ – but the price was high and the gains few.

A second wave of student protests broke out in mid-1973, less widespread but more effective than those of the year before, if still far from painless for the activists involved.¹⁴⁹ They began in May at UWC over the familiar issue of official recognition of the elected SRC, leading to the suspension of Henry Isaacs, who was both SRC President and SASO’s national President. On June 8, students marched around campus and disrupted classes; in response the university was closed, the student body expelled *en masse*, and Isaacs arrested and held for three days. Building on their experience the previous year, the students issued a well-thought-out list of complaints concerning racism and inequality at UWC and launched a large-scale campaign to win support from their parents and communities.¹⁵⁰ At least 20 public meetings were held in towns large and small, in the Western, Eastern, and Northern Cape regions as well as Johannesburg,

¹⁴⁷ On the parents meetings, see American Consulate Johannesburg, Telegrams to State Department, Johannesburg 306, May 23, 1972, Johannesburg 324, May 30, 1972, State Department Archives. On SASO’s problems, see Minutes, Meeting of the SRC Presidents, May 31, 1972, Carter-Karis-Gerhart Archive.

¹⁴⁸ American Embassy Cape Town, Telegram, Cape Town 489, May 23, 1972, State Department Archives.

¹⁴⁹ The account which follows draws largely on Race Relations Survey, 1973, op. cit., pp.336-340, except where otherwise noted.

¹⁵⁰ The demands are in the “Geel Document” (yellow document) they issued, reprinted in Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, op. cit., pp.525-30, while the campaign is described in Muslim News, June 29, 1973, and Cape Herald, June 30, 1973, July 7, 1973, and July 14, 1973.

where calls for support for the general readmission of all students and their other demands met an enthusiastic response. Sympathy protests also took place at colored teachers' training colleges in Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth.¹⁵¹ The culmination was the huge meeting in Cape Town July 8 with which this chapter opened, where the country's leading black political figures, associated with the BCM or government-created institutions, backed the students before the largest black protest meeting South Africa had ever seen. Thanks to their successful efforts to arouse public opinion, the students scored a series of triumphs: all were readmitted, the white Minister of Colored Relations acknowledged their grievances in Parliament, a commission of inquiry to look into them was appointed, and a leading colored educator was named to replace the white university head. But there was also a tragic coda: Isaacs was banned by the Minister of Justice on July 31, angry students called for the suspension of classes until the commission reported, leading to the expulsion of 18 activists, and half the student body left campus and their studies in sympathy. Similarly, at Fort Hare, protests against an unpopular dormitory warden were initially tolerated, but after the conflict escalated into a bitter boycott, half the students ultimately decided to walk out of the university for good. Still, the 1973 strikes were in several respects a more impressive exercise of student power than the previous year's. The students showed greater organization and maturity, formulating more specific and realistic demands, and making more extensive and systematic efforts to mobilize public opinion and bring pressure on the authorities. For their part, both university officials and government were more willing to listen and respond, as they realized that annual collisions would tear apart the institutions they were

trying to nurture. But the more extreme on both sides – the state security apparatus and the more hotheaded students – helped escalate tensions and make conflict resolution harder.

In the wake of the big 1972 student mobilizations, smaller-scale single-campus protests over particular issues also took place more frequently and successfully than before. Some dealt with long-standing issues over housing, rules, and food. Thus at UDW, students registered complaints over restrictive dormitory rules by casting blank ballots in an election for house committee.¹⁵² At Zululand, when women students were required to sign a register on leaving the dorms and their rooms made subject to bed-check at any hour of the night, they marched to the warden's house and slept in the common room until the rules were lifted.¹⁵³ Other conflicts reflected academic concerns: UNB students expressed outrage when the administration passed over a long-serving black professor and made a white man who had studied under him the head of his department.¹⁵⁴ Still others were more openly political and symbolic: UDW students boycotted speeches on their campus by Prime Minister B.J. Vorster and South African Indian council chief A.M. Rajab in 1973 and 1974.¹⁵⁵ These cases were indications that administrations had become somewhat more tolerant, once they had learned how student power could make a mishandled demonstration spiral into a disastrous confrontation.

¹⁵¹ Cape Herald, August 25, 1973, and Race Relations Survey, 1973, op. cit., p.341.

¹⁵² Black Review, 1974, p.182.

¹⁵³ SASO Trial Documents, Reel 1, Karis-Gerhart Archive.

¹⁵⁴ Black Review, 1974, pp.165-6.

¹⁵⁵ Black Review, 1973, p.37, Black Review, 1974, op. cit., pp.181-2.

And students were more careful to focus on particular issues and try to avoid situations which could escalate out of control.

The conflicts on campus that the BCM generated thus changed the balance of power within black institutions of higher education and touched the broader communities beyond. The students demonstrated their ability to challenge specific injustices and the overall system of apartheid in higher education and rally enough public support to force changes and win some protection against retaliation. Confrontation – and the desire to forestall it – loosened rules regarding student conduct and increased the number of Africans, coloreds, and Indians in teaching and administrative positions. Equally important, the protests won space and resources for political activities by students and opportunities for them to use the universities and student groups to mobilize the community. Of course, while significant, these changes involved unstable accommodations, not *modus vivendi*, and the state's security apparatus kept constant pressure on activists. Moreover, the very moral imperatives and loose structures which drove the student movements made it difficult for them to negotiate or compromise, raising the costs of conflict, particularly during the major confrontations of 1972-73. Yet even the expulsion of activists spread the word about BC still further, both through campaigns of solidarity in the communities which followed and through their own work off campus, particularly as teachers. For their stance and for their sacrifice, the SASO activists and the BCM more generally were seen as heroes by the youth and won respect from their elders.¹⁵⁶ SASO's stance moved some whites as well, helping radicalize many

¹⁵⁶ Interview, Isaacs; Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, *op. cit.*, p.127.

white student and provoke outrage at government from influential segments of white opinion.

The emergence of the black journalists' movement also gave rise to struggles to transform the institutions where they found themselves, and their success in turn strengthened the movement and changed what was published. The World in Johannesburg, the black paper with the largest circulation and staff, offers the most important example of this process. There, a steady and increasingly effective effort by black editorial staff from 1973 on turned a scandal sheet into a politicized mass-circulation daily more than comparable to overseas working-class tabloids and which would play a key role before and during the crisis of 1976-77. Similar changes occurred at the Cape Herald and Muslim News in Cape Town, which would reflect the voices and struggles of the BCM in the Western Cape.¹⁵⁷ Important if less dramatic ones also took place in the black editions of white papers like the Rand Daily Mail and Daily Dispatch.¹⁵⁸ While the efforts of black journalists and the flow of events were the driving forces in these changes, they had important allies in the small but active group of liberal (and in a few cases, radical) white journalists. This section is a case study of the struggles which occurred at The World and

¹⁵⁷ The 1973 walk-off at UWC had a major effect on the two Cape Town papers, as did staff changes that brought BC sympathizers into crucial positions – the young Rasid Seria at the Herald, and the arrival of the older writer James Matthews at Muslim News. Interview, Seria, concerning the Cape Herald, and on Muslim News, Interview, Farid Sayed, Cape Town, June 5, 1991, and Mohammed Haroon, Presentation, Conference on the History of the Alternative Press in South Africa, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, June 1991.

¹⁵⁸ The best-known account of the changes at the Dispatch due to the friendship between the editor, Donald Woods, and Biko and member of his circle can be found in Donald Woods, Asking for Trouble: The Education of a White African (Boston, Beacon Press: 1980). It was also discussed by Mtintso in interviews.

the changes that resulted in the paper, which stands as a representative of the larger process of change that the BCM caused in the black press as a whole.

The first issue to confront the press as the BCM developed was the coverage of BC organizations themselves. The World didn't report on SASO's first three conferences in 1968, 1969, and 1970. It began to carry stories on them in 1971, along with others on the series of meetings which led to the formation of the BPC (meetings chaired, not co-incidentally, by World editor Moerane). By this stage, Moerane seemed finally to have accepted the BC leadership as part of the elite black circles which The World had traditionally covered. But there were still disputes about the groups in the newsroom: the paper often failed to assign reporters to cover SASO meetings, carrying wire service reports instead.¹⁵⁹ The tension between politically-inclined reporters and the editor over the BCM is evident in the paper's treatment of the thirteenth anniversary of the Sharpeville shootings in 1973: two days before the anniversary a young reporter, Don Manaka, published a piece on the Sharpeville Youth Organization's commemoration service, while on the day the editor ignored it altogether.¹⁶⁰

But the turning point for The World came in a major internal struggle over the coverage of mass mobilization. After The World began paying attention to the emergent BC political elite, its failure to cover mass struggles (which could have led to accusations of agitation by the authorities) became the subject of dispute within the paper. For instance, the July 1972 student strikes which paralyzed the black campuses appear to have been almost ignored by The World. The crunch came with the Durban strikes of January-

¹⁵⁹ Interview, Latakomo.

¹⁶⁰ The World, March 19, 1973, March 21, 1973.

February 1973, the first major strike wave of the 1970s in South Africa. The editorial director, Charles Steele, regarded them as distant and unimportant to its readers. So the paper ran nothing on them from their outbreak January 31 through February 6, although they were front-page news in the white dailies. But for Percy Qoboza, the deputy editor, and news editor Joe Latakomo, the strikes were a vital development, and they argued vigorously for covering them. Their chance came February 7, when a football league dispute led to a suspension of matches, robbing Steele of his favorite front-page subject and letting Qoboza and Latakomo put the strikes there instead.¹⁶¹ The UBJ got involved at a meeting the next week, where its members compared The World's coverage of the strikes with the Rand Daily Mail's and released a statement critical of the black paper. The attack drew a furious response in print from Moerane – but almost immediately The World began to do a better job of reporting social conflicts, particularly around Johannesburg.¹⁶²

Yet such confrontations, while dramatic and important, were also rare; more common were daily episodes of conflict. Battles to change the paper took place on an ongoing, continual basis in the newsroom. "It was day-to-day issues – a slow process of transforming the newspapers," says Joe Thlloe. "It was something you fought at conferences daily."¹⁶³ The black journalists were particularly critical of the emphasis in front-page leads on sport, crime, and other sensational subjects. There were also interminable arguments with the subs over the choice and editing of stories. Latakomo recalled, "Even when a report [on BC activities] did come through, the telex was in the

¹⁶¹ Interview, Latakomo.

¹⁶² Interview, Mthimkhulu, Johannesburg, October 18, 1991, Rand Daily Mail, February 1973, The World February 16, 1973.

subs' room. We were not aware it had come through. The whole structure censored news without our being aware."¹⁶⁴ As the black reporters became increasingly politicized, tensions between them and the white subs mounted. It came to a showdown in April 1976, when a meeting was held to address the issue. There the reporters won the day: it was decided that major revisions to stories would be made only with the approval of the reporter or news editor.

Part of the reason for the BC activists' success at The World was the allies they acquired in 1974, when the paper received new, more militant black leaders as Qoboza replaced Moerane as editor and Latakomo became his deputy. Qoboza had been born in 1939 in Sophiatown, where at his mine-worker father's insistence he received a strict Catholic upbringing and education. (Ultimately he became national President of Young Christian Workers.)¹⁶⁵ He tasted the brutality of apartheid firsthand as a teenager in the 1950s, when his family was removed to Soweto on open army trucks in the pouring rain and he contracted double pneumonia. After school, he worked as a clerk for Johannesburg's Non-European Affairs Department, then joined the liberal Progressive Party. His politics were broadly liberal – opposed to the homelands, favorable to capitalism, sympathetic to nationalist ideas – but he was more outspoken and had more of the popular touch than the snobbish Moerane. He rose rapidly after joining The World in 196_, becoming editor at just 35. Physically, he was round-faced, with a high forehead, broad nose and lips; he was

¹⁶³ Interview, Thlooe.

¹⁶⁴ Interview, Latakomo.

¹⁶⁵ The Star, February 6, 1975; The New Yorker, November 28, 1977, Fred St. Leger and Tim Couzens, The African Press in South Africa, Unpublished Manuscript, n.d., p.179.

stocky and round-shouldered, though a bit above average in height. Personally, he left a deep impression, with his flamboyance, powerful laugh, colloquial language, and considerable ability. Don Pinnock tells how, two weeks after joining The World in 1972 as an earnest young liberal white sub, he was stunned to see Qoboza, displeased with a story just handed in, jump onto his desk and shout, "You kaffirs! You think you can write?"¹⁶⁶ Though known to like his liquor himself, Qoboza was a tough disciplinarian – essential in the boozy World newsroom. Qoboza almost suspended Mthobisi Mutloatse the week he had been hired, after he had gone on a drinking binge with colleagues. When he asked Qoboza how he could not have gone, the former Catholic schoolboy was blunt: "You should have said no!"¹⁶⁷ Qoboza's second-in-command was the affable but highly professional Latakomo, a barrel-chested, square-jawed man from Pretoria. When Qoboza was away at Harvard on a Nieman Fellowship from September 1975 to June 1976, Latakomo filled in as editor. The year abroad was important for Qoboza – he read Malcolm X and African nationalist authors, and came home angrier, more impatient, and more militant. Although as editors Qoboza and Latakomo could not play leading roles in the UBJ, they were broadly sympathetic to BC. They also possessed two important liberal white colleagues at the paper, World manager John Marquard and (from 1976) Weekend World editorial director Dennis Beckett. Increasingly, they challenged Steele's influence over the paper's editorial content and line, until the Argus company finally agreed to remove the editorial director and give them full control of the paper soon after Qoboza's return from the U.S.

¹⁶⁶ Interview, Pinnock, Grahamstown, December 2, 1991. "Kaffir" is the South African equivalent of the American term "nigger".

The key role which Black Consciousness played in these struggles, as an inspiration and a source of mutual aid and encouragement, is acknowledged by journalists of the era. "We identified closely with the BCM," recalled The World's Phil Mthimkhulu, "and we tried in our news coverage to reflect the viewpoint of the BCM". Latakgomo said, "We tried to move BC from the higher level of the Bikos, Tiros, and Nengwekhulus who had it at the universities."¹⁶⁸

The results of the struggles in the newsroom on the content of The World were dramatic. "There was a conscious decision to move away from a sex, sport, and booze paper, to a responsible, politically aware newspaper," according to Joe Latakgomo. The proportion of front-page leads dealing with serious issues more than tripled compared to 1968's 20%, reaching 72% in 1976. The share of them which dealt with the bantustans fell by two-thirds, with a similar decline for the UBC's, while increased attention was given to extra-parliamentary black political parties. The new headlines included items like "SASO denies Buthelezi demo" and "Fears Hit Transkei Opposition Party".¹⁶⁹ Editorial content also changed sharply. The news space devoted to accidents, sport, and crime was cut by almost half between 1968 and 1976, from 44% to 23%, while the space given news and feature reports on politics and society more than doubled. In comparative terms, the proportion of serious news and features in The World in 1968 had been like that of U.K. working class tabloids such as the Mirror or Express, and little more than one-third that of the Rand Daily Mail. In 1976, the share of serious news and features in The World was

¹⁶⁷ Interview, Mutloatse.

¹⁶⁸ Interview, Mthimkhulu, Latakgomo.

¹⁶⁹ Interview, Latakgomo, St. Leger and Couzens, op. cit., pp.280, 216, 215.

twice that of the British tabloids and almost equal to that of the Mail. The paper's editorials also became more political in focus (62% in the first half of 1976, vs. just 43% in 1968), and more vigorous and biting.¹⁷⁰ The net effect of the struggles at the paper is described by Latakgomo: "By early 1976, we were able, perhaps more so than any other publication, to write strongly on the issues of the time."¹⁷¹ With the parallel changes which took place at the papers with the most influence among coloreds in Cape Town, and similar struggles at the black editions of the white papers, the BCM succeeded in re-politicizing these important instruments of social communication, and made them resonate its ideas into the broader community.

In the churches, the influence of Black Consciousness was first felt in the seminaries, swept up in the ideas and struggles of the black student movement, and in meetings sponsored by BC groups to build support among clergy. The four largest seminaries – the English Protestant Fedsem next to Fort Hare, the Lutheran Maphumulo in Durban, the Catholic St. Peter's near Pretoria, and the colored Dutch Reformed theological faculty at UWC – were all touched by the boycotts of 1972-73. (Indeed, the Alice Declaration, the call for the 1972 national student strike, was drafted at a SASO meeting at Fedsem.) But the individual seminaries, like the black universities, were also wracked by internal conflicts; politicized seminarians revolted against conservative administrators at Fedsem and St. Peter's, provoking major changes in leadership at both

¹⁷⁰ ibid., pp.208, 211, 227.

¹⁷¹ Interview, Latakgomo.

institutions.¹⁷² Likewise, in less dramatic but equally important day-by-day encounters, black seminarians demanded – and obtained – curricula more relevant to social concerns and black experience, including the study of Black Theology. Others challenged conditions of study they considered undignified, such as Simon Farisani, expelled from Maphumulo for refusing the manual labor expected of all students.¹⁷³ As a result, the training of the black church elite changed, as authority and classes in the seminaries became more sympathetic to Black Theology, producing growing numbers of energetic, politicized black clergy.¹⁷⁴ Meanwhile, following up on the Black Theology seminars of the now-defunct UCM, the BPC held three conferences in 1972 and 1973 to bring older, established black church leaders into contact with the young church activists. The aim was institutional as well as theological: “to ‘increase their effectiveness’ as black leaders,” to gain ‘control over churches whose membership is mostly black’, and to use such power to change priorities.” The means proposed included building black solidarity within individual churches and eliminating white participation in the Inter-

¹⁷² On the Fedsem conflict, see *Black Review* 1972, pp.36-7; on that at St. Peter’s, American Embassy Pretoria to State Department, Airgram A-67, p.3, State Department Archives, and Interview, Wolfram Kistner, Johannesburg, August 4, 1992.

¹⁷³ Interviews, Kistner, Manas Buthelezi, Soweto, August 28, 1992, Klaus Nurnberger, Pietermaritzburg, September 9, , 1992, and Richard Stevens, Cape Town, July 4, 1991.

¹⁷⁴ In the case of Islam, the situation was different in detail, if broadly: since imams were not trained in theological schools in South Africa (the principal centers of Islamic learning for South African Muslims remaining Egypt and Pakistan), political militancy was injected into the mosque in the Cape in the 1970s by Muslim student activists, working together with clergy, particularly younger ones, attuned to the internationally-emergent wave of political Islam. The key organizations to take up the cause were the Muslim Students Associations at UWC and the University of the Western Cape and the Muslim Youth Movement. By the mid-1970s these groups were expressing public opposition to apartheid and sharing platforms with BC groups at public events in Cape Town, and a few mosques – among them the Stegmann Road mosque of the late Imam Haroon – also became platforms for protest. Interview, Farid Sayyed, Cape Town, June 5, 1991.

Denominational African Ministers Association (IDAMASA), the largest black clergy group.¹⁷⁵

As militant young ministers, *dominees*, and priests fanned out from the seminaries, they brought the ferment of BC into their parishes, helped by some older colleagues. In the Catholic church, five young black members of the St. Peter's Old Boys Association published the Black Priests' Manifesto in 1970, charging that they were treated as "glorified altar boys." The following year, black laymen scandalized the Bishops Conference with a placard demonstration attacking "white bosses in church."¹⁷⁶ In 1972, the Justice and Peace Association called on the curia in Rome to halt an effort by a white bishop to remove its black chair.¹⁷⁷ In 1974, black Catholic priests threatened a walk-out from the Priests' Council, the highest decision-making body after the bishops.¹⁷⁸ More startling still were developments in the black Dutch Reformed Churches: in mid-1973 a consultation of African NGKA ministers rejected apartheid as unbiblical and called on ministers to "conscientize the people," with similar stances adopted by the colored NGSK at its 1974 synod.¹⁷⁹ Other denominations internalized the process of

¹⁷⁵ Walshe, Church Versus State in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.153, containing citation from Black Community Programs, "Report of Follow-Up Conference with Black Church Leaders held at Lay Ecumenical Center, Edendale, Natal, on the 15th-18th August, 1972.

¹⁷⁶ New Nation, Johannesburg, June 7, 1991, Interview, Bokwe Mafuna, Paris, September 1990, Race Relations Survey, 1972, *op. cit.*, p.46, Drum, Johannesburg, December 8, 1972, Peter Randall, Apartheid and the Church (Johannesburg, SPRO-CAS: 1972), p.43.

¹⁷⁷ Race Relations Survey, 1972, p.46.

¹⁷⁸ Black Review 1974, p.134.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.* p.135, Pro Veritate, Johannesburg, November 1973, November 1974, Esau Jacobs, "The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk," in H.W. van der Merwe, ed., Towards an Open Society in South Africa: The role of Voluntary Organizations (Cape Town, D. Philip: 1980), p. 27, Ernie Regehr,

change – the Anglicans, for instance, set up “challenge groups” to seek out racial inequities – but while this made public eruptions less frequent, it did not avert conflict.¹⁸⁰ All these conflicts reflected, in part, the growing numbers and self-confidence of black clergy, as well as also concern among white clergy to live up to their anti-apartheid rhetoric and their worry that blacks would drift away or split off from their churches if they did not.¹⁸¹ Yet the effects of those factors can only be understood by considering the context, where the Black Consciousness Movement and Black Theology had become driving forces for change.¹⁸² One white theologian, contrasting the white-controlled discussions of the past with the black initiative he was witnessing, described the latter as the enactment of Black Theology.¹⁸³ The black clergy who challenged white control of the church coalesced in networks of contact and debate flowing from the black theology seminars launched by UCM, SASO, BCP, and the seminaries.¹⁸⁴

Perceptions of Apartheid: The Churches and Political Change in South Africa (Scottsdale, PA. Herald Press: 1979), p.227.

¹⁸⁰ Blacks campaigned openly for a greater voice in church policy, and the Anglican Synod of October 1973 was marked by angry exchanges between black and white over power in the church. Walshe, Church Versus State in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.154, and Black Review, 1974, p.135.

¹⁸¹ Thus a white theologian at a majority-black conference wrote how, given their numbers, the blacks “quite naturally took the leadership.” Klaus Nurnberger, “Comment: Relevant Theology in Action,” Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, Johannesburg, December 1972, p.63. The latter concerns are cited in Race Relations Survey, 1971, p.48, Race Relations Survey, 1972, and the SPRO-CAS report, Apartheid and the Church, *op. cit.*

¹⁸² The link between the rise of BC and black challenges within the church was noted by several contemporary observers, including Black Review, 1974, p.135, Regehr, Perceptions of Apartheid, *op. cit.*, p.229, and Marjorie Hope and James Young The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation (Maryknoll, Orbis Books: 1981), p.182.

¹⁸³ Nurnberger, “Comment,” *op. cit.*, p.63.

¹⁸⁴ While white control of the church was challenged by Black Theology, Christian religious practice and church structure *per se* was not challenged by it. In this respect it was different from Latin American Liberation Theology, which not only sought to make the church more relevant to the concerns of the poor but to restructure its activities around local-level base communities. However, there was one notable change in the theological position of black clergy produced by BC, not in relation to Christianity but rather

Black Consciousness also had a steadily growing impact across denominational lines through IDAMASA, the major ecumenical organization for African Protestant clergy. Revived in the early 1960s, it had over 1,000 members in over 100 branches around the country by the early 1970s. In 1971, the group came out for black solidarity, expelled whites from its executive committee, and launched the series of consultations which led to the formation of the BPC. In 1972, it urged its members to propagate Black Theology and to get involved in social issues.¹⁸⁵ By 1974-75, the group was growing in numbers and ambition, deepening its involvement in development and social projects, and discussing opening its ranks to colored and Indian ministers.¹⁸⁶ One of the major factors moving the group was, of course, the constant pressure from SASO, BCP, and its own younger members. But the organization itself encouraged it as well, because it provided an opportunity for African ministers, young and old, to meet, discover shared frustrations and grievances, and network among themselves. It offered support for activism at parish level in social issues, and received donor funding for several small-scale community development projects run co-operatively by several denominations active in a given area. It also succeeded, as the activists had hoped, in providing a chance for black ministers to organize formally and informally within their own churches and in multi-racial Christian organizations, spurring the formation of “black caucuses” and informal displays of black solidarity in institutions of church governance.

to traditional religion: a sharp decline was reported in opposition among African clergymen to the ancestor cult and other aspects of traditional African religion. Dwayne Sigcibo’s unpublished doctoral dissertation at Rhodes University contains fascinating data on this point.

¹⁸⁵ Walshe, Peter, *Church versus State in South Africa*, op. cit., p.66, *Race Relations Survey, 1971*, p.45, *Black Review 1972*, pp.31-32.

¹⁸⁶ *Black Review 1974*, pp.126-127, *Black Review 1975*, p.137.

The South African Council of Churches (SACC), the principal national, inter-racial ecumenical body, was also deeply affected by Black Consciousness, with far-reaching consequences. In the 1970s, the SACC functioned as a meeting ground between white church leaders professing non-racialism and black clergy increasingly committed to Black Theology, which produced some angry confrontations but over time brought the whites increasingly into the orbit of the blacks. This process gained impetus as the numbers of black staff at the Council grew steadily, BC influence rose within member churches, and more BC organizations became SACC members (including BCP, IDAMASA, SCM, and the Broederkring).¹⁸⁷ The SACC's white leaders were also more open-minded and liberal than most white church leaders – which was why they had fled the more conservative individual churches. They were concerned about the institutional viability of the churches, and feared black reaction if they did not pay attention to the black majority in their institutions.¹⁸⁸ They were also influenced by the views and ideas expressed at the Christian Institute, with which they had worked closely since the late 1960s, which had become a firm supporter of BC.¹⁸⁹ Nor should the role of the international ecumenical community be neglected, particularly the World Council of Churches: increasingly firm in pressing for church action against institutionalized racism

¹⁸⁷ John de Gruchy, The Church Struggle in South Africa (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans: 1986), p.126, Hope and Young, The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation, *op. cit.*, p.88, and Report of the Commission of Inquiry into South African Council of Churches (Pretoria, RP74: 1983) [hereafter cited as Eloff Commission Report], p.30.

¹⁸⁸ de Gruchy, The Church Struggle in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.126.

¹⁸⁹ Dr. Wolfram Kistner, a leading CI member, became one of the SACC's leading intellectual lights after his appointment as Director of the Division of Justice and Reconciliation. See Walshe, Church Versus State in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.166-167, and Eloff Commission Report, *op. cit.*, p.77

in South Africa, they also offered substantial funding to help take up the fight.¹⁹⁰ The consequences for the SACC were important, in doctrinal and organizational terms. The country's leading ecumenical organization was increasingly committed to Black Consciousness: "This needs to be encouraged and supported," wrote one of its leading officials in 1973.¹⁹¹ With its new orientation and new structures, the SACC became the "crucial catalyst in setting the agenda and tackling the issues facing the churches," as John de Gruchy put it.¹⁹²

Institutionally, the rise of Black Consciousness in the church led to substantial growth in black leadership and influence within the mainstream denominations. Black bishops, previously rare, were named by several major churches, the most notable being Manas Buthelezi, who became Associate General Secretary of the Lutheran Federation and Desmond Tutu, named Dean of St. Mary's Anglican Cathedral in Johannesburg.¹⁹³ While these were still second-level positions, they involved much of the actual running of the churches, providing significant control over administration and resources while putting their incumbents in line for the top jobs. In denominations with elected executives such as the Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Methodists, as well as the SACC, during the 1970s blacks were elected with growing regularity as President or

¹⁹⁰ Eloff Commission Report, p.66ff.

¹⁹¹ Hope and Young, The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation, *op. cit.*, p.88.

¹⁹² The Eloff Commission Report cites a document in which SACC Secretary-General John Rees wrote that since "the predominance of the membership of the churches belonging to the council are black, we must increasingly make plans, not only within the Church structures, but also within the structure of the Council itself, for the voice of our black brethren to be heard, p.74. See also de Gruchy, The Church Struggle in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.127.

Moderator.¹⁹⁴ But change was not limited to the top. Organizing within church structures, a black caucus won parity with whites on the executive of the Catholic Priests' Council. In the Anglican synod, blacks obtained the replacement of one parish-one vote, which over-represented small white congregations, with one parishioner-one vote, establishing black majority rule in South Africa's most prominent English church.¹⁹⁵ Likewise, the SACC bureaucracy came increasingly under black control, with a majority of its departments (7 of 13) run by blacks by 1975.¹⁹⁶ These shifts in power also brought improved standing and conditions for blacks within church institutions, ending practices such as unequal pay and segregated toilets for black and white which had run counter to church anti-apartheid pronouncements.¹⁹⁷

The churches also provided vital organizational resources and funding for the BCM. At the most basic level, churches with sympathetic clergy provided venues where BC groups could hold public meetings, because church meetings and funerals were the only types of gatherings in the townships which did not require prior government approval. As former SASO activist "Socks" Socupa recalled, "One of our problems was meeting places – we couldn't meet in community halls. But the churches would allow us

¹⁹³ Walshe, Church Versus State in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.162, and Drum, August 1976. Black bishops were also appointed to head dioceses in black areas: thus in the Catholic church Peter Buthelezi was promoted to Bishop of Umtata and the Rev. Biyase to Bishop of Zululand.

¹⁹⁴ Race Relations Survey, 1969, p.12, Race Relations Survey, 1971, p.48 (Congregationalists), Cape Herald, October 13, 1973, and November 2, 1974 (Presbyterians and Methodists) and Race Relations Survey, 1971, p.47, Cape Herald, August 11, 1973, and Hope and Young, The South African Churches, *op. cit.*, p.88 (SACC).

¹⁹⁵ Black Review, 1974, p.134, Walshe, Church Versus State in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.154.

¹⁹⁶ Hope and Young, The South African Churches, *op. cit.*, p.88.

¹⁹⁷ *idem.*, Race Relations Survey 1972, p.48, and Cape Herald, September 14, 1976.

to – quite a lot of priests would let us hold meetings.”¹⁹⁸ Church groups let BC groups have offices in their buildings in city centers and offered them other facilities, helping them circumvent the segregation laws. SASO’s Durban head office space was provided by the Congregational church, and Biko’s BCP office in East London was in a building provided by the Anglicans.¹⁹⁹ In Johannesburg, SASM had its offices in the SACC building, and Christian Institute staffers helped its members rent cars and print material, allowing them reach into the community and stay in touch with other cities.²⁰⁰ Church facilities also provided a major source of support, formal and informal, for Black Consciousness projects. These ranged from the Lay Ecumenical Center in Pietermaritzburg, a major conference site that hosted dozens of conferences and training sessions for BC groups, to a humble Catholic parish in Pretoria whose priest fed and housed SASO members working on a community development project.²⁰¹ The SACC itself – with an annual budget of R2.5-million by 1975,²⁰² a fortune by the standards of other black organizations – created a series of new departments charged (often in BC-influenced jargon) with furthering its anti-apartheid mission. These included the Divisions of Theological Education, which ran training courses for black ministers ,

¹⁹⁸ Interview, Socupa. Activists from other areas shared similar recollections in interviews: such as Mathata Tsedu (the Northern Cape), and Ashik Mani (Cape Town). The ban on unauthorized meetings outside churches is noted in Michael de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction: A Study of Conciliar Behavior in a Black South African Township, Ph.D. Thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1979, p.183.

¹⁹⁹ Airgram, A-79, American Consulate General Durban to Department of State, October 12, 1971, State Department Archives.

²⁰⁰ Interviews, Daniel Montsitsi Johannesburg, August 5, 1992, Masethla.

²⁰¹ Black Review, 1972, pp.37-8, and Black Review, 1974, p.128, and Mangena, On Your Own, op. cit., p.15.

²⁰² Calculation based on figures from 1975-1981 in Eloff Commission Report, p.137.

General Development, running projects to alleviate unemployment, Home and Family Life, Inter-Church Aid, Justice and Reconciliation, and the Dependents Conference. They ran a host of programs of their own ranging from “relevant” theological education to social service projects for domestic workers and the unemployed to support for political prisoners and their families and employed a steadily growing number of blacks sympathetic to BC.²⁰³ In addition, the SACC was the source of direct grants to BC groups – at least R93,000 in 1975-76 alone – while the CI helped them with fundraising contacts in Europe and the United States.²⁰⁴ The church connection is thus much of the reason why the BCM was able to marshal far larger material resources than previous black political movements had ever done.

Politically, the influence of Black Consciousness and Black Theology on the churches led them to move beyond cautious criticism of aspects of apartheid to challenge the regime’s very foundations and legitimacy. As black clergy moved into more influential posts and BC ideas spread within the churches, attacks on apartheid from the pulpit became more daring, rejecting the fundamentals of the apartheid system, including the division of the country into homelands, the denial of equal citizenship and political power to the black majority, and all forms of discriminatory legislation.²⁰⁵ Moving

²⁰³ Eloff Commission Report, *op. cit.*, pp.31-55.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*, pp.324ff. The recipients included projects run by the Lay Ecumenical Center, the Border Council of Churches (which worked closely with Biko in King William’s Town), the Association for Self Help (a Durban group), Biko’s Zanempilo clinic, BPC, the Institute of Black Studies, the Consumer Association, the BPC, and IDAMASA, an investigation into the University of the North, and defense counsel for the SASO-BPC defendants, Biko, Saths Cooper, and Mzimkhulu Gwentshe.

²⁰⁵ To cite just a few examples, newly elected Methodist Moderator James Jolobe declared in his inaugural address, “Blacks today claim equality. We claim equality before the law, equality of opportunity in all spheres of life, and equality to be ruled by the same laws as all other people in a country common to all.” Cape Herald, October 13, 1973. NGKA ministers condemned the issuance of homeland citizenship

beyond mere criticism, both the SACC and the SA Catholic Bishops' Conference produce blueprints for a radically different South Africa including a common citizenship and the vote for all races, the elimination of racial gaps in wages and state spending, equal opportunity for all, an end to migrant labor, massive investment in black housing, freedom of expression, and free black trade unions.²⁰⁶ By 1976, the Anglican and Catholic churches moved into confrontation with the state by opening their church schools to all races, in open violation of the segregation laws.²⁰⁷ The churches also became increasingly critical of the repressive laws used to keep the lid on black discontent, and willing to affirm that the movements and individuals banned or imprisoned under these laws ought to have a place in the political process.²⁰⁸ The churches were also increasingly open in branding the regime as illegitimate and unwilling to support it against the armed insurgents of the nationalist movements. By the mid-1970s, as black influence grew within the church, the criticism they had voiced over

certificates to African children, declaring that "blacks and whites belong to one undivided South Africa." The NGKA's Sam Buti took matters one step further, declaring, "We all belong to South Africa and should therefore take part in the decision-making machinery." Regehr, *Perceptions of Apartheid*, *op. cit.*, p.227. And the SACC condemned the steps to reduce discrimination as "superficial" and called for a "for more radical and rapid reversal of apartheid policy." *Race Relations Survey*, 1975.

²⁰⁶ *Drum*, September 8, 1975, *Race Relations Survey*, 1972.

²⁰⁷ *Weekend World*, May 30, 1976, Brigid Flanagan, "Education: Policy and Practice," in Andrew Prior, ed., *Catholics in Apartheid Society* (Cape Town, David Philip: 1982), pp.90-91, *Race Relations Survey*, 1977, *op. cit.*, pp.40-41.

²⁰⁸ Condemnations of detention without trial became increasingly common from the pulpit as the pace of repression picked up in the mid-1970s and increasingly prominent activists were banned, detained, or jailed. To cite just a few examples: Dr Manas Buthelezi called on the government to scrap the Suppression of Communism Act (the law authorizing bannings) and the Terrorism Act (sanctioning incommunicado detention and torture) as violations of human rights. *The World*, April 14, 1976. Even a previously conservative denomination such as the NGKA expressed "abhorrence" of the Terrorism Act, and Sam Buti, one of its leading lights, urged the release of political prisoners and the participation of exiles in a national round table to work out a political solution.

WCC grants to the nationalist movements was hushed.²⁰⁹ But the real turning point was the controversial “Hammanskraal Resolution” endorsing conscientious objection to service in the South African army, passed at the 1974 SACC annual conference. Spearheaded by figures associated with BC and the CI, this resolution branded South Africa as a “fundamentally unjust and discriminatory society” based on “institutionalized violence which has provoked the counter-violence of the ‘terrorists’ or freedom fighters,” adding that this institutionalized violence was “far worse” than that which Afrikaners had taken up arms against in the Anglo-Boer War.²¹⁰ An observer noted that the resolution “in effect gave a almost an equally emphatic approval to the nationalist movements as the WCC” had done.²¹¹ In sum, the Black Consciousness Movement played the key role in moving the churches from a posture which, though somewhat critical of aspects of apartheid, did not encourage militant action against it, to one increasingly sympathetic to the regime’s most radical opponents.

In tandem with the changes in the churches occurred the politicization of the mosque by the BCM, particularly in the Western Cape, where Muslims make up one-fifth of the colored population, concentrated around Cape Town.²¹² Due to the decentralized organization of Islam – lacking a centralized bureaucracy, the workings of mosques resemble those of Jewish synagogues more than Christian churches – the BCM could not

²⁰⁹ Eloff Commission Report, p.68.

²¹⁰ de Gruchy, The Church Struggle in South Africa, *op. cit.*, pp.138ff, Walshe, Church Versus State in South Africa, *op. cit.*, pp.163-64; text of the resolution in Eloff Commission Report, p.188. For an extensive discussion of the resolution see Regehr, Perceptions of Apartheid, *op. cit.*, ch.8.

²¹¹ David Thomas, “Church-State Relations in South Africa: Uncomfortable Bedfellows,” South Africa International, June 1982, p.51.

capture the commanding heights, but instead had to bubble up from the base. Prime movers in this process were Islamic youth groups – the Muslim Students Organization at UWC and UCT, and the Muslim Youth Movement among high school pupils – which allied with SASO and shared platforms with BC groups. But it was also driven by events – with one turning point the death in detention of Imam Abdullah Haroon, one of Cape Town’s leading Muslim clerics, mentioned in the last chapter. After the mass march to Haroon’s funeral in 1969, the editor of a religious weekly Muslim News, BC writer James Matthews, published a special tribute issue which was the first break with the paper’s apolitical tradition. In the years which followed, his influence, and that of young, activist reporters, made the paper into the Cape’s most militant and overtly pro-BC voice in print. Another threshold for the community was crossed with the UWC crisis of 1973, because many of the students affected were the children of local Muslims. As a result, the Muslim Assembly, which previously had stuck to religious issues, took the unprecedented step of supporting the students and condemning the university authorities, while the Imam of the Glenmoor mosque called for moral, physical, and financial support of the students at Friday prayers.²¹³ Haroon’s former mosque, the Stegmann Road mosque, remained a center for Islamic politics, offering political activists the sort of space churches provided in Christian areas. The growing openness to politics on religious platforms was also reflected when the Muslim Assembly held a “Sociological Symposium” in 1974, addressed by a number of BC stalwarts.²¹⁴ Along with the shifts

²¹² For this discussion I am indebted to interviews with Sayed and Mani.

²¹³ Cape Herald, June 30, 1973, Muslim News, June 29, 1973.

²¹⁴ Muslim News, July 19, 1974.

in the NGSK, the changes in the mosque meant that in the colored-dominated Western Cape, as in the African-dominated communities elsewhere, a growing part of the religious leadership was increasingly ready to support BC in its opposition to the regime.

As soon as the Black Consciousness Movement began to grow within black institutions, the police and government bureaucracy turned a hostile eye. Donald Card, a Security Policeman who resigned in 1970 in disillusionment with apartheid, recalled, "The view from government was that [Black Consciousness] was dangerous. I got instructions from Pretoria to try and get hold of contacts within the organization. It was watched closely. They wanted to know exactly what was happening."²¹⁵ This was no secret at the time: an American diplomat, for example, commented in late 1971 that "the security branch of the government has SASO and its leaders under careful observation."²¹⁶ SASO activists were routinely interrogated by the Security Police after meetings or protests.²¹⁷ Black Theology papers were seized by police and banned by the government censors almost as quickly as they were written.²¹⁸ In a further sign of official hostility, BC leaders were routinely denied passports even though many were offered coveted scholarships and travel grants to go overseas, particularly to the US.²¹⁹ Hostility

²¹⁵ Interview, Donald Card, East London, December 7, 1991.

²¹⁶ Airgram A-219, American Embassy Pretoria to Department of State, October 20, 1971, State Department Archives.

²¹⁷ See, for instance, the press reports of a special roadblock to pick up SASO leaders for interrogation after a national conference (The World, July 2, 1974) and the questioning of activists at the University of the Western Cape after the 1972 and 1973 protests there (Cape Herald, January 6, 1973, May 26, 1973).

²¹⁸ Interview, Basil Moore, Johannesburg, May 8, 1992.

²¹⁹ Concerning the refusal of a passport to Barney Pityana in 1972, the Secretary of Bantu Education wrote that SASO was "a student body which is not accepted by the state." Letter, Secretary of Bantu Education to Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development, June 26, 1972, State Archives, Pretoria.

to the BCM appears to have come reflexively from the lower and middle levels of the state apparatus.²²⁰ The BCM appears to have received little attention before 1973 at the level of ministers or cabinet, who were much more concerned with white dissent than black.²²¹

From 1973 on, government's response to the movement escalated to repression directed at key individuals, as leaders were banned, detained, and tried under security laws in a bid to quell BC activity and organization. The turning point came in March 1973, following a report by the Schlebusch Commission, a government body investigating the UCM, NUSAS, and the Christian Institute, when banning orders were issued against 8 top-tier leaders in SASO, including Steve Biko, Barney Pitso, and Saths Cooper, days after the leading lights in NUSAS were also banned. Those who took their places, including Henry Isaacs, were banned in succession, as were important figures in the BPC, BCP, NAYO, BWP, the CI, and the Labor Party'. By year-end the Cape Herald reported commented, "Bannings this year have wiped out almost the entire leaderships of every organization – peaceful or noisy – which grew out of the rising Black

²²⁰ Nolutshungu, Changing South Africa, *op. cit.*, pp.173-4.

²²¹ Some – notably Nolutshungu – have suggested that there was a conscious decision by the highest authorities not to suppress the BCM (Changing South Africa, *op. cit.*, pp.173-4.) It is true that there is some evidence that Afrikaner administrators at black universities and journalists thought at the outset that SASO was compatible with separate development and a useful counter to NUSAS, but there is no evidence that those at the top paid it much heed. On perusing archival files in the State Archives from the 1965 through 1973 from the offices of the Minister and Adjunct Minister of Police and the Minister of Bantu Education and Development, what is striking is not how much but how little attention the BCM received in the years prior to 1973. For example, the Police Minister's files on "Student Unrest," "Student Activities," and "Communism" contain a great deal of material on NUSAS but next to nothing on SASO. (NUSAS President Duncan Innes seems to have been a particular *bete noire* for the Minister – there is even a note on an interview with his mother! – while there is not a word on Biko, who was his contemporary.) Black student protests do receive cursory treatment, and the file list suggests there weren't separate files on them. The tendency to focus on white dissent and ignore BC activity is paralleled in state attitudes towards the press: as late as 1973-74 public statements on press controls by Prime Minister Vorster and his Ministers

Consciousness of recent years.²²² The US Embassy in Pretoria reported that 53 black leaders had been banned and concluded that the South African Government had launched a “systematic effort to emasculate African political activity outside of homelands.”²²³ The next year, following the pro-Frelimo rallies of September 1974, 40 of the top figures in SASO, the BPC, and BC cultural groups around the country were detained incommunicado for months (many complaining afterwards of torture). Nine were brought to court in the marathon SASO-BPC trial of 1975-76 to face a capital charge of terrorism, even though the state alleged no violence but only incitement by them.²²⁴ Detentions and prosecutions aimed at school pupils and youth – the most militant elements in the BCM – also picked up in 1975-76, with 30 young people detained prior to the trial of NAYO leaders for guerilla recruitment, in which torture reports by detainees also figured prominently and considered credible by the judge.²²⁵ Besides these overt actions by the authorities, BC activists also confronted steady day-to-day harassment – a car sabotaged, a window broken – and occasional acts of terror, such as a mail bomb which killed former Turfloop student leader O.R. Tiro in exile in Botswana.²²⁶

sought to rein in the white liberal press, particularly the Rand Daily Mail, and not, prior to 1976, the black press.

²²² Cape Herald, November 3, 1973.

²²³ American Embassy Pretoria to Secretary of State, Telegram Pretoria 4263, November 20, 1973, State Department Archives.

²²⁴ Race Relations Survey, 1975, op. cit., pp.58-61.

²²⁵ ibid., pp.62-64, Brichtill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., pp.83-84.

²²⁶ A mail bomb was also sent to ANC activist Mewa Rambogin in Durban in 1973, Drum, April 22, 1973. During the 1980s mail bombs killed ANC activists Ruth First in Mozambique and Jeanette Curtis in Angola. The latter were subsequently acknowledged as the work of South African security forces.

The reach of state repression was amplified by pressure on BC activists in civil society, discreetly orchestrated by the authorities. For example, in the wake of the 1973 boycotts, the Cape Chamber of Industries issued a “private and confidential” circular to employers warning not to hire students who had left UWC as they might be “agitators” who would “foster industrial unrest.” The result was to make the former students almost unemployable. A spokesman for the Chamber said they had issued the circular “because we were told to” by unnamed sources who could “check on anybody” – a veiled reference to the state security services.²²⁷ A black lecturer at the University of the North who spoke on the history of the bantustans at a 1970 SASO meeting was forced to resign by the rector, who accused him of being “an enemy of South Africa.”²²⁸ UCM branches were forced off campus by 1970, and after the unrest of 1972-73 SASO chapters were banned on all the black campuses as well. In the black schools some administrators also pursued a vendetta against BC activists. A black school principal was lauded by a minister of the Ciskei government for vowing to “crush SASO,” while leaders of SABSA in Cape Town proved to have a remarkably high failure rate on year-end exams.²²⁹ Some church officials bowed to requests from the Security Police to bar UCM or BC meetings on church property. A more dramatic blow was struck in 1974, when the Federal Theological Seminary was evicted from its 15-year-old premises in the Ciskei.²³⁰ Just as

²²⁷ Cape Herald, Sept. 29, 1973.

²²⁸ The World, July 7, 1971.

²²⁹ Daily Dispatch, February 6, 1976.

²³⁰ Race Relations Survey, 1974.

the activists sought to mobilize the institutions of civil society from the bottom up, efforts were made to batten the lid down from the top.

Yet while repression directed at individuals hampered the working of BC organizations, it was unable to halt the growth of Black Consciousness as a movement and a mood. Although the key BC groups – particularly SASO – were dealt blows from which they took two to three years to recover, they never ceased to function. New leaders – less experienced and less firmly tied to the historical roots of BC, but still deeply committed and determined to keep the organization alive – kept coming forward despite the bans and detentions.²³¹ Indeed, an ironic consequence of the dispersal and marginalization in rural backwaters of the first generation of BC leaders, particularly Biko, may well have been to open the door to the growth of ANC influence, which many of them opposed, among their successors.²³² Yet the very fact of their loss of control of the movement they had started was also the flip side of the fact that it had grown so widely within black society that it could not be easily suppressed. “Government will probably be successful in its efforts to suppress these spokesmen, and through them the organizations they led,” an American diplomat observed, “but the ideas they expressed have already found fertile ground among young black intellectuals.”²³³ The movement could not be stopped by action against leaders because it was founded in the circulation of ideas – and repression directed against prominent activists could not halt the spread of the

²³¹ Interviews, Patrick Lekota, Johannesburg, , Diliza Mji, Durban, September 11, 1992, also Nolutshungu, *Changing South Africa, op. cit.*

²³² Interview, Skenjana Roji, King William’s Town, May 26, 1992.

²³³ American Embassy Pretoria to Secretary of State, Telegram Pretoria 4263, November 20, 1973, State Department Archives.

discourse once it had taken root in the public sphere and the private spaces of the social networks of black civil society. John de Gruchy's observations about Black Theology hold for the rest of the BCM as well:

"No matter how many people and publications were banned – and essays on the subject soon proliferated – nothing could prevent the development of Black Theology. Seldom has a theological movement received such publicity. From then on, it simply could not be pushed under carpets, escape the vigilance of the authorities, or fail to influence the black community."²³⁴

The struggles waged by the BCM within the institutions of black civil society revealing much about its *modus operandi* and help us to understand its impact. It emerged out of mutually supportive circles of activists in the universities, churches, and press. They were armed with their discourse – grown from their experience – and the strategy they drew from it of black autonomy – perceived not as a calculated choice but as the expression of their personality and authenticity. The contexts of the challenge differed: in the universities it involved large-scale struggle and substantial mobilizations, while the conflicts in the churches and newsrooms were more private if no less bitter. But the stakes were evident to all – including the state – which lashed out at individuals involved but were unable to arrest the momentum of the movement. The activists succeeded in implanting the BCM in the key linkage institutions of black civil society. In so doing, they gained a mass audience, institutional resources, and prestigious connections to the rest of the black organizational world. In a highly networked realm, what the BCM obtained from the institutions it fought for were the keys to the kingdom.

²³⁴ de Gruchy, The Church Struggle in South Africa, *op. cit.*, pp.155-6.

IV. PRESS, POLITICIANS, AND PERFORMERS: BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

For urban black South Africans, the discourse of Black Consciousness came to dominate the public sphere by the mid-1970s. This emergent hegemony reflected a dramatic change in public utterance and behavior before the new mass audience which had developed during the previous decade. This was reflected above all in the growing influence of Black Consciousness on the mass-circulation English-language black press, but was also manifest in discursive competition which obliged black elites working within the system to adopt the language of BC and in public performances that gave an emotive charge to BC through drama, poetry, and sport. Despite the small size and fragility of BC movement organizations, the BCM's growing effect on the institutions and elites of black civil and political society diffused the Black Consciousness narrative to a huge, newly-literate black public and shaped discussion and feeling about ostensibly non-political events and even the language of the movement's opponents. The result was that BC ideas spread far and wide among the literate black masses, directly challenging the legitimacy of the regime and of the conservative and moderate black leaders associated with it. This, in turn, provoked tension and division within the collaborating black elites, cracking open the hegemonic bloc which had kept organized mass protest in abeyance for a decade. Thus, although formal group membership remained small, the success of the BCM in getting its ideas out to the masses established a direct, if

discursive, link between the movement and the urban mass public and laid the foundations for the large-scale conscientization of black civil society.

We will explore this process through an examination of the public discourse of the black press and politicians in this period and a look at the text and context of performances before large-scale audiences in black communities. Our principal focus will be a detailed analysis of the discourse of the most important English-language black newspaper, The World. This is in part because of the centrality of the black press in the change in black political culture, since it reached the largest audience, with the greatest frequency, of any of the media conveying Black Consciousness ideas. It is also because the discourse of the black press had a more complex relationship with BC than did that of other media: movement events and slogans took up only a small part of the news hole, while the change of greatest significance was the pervasive realignment of the papers' content within the Black Consciousness framework. In addition, we will offer brief analyses of the more overtly BC-influenced public discourse of politicians working within official representative institutions and of the words and deeds of BC-linked performers and poets. We will show how the politicians' words reflected the hegemony of Black Consciousness and the changes in elite alignments this was producing, and how transgressive words and gestures gave enormous force to public performances perceived as BC-connected.

A. Conscientizing The World: BC Discourse in the Black Press

What the black press wrote about, and how it wrote about it, was profoundly affected by the ideas and activity of the BCM. Along with the quantitative shift in content noted in the last section – away from sport and scandal, towards political and social issues – there was also a qualitative change in the discourse of black newspapers in the 1970s. This was reflected, as we shall see, in the choice of language, tone, assumptions, categories of discourse, and decisions about coverage that figured in the headlines, stories, and layout of the papers.²³⁵ This change in discourse was even more far-reaching than the overall shift in content, because it reshaped the entire presentation of news within the Black Consciousness narrative framework. This meant that on every topic, every day, the papers offered blacks the opportunity to connect their own ideas and experiences to the more detailed and articulated version of them offered by the Black Consciousness world-view. In this they did much of the actual work of conscientization – the politicization of collective identity – on which the transformation of township political culture and the growth of Black Consciousness as a social movement depended. These shifts can be most clearly seen in the pages of The World, the paper which played the greatest role in diffusing BC ideas among the black mass public. This was due both to its enormous audience – by 1976, as we have seen, the majority of adult men in Soweto read it daily – and its position as the UBJ's greatest stronghold. The new voice it found

²³⁵ This approach to the analysis of newspaper discourse and the choice of these factors on which to focus reflect a debt to Díaz, Maria Elena, "The Satiric Penny Press for Workers in Mexico, 1900-1910: A Case Study in the Politicization of Popular Culture," Journal of Latin American Studies, vol.22, 1990, as well as

can be seen through a qualitative textual analysis of the paper's treatment of major themes from 1973 to 1976 and their place within the BC narrative.

The social categories of discourse used by The World in this era are, above all, racial – in the Black Consciousness sense. Other social divisions appear in a minor key before the overwhelming role of race in South African life. "Black" is understood as meaning all South Africans of color, or all the oppressed. Blacks are principally presented as victims of racism and indignity.²³⁶ The principal images associated with blackness are ones of pathos, humiliation, and dehumanization – blacks as objects, not actors.²³⁷ Black workers have "meager" earnings; they are "desperate" and "fighting to make ends meet".²³⁸ The black experience is one of "hardship, political repression, economic deprivation, and exposure to white values."²³⁹ An expose on the squatters of the Winterveld describes them as "crushed" into shanties, facing "exploitation and poverty".²⁴⁰ A legion of other examples could be cited. The emphasis on suffering in the texts – a strongly Christian theme – carries with it an undertone that it is part of the path to redemption (a victim of the struggle such as Tiro is described as a "martyr").²⁴¹ This imagery is associated with hints of an

the discussion of the 19th-century British press in E.P. Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class (Harmondsworth, Penguin: 1962).

²³⁶ The World, July 8, 1971

²³⁷ See The World, May 18, 1976.

²³⁸ The World, October 2, 1975, October 14, 1975.

²³⁹ The World, 1976.

²⁴⁰ The World, 1976.

²⁴¹ The World, December 20, 1974.

apocalypse to come: in 1976, in particular, there are repeated references to an impending black "explosion" and warnings of an end of days ("time is running short").²⁴²

A second emphasis in the discourse of The World is the revaluation of blacks and the putting of whites into their place, although less explicitly than in elite BC discussions. For example, SASO Permanent Organizer Patrick Lekota is quoted during the SASO trial as saying, "The blacks are seen as sub-humans who should become human, and the whites who are seen as super-human must also become human."²⁴³ The claim here, too, is frequently based on Christianity: blacks are created in the image of God, just like whites. Less frequent are direct put-downs of whites, such as Saths Cooper's declaration, "Whites are racists," or Percy Qoboza's exclamation that the first whites arrived in South Africa "penniless, cattle-less, and generally vagabonding round the world aimlessly."²⁴⁴

In their use of these social categories in this way, The World's journalists convey the meta-narrative or long story of Black Consciousness: conquest and dispossession, followed by psychological, and then physical liberation. The language of loss and suffering taps into the hidden transcript of the black public – the popular memory of loss and longing for change. The insistence on the revaluation of blacks and whites – an expression of a central tenet of BC – is an echo of the repressed hope for national liberation and true humanity. All of this takes place within a profoundly Christian framework – but it is a Christianity deeply influenced by Black Theology to see the black South African experience as the axis of suffering, struggle, and redemption. These themes are rarely made explicit,

²⁴² The World, March 3, 1976, March 31, 1976, May 25, 1976, and March 9, 1976.

²⁴³ The World, May 18, 1976.

except in articles directly dealing BC figures. Rather they provide a skeleton or scaffolding for coverage of blacks in general, but one which conveys the BC message implicitly even when it is not spelled out explicitly.

The political discourse of The World was liberal democratic, with an emphasis on blacks' claim to citizenship of South Africa and the full rights of citizenship, including the vote. The cornerstone was the frequently repeated notion that South African citizenship was the "birthright" of all blacks, particularly urban blacks with weak homeland ties.²⁴⁵ The paper's rhetoric concerning political rights was increasingly assertive: Buthelezi's call for majority rule at a Soweto rally in March 1976 was the front page lead, and a day later an editorial said it reflected "majority black thinking." Two weeks later a news story reported Sonny Leon's claim, "Blacks in South Africa will take nothing less than full citizenship."²⁴⁶

The other major political theme could be described as constitutionalism or human rights: the rights of blacks to equal protection of the law, free speech, and due process. A particular focus was the violation of these rights by the courts, police, and security laws. Many blacks were exposed to the hard edge of the law under apartheid, and the paper looked at this. For example, an Umlazi court where prosecutors and magistrates were drunk is termed a "court of injustice."²⁴⁷ But The World gave special attention to the treatment of BCM activists. The 1973 bans on SASO and UBJ activists are criticized as "simply for being opposed to the apartheid system" – a violation of free speech.²⁴⁸ The harassment of

²⁴⁴ The World, April 4, 1976, September 27, 1974.

²⁴⁵ The World, October 19, 1975, February 27, 1976.

²⁴⁶ The World, March 15, 1976, March 16, 1976, March 31, 1976.

²⁴⁷ The World, May 15, 1973.

SASO activists by the police is reported as a violation of civil rights and a form of political intimidation.²⁴⁹ The detainees held after the September 1974 Frelimo rallies, some of whom were later tried in the SASO-BPC case, received extensive and sympathetic coverage, including reports of demands for their release. One of the strongest referred to "arbitrary arrest and detention incommunicado under the unacceptable laws of the government."²⁵⁰ The World also reported attacks on the banning, detention, and torture of Barney Pitso Rantso published in the London Times by columnist Bernard Levin. Thus, the tension between the discourse of constitutionalism and rights articulated in The World and the principles and practices under which the black majority was ruled became increasingly evident.

Together these foci fit the ontological or intermediate level of the Black Consciousness narrative, which focused on white hegemony. The increasingly vigorous stress on liberal democratic rights, particularly citizenship – while at odds with the increasingly Marxist orientation of movement intellectuals in the mid-1970s – was a discourse inverting the claims of the white and bantustan authorities, which presented blacks as having no claim to citizenship within “white” South Africa. The insistent reporting of procedural and substantive violations of human rights was part of a constant process of revealing the ugly truth about the workings of white supremacy, behind its façade of benevolence and wisdom. Together these themes connected to the hidden transcript of white domination as experienced every day – fear of the authorities, arbitrary arrest,

²⁴⁸ The World, March 6, 1973, April 13, 1973.

²⁴⁹ The World, July 2, 1974, for example.

²⁵⁰ Weekend World, November 20, 1974.

restriction under pass and security legislation – and to the emphases on black solidarity and self-determination which marked the strategic and tactical thinking of Black Consciousness.

Much like the BCM as a whole, the paper's discourse on politics also showed a growing hostility to the clientelist state-created political institutions and became ever more direct in questioning the legitimacy of the regime. In the 1960s, under Moerane, the paper had taken an accommodationist stance. An editorial urged Sowetans to the polls in the 1968 UBC election, saying the "future of our people" depended upon it and praising the candidates for "service", "integrity", and their "ability and programs."²⁵¹ The paper's line had changed sharply by the 1975 UBC election, which a leader noted received "minimal interest" in the township because of the council's lack of power. "People do not take the UBCs seriously," wrote Latakomo in his column while acting as editor in 1976.²⁵²

Similarly, while the paper was generally supportive of the bantustans in the 1960s, it swung to focus on bantustan leaders critical of apartheid in the early 1970s, then became openly hostile to the whole system by the middle of the decade. This hardening of positions was linked to the approach of the first date set for the declaration of a bantustan's "independence," that of the Transkei in October 1976. The policy of forcing urban blacks to take the citizenship of homelands they had "never seen" was termed "tragic," and Gatsha Buthelezi's dismissal of independence as merely the "formal trappings of power" was prominently run.²⁵³ Even a moderate like Moerane was sufficiently alarmed to write after

²⁵¹ The World, March 29, 1968.

²⁵² The World, 1976.

²⁵³ The World, May 12, 1975, October 19, 1975.

his retirement that the "bantustan policy was designed to deflect the legitimate demand of blacks for full participation" in South African politics."²⁵⁴

As the paper displayed less sympathy for the blacks working within the system, The World showed growing warmth towards the extra-parliamentary activities of the BCM. In the early years, it largely consisted of reports of SASO and BPC conferences and public meetings, often taken from the wires.²⁵⁵ As the 1970s progressed, reporting and comment on the movement's organizations and their activities became increasingly frequent and favorable, though not completely uncritical. A 1971 editorial termed SASO's challenge to separate development a "national service," while two years later the cause of the banned SASO men was described as "honest truth and justice."²⁵⁶ The 1974 BPC-sponsored Black Renaissance Convention was "the voice of the black man speaking. An article on the unveiling of Tiro's tombstone called him a "hero" as well as "martyr", and, equally important, helped mobilization by telling how to catch busses there. However, the most extensive, systematic presentation of BC ideas in The World came during the defense at the SASO-BPC trial during the first half of 1976. In this period, many of the major leaders testified, including Saths Cooper, Lekota, and Muntu Myeza. Above all, Steve Biko received his first public platform since his banning. For the black public, this was the first chance to read an ongoing sustained, detailed discussion of the ends and ideas of the Black Consciousness Movement over a period of many months, as opposed to the one-off pieces which had characterized most coverage of the movement until then.

²⁵⁴ The World, 1976.

²⁵⁵ See The World, July 4, 1974 et. seq., and December 7, 1974 et. seq., for examples.

In these respects The World's discourse represented a serialization of the conceptual level or short story within the BC narrative, which dealt with the rejections of institutionalized racism and the divide-and-rule politics of the apartheid regime. In other words, the paper's stance increasingly moved towards the non-collaborationist line of the BCM and the rejection it advanced of the philosophy of indirect rule traditionally legitimating the South African state. Altogether, the representation of the BCM in the black press helped suggest the renewed possibility of an autonomous black civil society and of extra-parliamentary political action, thus widening the bounds of political discourse. These stresses were entirely in keeping with the movement's tactics, which stressed co-opting or replacing the white-dominated institutions of black civil society and uniting the black elites outside the government-created political bodies. Cooper testified in the SASO-BPC trial that BC had "come to show blacks there is hope", and the paper's treatment of the movement, while not uncritical, reflected this.²⁵⁷

The discourse of The World in this era on socio-economic issues was one which presented blacks as possessing rights they could assert, and to which capital and the state should respond. This was implicit in the litany of social exposes published regularly in the newspaper: stories describing blacks' poverty, low wages, poor housing and educational conditions, and their regimentation via the pass laws, hostels, and the like.²⁵⁸ The fact of reporting these stories suggested that blacks had social and economic entitlements as

²⁵⁶ The World, July 4, 1971, March 6, 1973.

²⁵⁷ The key qualification in the paper's attitude towards the movement was its repeated criticism of the sectarianism of BC leaders, calling on them to co-operate with critical blacks working within the system in the name of black unity. Thus, one leader published during SASO's 1974 conference stated that although the organization played a "valuable role," it displayed an "insulting," "know-all" attitude towards blacks of other views. The World, July 4, 1974.

workers and members of the community to fair treatment and decent living conditions. Implicit, too, was the notion of the mutability of the social order: if conditions could not be imagined otherwise they would not have been news worth reporting (as indeed they had not been a few years earlier). The coverage also underlined that the same situation was shared by blacks throughout South Africa, setting a new frame of reference for the rights-based conceptualization of self proposed. The most corrosive social criticism took the form of satire – especially the time-honored black journalistic tradition of imagining whites in blacks' places or vice-versa. Thus, when Vorster asserted in parliament that the differences between black and white in South Africa were "geographical", not discriminatory, The World reprinted part of a photo-montage from Drum titled, "If Mr. Vorster turned black..." The pictures slyly changed Vorster into a black manual laborer, letting black readers delight in seeing him awakening in a migrant worker's hostel bunk, working on a road gang, hiding from the police without his pass, and – sweetest of all – being deported to his homeland.²⁵⁹

The treatment of social and economic issues in The World also revealed a concept of the state as the enforcer of social rights. This understanding implied the idea of the state as a neutral social arbiter – ideally, if not in the specific circumstances of the racially structured state existing in south Africa. Whether discussing the plight of black bus commuters or urging the recognition of black trade unions, a softer line on Afrikaans-medium instruction in black schools or the scrapping of race discrimination, the interlocutor

²⁵⁸ For examples, see The World, April 9, 1976 (Winterveld squatters).

²⁵⁹ The World, 1973.

addressed is the state.²⁶⁰ It is urged to act in strong yet respectful, constitutional tones, in its own interests and those of the country.

The paper's bold and explicit discussions about social and economic questions – where the taboos inhibiting expression were much weaker than on explicitly political subjects – represented the public level of the BC narrative, in which the hidden transcript was openly released. They dramatically underlined the differences in living conditions and legal status between black and white, revealing what the regime would have preferred to keep under wraps, and suggested that no one was above ridicule by blacks – offering humorous expression for their frustration and anger. At the same time, this was done within the broader rhetoric of liberal democracy and human rights to which the paper subscribed. Blacks were not expected to rely solely on the benevolence of the state – the right to protest and non-violent mass action was accepted by The World under Qoboza and Latakomo – but the state was presented as one which was or should have been capable of responding in the interests of the community as a whole. The background was clearly a social democratic or welfare-state position, distinct both from that of official policy – which offered traditional society and the homelands as the solution to black welfare – and from the socialist, anti-capitalist vision growing in popularity among the radicalizing intellectual BC activists.

The coverage of the mass struggles of the mid-1970s in The World, and the paper's attitude towards them, moved from the premise that blacks possessed social and economic rights to the notion that they were capable of asserting those rights. From the Durban strikes of January 1973 on, many reports revealed the increasing frequency, strength, and

²⁶⁰ The World, March 3, 1976, January 13, 1975, March 10, 1976.

effectiveness of strikes, bus boycotts, and the like.²⁶¹ The very terms in which non-violent mass action was reported underlined blacks' ability to wield power: "massive" actions, which "crippled" whole industrial areas, etc.²⁶² Editorials and news features took a more sympathetic attitude towards mass action than in Moerane's day, arguing that the origins of protest lay not in agitation but in social injustice, against which protest was a right.²⁶³ The paper's discussions of strikes and boycotts showed an awareness of black workers as a group with considerable power due to their numbers, but not as a social group with interests opposed to those of other blacks. Their self-assertion was seen as a part of broader black self-assertion. These were the moments when the hidden rage of the black man was expressed in public – and revealed the potential for power and mass action which was implicit in the Black Consciousness narrative.

A topic which grew steadily in importance in the pages of The World in the mid-1970s was the South African nationalist movements, particularly the ANC. Although the movements were banned, as was overtly promoting their ends and quoting their leaders, this restriction did not keep the paper's journalists and editors from writing about them. Their legalization was urged in the name of democratic principles, while reports of their clandestine activity carried an implicit menace of violent conflict. The major focus of The World's reporting and editorials on the nationalist movements was the 1974 campaign by the Human Rights Committee (an ANC-linked mostly-white group) for the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and their recognition as representatives of

²⁶¹ The World, July 30, 1974, January 7, 1975.

²⁶² Weekend World, January 12, 1975, September 28, 1975.

black South Africans. This was openly proposed in editorials, received sympathetic coverage in regular reports on public meetings organized by the HRC and public appeals urging their release, and was given a sense of urgency by the paper's closely following official discussions of the issue.²⁶⁴ There were also occasional reports of public events involving the movements' leaders or members, including honors awarded abroad or funerals at home.²⁶⁵ The rhetoric of these articles was still that of democratic liberalism: one editorial urged that the solution of the country's problems required that the "country's black leaders are recognized and have a part in discussions," just as the South African government had accepted they had to in the neighboring then-colony of Rhodesia.²⁶⁶ Such treatment underlined the respectability and political significance of organizations which the authorities stigmatized as "terrorist." Coverage also served to keep their leaders and prominent personalities in the limelight. Thus Leabua Jonathan praised the late ANC leader Albert Luthuli as a "great African"; Mandela's wife Winnie became his public mouthpiece after her banning order expired in 1974; and official discussion of Mandela's release gave Weekend World the nerve to print his picture twice in 1976, flouting the Prisons Act ban on publishing photos of prisoners.²⁶⁷

Alongside the overt discourse of democracy and clemency towards the liberation

²⁶³ The World, October 2, 1975, October 14, 1975, April 4, 1976.

²⁶⁴ The World, December 13, 1974, April 6, 1976, October 13, 1975, December 12, 1974, January 19, 1975, September 28, 1975, October 1, 1975, October 28, 1975, April 5, 1976, Weekend World April 25, 1976, May 23, 1976.

²⁶⁵ See the reports of a posthumous OAU award to the late ANC secretary-general Albert Luthuli, December 11, 1974, and the funeral of Umkhonto we Sizwe guerilla Joseph Mdluli, April 4, 1976.

²⁶⁶ The World, December 13, 1974.

²⁶⁷ The citation was used December 11, 1974, Mrs. Mandela was interviewed in Weekend World, April 25, 1976, and Nelson Mandela's picture used in that issue and on May 23, 1976.

movements, a sub-theme in The World from 1973 on was that the banned movements were active underground within the country. There were reports of their propaganda activity, both direct – such as ANC leaflet bombs, and covert – such as publicity given meetings of the PAC front group, the Young African Christian Movement, operating in the townships west of Johannesburg.²⁶⁸ There were also reports of raids and arrests of guerilla recruitment networks, which suggested (and perhaps allowed feverish imaginations to exaggerate) the extent to which underground was active.²⁶⁹ Most important of all was coverage of the quickening pace of political trials involving members of both groups, but particularly the ANC. Ironically, while the incriminating evidence led in these cases made matters worse for the defendants, it only offered proof to the black public that the movements were not dead, despite the regime's claims to the contrary, while the statements of convicted defendants before sentencing offered them a platform to address the masses which they were quick to use. As early as the Mounbaris trial of 1973, The World carried a report of testimony by an ANC member that the organization had "young men prepared to fight."²⁷⁰ Such reports appeared with growing frequency. In early 1976, two major guerilla recruiting trials in which BC activists were tied to ANC networks, the Molokeng and Tshabalala cases, were being heard and reported in detail in The World. Day after day, World readers following the Molokeng case learned of testimony regarding the involvement of NAYO and TRAYO activists in forming revolutionary cells and planning surveillance for sabotage activities. During the Tshabalala case, which involved similar charges, Duma Ndlovu filed

²⁶⁸ The World, March 19, 1976, and March 26, 1976.

²⁶⁹ The World, April 25, 1975, May 4, 1976.

a report which was almost a how-to guide for would-be guerillas. It explained how the accused students had listened to *Zambian radio*, which called for volunteers to go to Zambia via Botswana for training to overthrow the South African government.²⁷¹ The trial reports were neutral in tone, but significant simply for appearing and receiving ample space. They were proof the nationalist movements had not been wiped out by state repression, and implied that their preparations for guerilla war might offer an alternative to the politics of collaboration.

The changing terminology used in *The World* to describe guerrilla warfare against white minority rule in neighboring countries in the region, and the growing legitimacy it accorded such revolutionary struggles, had unmistakable implications concerning the South African regime and armed struggle against it. Under Moerane, articles on the wars in Mozambique, Angola, and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) routinely referred to the African insurgents as "terrorists," particularly in headlines written by the white copy editors. Their content usually painted them as savages in a brutal but hopeless contest, and they tended to be drawn from wire service copy by white South African and Rhodesian journalists. While editorials called for peaceful negotiations, they offered no endorsement for the guerrillas. In 1975-76, as Qoboza and Latakomo strengthened their control over the paper, there was a significant change of tone, suggesting greater legitimacy for and respect for the effectiveness of African guerilla activity. The new editors' attitude differed sharply from the old on armed struggle. In early 1976, an editorial stated, "If Smith does not settle now,

²⁷⁰ *The World*, 1973.

²⁷¹ *The World*, March 10, 1976.

he will deserve everything that comes his way."²⁷² Headlines referred much more frequently to "guerillas," recognizing black fighters as combatants rather than wanton killers, although lingering tension in the subs room was reflected in some references to "terrorists".²⁷³ The seriousness with which the nationalists' armed struggle was taken by African leaders was also emphasized. The front-page lead headline on their calls for stepped-up guerilla activity in Rhodesia after the 1976 Smith-Nkomo talks failed could hardly have been more explicit: "Africa Beats The Drums Of War."²⁷⁴ The effectiveness of armed action was also shown increasingly clearly: "The question is how long Rhodesia can comfortably hold out;" or, more bluntly, "Rhodesian security plummets." By late May 1976, a report from Rhodesia by a white South African journalist noted that guerillas were just 25 miles from the capital and asked, "How long can it be before they start to hit the city itself?"²⁷⁵ An equally object demonstration of black power via guerilla warfare came from the independence of the Portuguese territories, obtained through the barrel of a gun in 1975. The World showed the rapturous welcome given Samora Machel, the conquering hero who had led the victorious struggle, on his return to Mozambique. A picture caption declared he was "setting Cabo Delgado alight with excitement," while his return to the capital merited a front-page lead (30,000 Greet Machel in LM.)²⁷⁶ Extensive reporting of South Africa's defeat by Angolan and Cuban forces during its intervention in Angola in 1975-76, while

²⁷² The World, March 2, 1976.

²⁷³ The World, October 14, 1975, February 12, 1976, May 28, 1976.

²⁷⁴ The World, 1976.

²⁷⁵ The World, February 12, 1976, May 25, 1976, 1976.

²⁷⁶ Weekend World, June 1, 1975, The World, 1975.

more circumspect due to South African military censorship, must have underscored the vulnerability of white minority rule. The change in attitudes was also reflected in the choice of news sources for coverage of the regional wars: more copy was drawn from European wire services, such as Agence France-Press, with less of an investment in white minority rule.

In relation to the Black Consciousness narrative, The World's treatment of armed struggle represents a sort of coda which linked the public level – open contemporary events – to the meta-narrative of national liberation. Its increasingly sympathetic portrayal of the guerilla struggles in Rhodesia, Mozambique, and Angola – and with it the acceptance of revolution against intransigent white authority – had transparent implications for South Africa as the nationalist movements geared up for armed struggle there too. This was in line with the eventual promise in BC's meta-narrative or long story of a revolutionary orientation. The BC theme – the capacity of blacks to act, and indeed, to overthrow white-dominated regimes – was not undermined by the hostile tone of much of the wire copy run. Indeed, the worse things got, the better, in a certain sense: the images stirred were both Fanonist (the revenge of the native, ironically particularly strong in the gory accounts of guerilla action in which conservative white South African reporters gloried) and Christian (the consummation of the apocalypse, in which the last become first.) However, here too, there were differences with the elite version of the narrative: the reporting and comment dealt almost exclusively with African guerilla movements and ignored other contemporaneous guerrilla struggles (in Vietnam, Palestine, Central America). In this focus on African nationalism rather than a broader anti-imperialism, the black journalists

differed from the broader Third World solidarity and anti-Western stance gaining ground among BC intellectuals.

In sum, how can the impact of the BCM and the struggles of black journalist on what The World published be summarized? In terms of content, the paper went back to the high levels of politicization which had marked it in the 1950s. In terms of its discourse, the result was a forceful articulation of liberal democratic and social democratic themes: citizenship, rights, blacks' capacity for mass struggle, and state intervention in the economy. But the paper in this era was distinctive from earlier years in its emphasis on BC themes, explicit, prised, or as presuppositions. These included the definition of blackness, assertive and militant claims to black majority rule and state resources, the articulation of BC ideology, and reports on the activity of Black Consciousness organizations. Most important of all was a willingness to envision the use of violence to obtain national liberation -- a sharp departure from pre-1960 themes. The World was neither overtly agitational in the sense of party newspapers nor "revolutionary" in the socialist sense of the term. Indeed, striking by their absence are the Marxist, Freirean, and anti-imperialist impulses increasingly evident among BC or nationalist movement intellectuals in this era. But increasingly vigorous political and social discourses were articulated in its pages -- as in other black-oriented papers -- and broadcast to a black audience unprecedented in its size and diversity.

B. Discursive Competition With the System Betokens Hegemony

Beyond the BC-oriented press and groups, increasingly the militant words of Black Consciousness also could be heard on the lips of black elites operating within regime-created political institutions, furthering the dominance of BC in black public discourse. In the early 1970s, conservative homeland leaders, such as the Transkei's Matanzima, or Bophutatswana's Mangope, who understood that they had to compete with the emergent BCM for mass black support, sought to co-opt its rhetoric and gestures, as Kotze noted at the time. "Realizing the political appeal of BC, the homeland-based leaders were increasingly outspoken in favor of black unity in South Africa. They referred increasingly to black dignity and pride and to black advances through self-help efforts, and they became more amenable to manifestations of African culture in dress, art, literature, and history." For instance, Matanzima closed the 1971 session of the Transkei legislature with a shout of "Unity!" and a clenched-fist Black Power salute, previously seen in South Africa only at BC gatherings. A year later he publicly declared, "Black is beautiful," while in 1973 he made a clenched fist – the BPC emblem – the symbol of his homeland party.²⁷⁷ The same year, Mangope said of SASO, "we may be using different methods, but our aims are the same."²⁷⁸ A few of their more politicized lieutenants openly associated themselves with BC: Curnick Ndamse, a former political prisoner who had become Matanzima's right-hand man, addressed the 1971 SASO conference, and Collins Ramusi, Lebowa's Interior

²⁷⁷ Kotze, African Politics in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.77.

²⁷⁸ Drum, August 22, 1973.

Minister, was close to Sekhukuni clan networks linked to both the ANC and BCM.²⁷⁹

Some, like Ramusi, also attacked the Bantu Investment Corporation, a state-backed agency which irritated the acquisitive homeland politico-business elites because it was seen as putting control of bantustan industrial and commercial development in white hands.²⁸⁰ This new rhetoric was expressed publicly in public meetings, homeland legislatures, township councils, and other state-created institutions – and in the press coverage which they received.

The high water mark of unity among elites in the system came at the Umtata Summit of November, 1973, which brought together leaders of seven of the nine homelands, including Matanzima, Mangope, and Ramusi as well as the Ciskei's Lennox Sebe and KwaZulu's Buthelezi, in the capital of the Transkei. There, they pledged to join their homelands into a single multi-ethnic federation, called for the abolition of the pass laws, agreed that they would act together on decisions concerning Pretoria's offer of independence, and declared that they would not accept it unless granted more than the 13% of the country's territory previously set aside for African reserves. Their tough-sounding declarations almost sounded scripted by a SASO ghost-writer. Matanzima spoke of the "rebirth of a nation," Mangope of unifying Africans around common indignities. Buthelezi said they had come to "bury ethnic grouping," while another homeland leader, Hudson Ntswanisi of Gazankulu, declared, "I believe in black solidarity." In public speeches at the meeting's end, Buthelezi and Ntsanwisi brought the crowd to its feet with Black Power salutes and cries of "Amandla! Ngawethu!" ("Power! To the people!") a slogan identified

²⁷⁹ Drum, March 22, 1973, Interviews, Collins Ramusi, Sekhukuniland, July 1993, Nkadimeng.

with the BCM.²⁸¹ At last, it seemed, the homeland leaders understood how to use the modicum of power their positions gave them: a joint rejection of independence threatened to stymie the regime's plans to rid South Africa of its black majority, while co-option of BC rhetoric gave a second wind to their conservative populism.

From 1974 on, however, the collaborating black elites steadily backed off from these bold stands, yielding to Pretoria's determination to press on with apartheid. In face-to-face meetings, their demands for policy changes and federalism were categorically rejected by Prime Minister Vorster. Given his unyielding attitude, the somewhat greater autonomy and resources "independence" offered must have beckoned to the more conservative homeland leaders, men with strong sentiments of tribal nationalism and pride. (In the smaller homelands, such as Mangope's, there was concern about "swamping" within a broader federation, particularly among members of the bantustan elite who feared for their positions in a super-homeland.) As the weeks and months after Umtata passed, the conservatives changed tack. In March, 1974 Vorster persuaded Matanzima to break ranks with the other homeland leaders and opt for independence by October 1976 with minimal territorial concessions.²⁸² Mangope made a similar choice in late 1975, with independence set for 1977. One after another, the more outspoken bantustan officials, such as Ndamase and Ramusi, were sacked, often amid allegations of pressure from the white authorities.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Drum, September 8, 1975.

²⁸¹ Drum, December 22, 1973, The Argus, November 9, 1973, Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, *op. cit.*, pp.223-224.

²⁸² ibid., pp.645-653 (transcript of meeting between Vorster and homeland leaders). On the Transkei's decision, see Roger Southall, South Africa's Transkei: The Political Economy of an "Independent" Bantustan, *op. cit.*, pp.52ff.

²⁸³ Drum, September 8, 1975.

Ironically, however, the regime's victory on the independence issue sharply diminished the political value of the black allies upon whom it had relied. Each step towards independence – and the loss of South African citizenship for urban blacks classified as part of their tribal group – reduced the ability of the rural-based bantustan elites to attract urban support. Indeed, even as the conservatives' brave talk was proven to have been empty words, their about-face confirmed the claims of Black Consciousness about the regime's black collaborators to the urban black public.

While the conservatives back-pedaled after 1973, pressure from the BCM steadily pushed the moderate leaders working within the system – notably Gatsha Buthelezi and the colored Labor Party – towards more militant positions which increasingly echoed the discourse of BC. Indeed, even as the BCM distanced itself from Buthelezi in the mid-70s, he moved steadily to the left, and increasingly used the vocabulary of Black Consciousness. In 1974, he presented a plan for a multi-racial federation of states with limited powers; by 1976 he was calling openly for majority rule.²⁸⁴ Unlike overt collaborationists such as Matanzima or Mangope, he contemptuously rejected homeland independence as the “mere trappings of power,” and he warned that guerilla violence was bred by institutionalized violence – views much like those of the BCM.²⁸⁵ In his 1976 majority rule speech, he also termed white society “sick,” looked forward to a “black future” of “hope, liberation, and the realization of human dignity,” and warned that blacks would not fight to defend apartheid South Africa.²⁸⁶ The language of the Labor Party developed along similar lines. As early

²⁸⁴ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, op. cit., pp.224, 676.

²⁸⁵ Weekend World, October 19, 1975, Reality, November 1974, pp.18-19.

as 1971, its deputy leader, David Curry, was warning that coloreds were turning away from whites and towards Africans, and a year later, after the formation of the BPC, the party embraced the principle of black solidarity among Africans, coloreds, and Indians.²⁸⁷ By 1976, the Labor Party was calling for “polarization” of black against white, and choruses of “*Amandla!*” could be heard at its convention.²⁸⁸ Although they had to keep a nervous eye on the authorities, these leaders gave much fuller expression to BC ideas than did the conservatives, for whom references to black unity were largely window-dressing. Moreover, the adoption of BC discourse by the moderate leaders helped extend its audience considerably, because organizations operating within the system could set up mass meetings with much greater ease and frequency than extra-parliamentary groups, and received far more space in the press, including the BC-leaning black press.

Even the township councils began to speak up, pressured by the rising militancy of the BCM and let down by their traditional homeland allies. As Karis and Gerhart noted, “Rare was the council member, no matter how conservative, who did not give at least lip service to the consensus of politically conscious urban dwellers: rejection of the homelands policy in principle and endorsement of the aim of eventual equality in Parliament. The rhetoric of resistance swirled around the institutions of the system, and participants found themselves in a tense equilibrium as they responded alternately to critical constituents and to officialdom.”²⁸⁹ Indeed, the township councillors could hardly support the de-

²⁸⁶ Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, *op. cit.*, p.676.

²⁸⁷ *The Argus*, May 1, 1971, *Cape Herald*, December 23, 1972.

²⁸⁸ *Cape Herald*, January 31, 1976, *The Argus*, January 8, 1976. The use of the call-and-response of “*Amandla-Ngawethu*,” which is Xhosa or Zulu, was all the more striking at a meeting of coloreds, who speak Afrikaans or English.

nationalization of their constituents, while facing constant pressure to up the rhetorical ante from the BCM. Thus the combined effects of the growing opposition movement and the government's insistence on pushing forward its agenda of homeland independence severely weakened the traditionalist alignment of councillors and chiefs which had been the basis of political domination in black South Africa. In these ways, the hegemony exerted by the BCM was dragging much of black political and civil society in its wake. Kotze observed the "cautious acceptance, intentional or unintentional, [that] has been given to BC objectives and terminology by organizations and structures not explicitly connected with the movement, or even by those opposed to it."²⁹⁰ This, in turn, led to tensions in the old dominant bloc.

The rising tide of Black Consciousness produced divisions and splits within the collaborationist elites, and with these new political opportunities through alliances of convenience or conviction. The Labor Party suffered from the defection of some leading lights, such as Public Relations Officer Don Mattera, to the BPC. This was as much a sign of commonality as of conflict, however: relations between the two movements were fairly good, and informally Labor was helpful to the BPC and Western Cape SASO.²⁹¹ In the Transkei, with the approach of independence, BC-oriented activists, who had come out of SASO and the teaching profession, some with ties to the nationalist movements, took over the opposition Democratic Party in January 1976, despite the BCM's official hostility to participation in state-created institutions. The Democratic Party promptly split, but it

²⁸⁹ Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, *op. cit.*, p.232.

²⁹⁰ Kotze, *African Politics in South Africa*, *op. cit.*, p.92

²⁹¹ Interview, Johnny Issel, Cape Town, July 4, 1991.

survived as a thorn in Matanzima's side in the Transkei's complex elite politics.²⁹² In Johannesburg, signs of strain became evident on the black school boards, which had been set up as nominally independent authorities to run Bantu Education schools. However, in the early-to-mid 1970s, facing pressure from the community and schools in which Black Consciousness were stronger than any other region, the school boards begin to rebel against official directives, first opposing attempts to establish ethnic grouping in urban schools, then refusing official directives to fire politically active teachers such as former SASO President O.R. Tiro. (In Tiro's case, the board was overridden by the Department of Bantu Education, which forced his firing.)²⁹³

C. Before Black Audiences: Black Consciousness Plays and Poetry

In addition to the press and the politician's platform, the word of BC also reached the public through the black theater. The first half of the 1970s witnessed a veritable explosion of black politically-oriented theater in South Africa, as new BC-oriented companies sprang up and the existing commercial theater became more politicized. At least 26 black theatre groups were producing plays, with several in every major urban center. The most important included a number of explicitly BC groups — in Johannesburg MDALI

²⁹² Southall, South Africa's Transkei, *op. cit.*, p.131ff, and Roger Southall, "The Beneficiaries of Transkeian Independence," Journal of Modern African Studies, vol. 15 (1977). See also Daily Dispatch, January 5, 1975, and Barry Streek and Richard Wickstead, Render Unto Kaiser: A Transkei Dossier (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1981), p.62. The DP later became the Democratic Progressive Party of the Transkei, and individuals and networks associated with it, including Chief Sabata Dalindyebo, were important players in the struggles and maneuvers between Matanzima supporters and the ANC which animated Transkeian politics in the 1980s.

²⁹³ Hyslop, Social Conflicts Over African Education in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.459.

(a fusion of several Johannesburg and Alexandra companies) and the People's Experimental Theater (PET, a collaboration of Indians from Lenasia and Africans from Soweto), in Durban the Theater Council of Natal (TECON), whose leading lights were BPC activists Saths Cooper and Strini Moodley, in Cape Town the Cape Flats Players of Adam Small, a UWC lecturer who resigned after the 1973 crisis there. The venerable organization of Gibson Kente, the country's leading black theatrical impresario, also was part of the trend, as his work became far bolder and more political following withering criticism of his play-it-safe approach from BC circles.²⁹⁴ Thanks to the rapid increase in politicized theatrical activity, in the years from 1971 to 1976, more than 45 politically-oriented plays were produced in townships around the country. Most were locally written, dealing with themes such as life under apartheid (TECON's "Black on White", Workshop '71's "Survival," Kente's "How Long,"), forced removals (SASO's "The Dispossessed," Small's Afrikaans-language and colored-oriented "Kanna Hy Ko Hystoe," Backstreet Players' "Goodbye District Six,"), or resistance (PET's "Shanti," on student politics and guerrilla warfare, Ebenezer Maqina's "Give Us This Day," focused on Tiro's life and death). A few were pieces by foreign authors with direct relevance to South Africa, such as Anouilh's *Antigone* (dealing with resistance amid despair) or Peter Weiss's revolutionary "Marat/Sade," and works by militant black Americans (such as W.W. MacKay's "Requiem for Brother X," on Malcolm X) or other African and black writers (Ngugi wa Thiongo, Aime Cesaire). While

²⁹⁴ Other companies included Workshop '71 and the Phoenix Players in Johannesburg, the Mpando Theater in Pretoria, the Chatsworth Arts and Theater Group, Shah Theater, Oceanview, and Ronnie Govender company in Durban, the UWC Dramasoc, Hanover Park Drama society, Backstreet Players, and Sechaba Theater Company in Cape Town, the Serpent Players in Port Elizabeth, Imita in East London, the Fort Hare Drama Society in Alice, and the St. Stephens Drama Society, Sowai, Loyolo, and Nakasa. Sources for this and the rest of the paragraph are the various volumes of *Black Review* (1972, 1973, 1975-75, 1975-76), as

two pieces reached Broadway and international acclaim—“The Island” and “Sizwe Banzi is Dead” by Athol Fugard’s Serpent Players – South Africa’s black theatrical boom involved much more. In 1971 and 1972, major black theatrical festivals in Durban and Cape Town put on six or more plays in succession, well attended and widely reviewed, while by 1974 no fewer than 14 black plays were reported to be on the boards in various centers at the same time.

As well as drama, the BC message was also carried on a wave of poetry by and for black South Africans. Previously largely an elite and white art form, in the 1970s poetry was taken up by large numbers of black South Africans as an outlet for their feelings and ideas. Some, such as Oswald Mtshali, Wally Serote, Sipho Sepamla, and James Matthews were widely published and gained national reputations. Many more remained unknown outside of a welter of poetry and literary circles which mushroomed in the townships, printing small-circulation newsletters or circulating their material privately. Just as distinctive as the sources of this poetry was its delivery to its audience, however: less often in print than through performance, in township halls, migrant worker hostels, even stadiums. Poetry by black South Africans and black writers abroad became a basis for performances by dramatic groups, mixed with music, drumming, and song into a powerful, emotive message. Groups such as TECON, Mibloti, and the Soweto Black Ensemble performed entire evenings of poetry, while a show called “Izintu” mixed music with protest poems at the Dube Hostel in Soweto. Poetry became a standard feature of cultural and political gatherings – an intensely political poetry which, as a contemporary commentator

well as Interview, Cooper, Interview, Kumi Naidoo, Robert Kavanagh, Theater and Cultural Struggle in South Africa (London, Zed Press: 1985), and Drum, April 27, 1973, June 22, 1974.

put it, "seeks to infuse in the people a sense of 'rage' at their own self-inflicted inadequacy."²⁹⁵

After the press, the stage and poetry were the public forums which gave BC ideas their largest audience among the black public. In late 1975, Joe Thloloe said that blacks were filling township halls like sardine cans to see the politicized dramas playing there.²⁹⁶ Theater served as a crucial political and cultural medium for black South Africans because overtly BC political meetings were relatively rare, the country lacked television until 1976, and black-oriented radio was under strict state control. As a result, militant plays by BC-aligned authors, such as "Shanti," "Give Us This Day," and "Confused Mhlaba" played successfully in township and school halls in major urban centers, including Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, and Port Elizabeth, attracting large, enthusiastic, and youthful crowds till their runs were cut short by banning.²⁹⁷ More sophisticated dramas, such as those put on by TECON, also drew substantial audiences around Natal.²⁹⁸ But black theater's record-beater remained Gibson Kente, who had at least two shows on national tours throughout 1973-1976. His increasingly politicized plays, such as "How Long," "Too Late," and "I Believe," regularly packed houses across the country. In Johannesburg, people flocked from the East Rand and Vaal Triangle after township administrations refused to permit "How Long" in order to see it in Soweto. A conservative estimate of attendance of 2,000 per week, with performances 40 weeks a year, and a run of 18 months, would mean that at least 120,000

²⁹⁵ Black Review 1972, *op. cit.*, p.209.

²⁹⁶ Drum, January 22, 1976.

²⁹⁷ ibid., Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, *op. cit.*, p.135, Kavanagh, Theatre and Cultural Struggle in South Africa, *op. cit.*, pp.119, 169.

people saw each play.²⁹⁹ Even BC protest poetry attracted an unprecedented audience, as readers ripped them off bookstore shelves. Mtshali's Sounds of a Cowhide Drum sold 6,000 copies, Rive's Cry Rage 4,500 prior to its banning, unheard-of figures in South Africa, and they reached many times that number as they were passed from hand to hand or read in gatherings. Of course, not all of the work influenced by the movement was to mass taste: poetry evenings attracted educated and rather small crowds, while some found BC plays too dull and polemical.³⁰⁰ But during the 1970s, political theater in South Africa became something of a mass medium. With scores of works on the circuit and numerous small venues, one could estimate that the total number who saw BC-influenced drama was at least on the order of 250,000 – 500,000, or 10% to 20% of the literate adult urban black population. In the Black Consciousness era, performance became a medium for circulating social movement ideas and subversive discourse in a way recalling the political theater of the years before the French Revolution.³⁰¹

“Shanti” was the most militant and controversial of the plays produced by theater groups aligned with the BCM.³⁰² The author was Mthuli ka Shezi, the BPC activist and

²⁹⁸ Cooper claimed that TECON never drew a house less than 60% full (Interview).

²⁹⁹ This estimate is based on figures in Kavanagh, Theater and Cultural Struggle in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

³⁰⁰ Mhloti's cultural evenings in 1973 and 1974 were poorly attended, according to *ibid.*, p. 188. Jerry Mofokeng, then a high school pupil who would become involved in the 1976 revolt, recalled being bored when attending a SASO play and Mutwa's “Unosimela,” preferring the livelier work of Kente. Interview, New York, 1990.

³⁰¹ Our discussion in this section and below owes much to the discussion of theater in Simon Schama's Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution (New York, Knopf: 1989), pp. 133ff.

³⁰² It is also the best documented, thanks to Kavanagh's thoughtful analysis (Theater and Cultural Struggle in South Africa, *op. cit.*, ch.8). The text of the play forms part of the indictment in the SASO-BPC trial record in the Carter-Karis-Gerhart archive and is published in Gibson Kente, Gredo V. Mutwa, Mthuli Shezi and Workshop '71, South African People's Plays (London, Heinemann: 1981).

former President of the University of Zululand SRC, who had left campus after the 1972 boycotts, and was later pushed in front of a train by a white railway worker with whom he had quarreled. The story begins in a student milieu, with Shanti, an Indian girl, her boyfriend Thabo, an African who belongs to a BPC-type group, and their friend Koos, who is trying to get his government classification as "Other Colored" changed. Thabo is visiting Shanti, who, while urging him on politically, says she cannot marry him because of her parents' opposition. Police burst in and arrest Thabo for being illegally in an Indian area. Then, in a case of mistaken identity, he is convicted of a murder he did not commit. En route to prison he escapes, leaves the country, and joins the guerillas in Mozambique fighting for independence. But his efforts to contact Shanti arouse suspicion, and Thabo is put to death. This is discovered by Koos, whose letter informing Shanti closes the play.

"Shanti" was a play which powerfully, if polemically, advocated black unity and armed struggle, staged in ways which gave it great resonance for many blacks, although it lacked the polish of more traditionally theatrical work. The play works through an "impressive integration of personal and political suffering," as Robert Kavanagh puts it.³⁰³ The three main characters represent the three black groups, and the portrait of their problems – the bigotry of Shanti's parents, Koos's classification by government, Thabo's wrongful conviction – damns the divisions among blacks and the government policies which oppress them. As the plot develops, the characters vocalize the repressed rage of black South Africans – the hidden transcript of the oppressed – while hammering home the BC message that racial oppression is the cause.³⁰⁴ ("Nothing must remain unsaid," insists

³⁰³ Kavanagh, Theater and Cultural Struggle in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.176.

Thabo, urging blacks, "Take your stand.")³⁰⁵ The treatment of armed struggle in the play humanizes the guerrillas – officially stigmatized as "terrorists" – in a speech where their leader explains how he reluctantly felt compelled to take up the gun.³⁰⁶ The players themselves were amateurs – students and professionals – whose aim, quite explicitly, was conscientization, as Vusi Khumalo, who played the guerilla leader, explained: "theater that depicts the people's struggle in terms of black awareness and to instill in them a sense of pride."³⁰⁷

Because of this, "Shanti" as a play had different imperatives and a different structure from commercial entertainment. Like other Black Consciousness plays, "Shanti" was experimental in structure, mixing realism and fantasy, using elements such as speeches, harsh images, and songs to make its point.³⁰⁸ The story consists of brief episodes and tableaux, which recall the photo-comics which were among the most popular of township reading matter and helped make it more comprehensible to the poorly educated.³⁰⁹ The

³⁰⁴ Thus Thabo, in jail, hears other prisoners singing the freedom sing "Senzeni Na" ("What have we done?") and declares, "What have we done that we are so oppressed? Our sin is blackness indeed. The whites are not our friends." (p.8 of "Shanti" manuscript in Karis-Carter-Gerhart Archive).

³⁰⁵ "Shanti" manuscript, p.9.

³⁰⁶ General Mobu, the guerrilla leader, says,
"I am beginning to hate the kind of life we lead.
We the so called terrorists, it is too brave and full of chances.
My two daughters and youtgest son,
How I wish I hadn't taken to arms, but The System so decided
And when words failed, I got tired of seeing my people talk,
Talk to stones, dead stones."

"Shanti" manuscript, p.11.

PET's attitude to the armed struggle also is reflected in its motto, "The Spear Lives On." This referred to its merger with the African drama groups Shiqomo (Spear) – but it was also the slogan used at the time by Umkhonto we Sizwe, the ANC's guerrilla wing.

³⁰⁷ Cited in Kavanagh, Theater and Cultural Struggle in South Africa, op. cit., p.171.

³⁰⁸ ibid., p.166.

most effective moments are the political soliloquies, which emerge from moments of intense feeling, when the actors drop the illusion of theatrical realism and speak directly to – and for – their black audience.³¹⁰ The simple structure and didactic approach lent themselves to simple staging with a minimum of props in the community, church, and school halls used for the play’s one-night stands. Of course, the play’s reach was limited by the fact that it was not “entertaining” in the ways that the plays of figures like Kente were, as well as by the grandiloquent, poetic, and sometimes pseudo-Shakespearean, language used.³¹¹ Nonetheless, for the young people who flocked to see them in a time of widespread fear and repression, the daring outspokenness of BC plays like “Shanti” made them attempts to “speak for themselves, for the audience, and for all black South Africans.”³¹²

Under the influence of the BCM, Kente and other leading lights of black commercial theater also produced plays which dealt incisively with social and political realities, a sharp departure from their previous practice. Although beloved by the black public, their popular musicals, which attributed their characters’ suffering to bad luck and

³⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.189.

³¹⁰ For example, when Thabo is jailed, Shanti cries,
“What a life! Even at night, I no longer sleep the sleep they (whites) sleep.
Mine is short, wakeful and tiresome. Even my thoughts are no
Longer peaceful as theirs of comfort. Mine are monotonous, dreary
And heavy. Even my vocabulary, is no longer pleasing as theirs of luxury.
Mine is oppression, increase, influx, police.
Even at rest I am at labor. I am unlike them at ease.
I think, I pine, I pray, I curse, I weep.
Even at prayer I no longer thank as they do thank the Lord.
Mine is full of petitions, questions, expectations.”
“Shanti” manuscript, p.12.

³¹¹ For example, Thabo tells Shanti, “I have done the best I can to display the wardrobe of my love for you.” “Shanti” manuscript, p.4. Other BC-oriented theatrical groups responded to this problem by the increasing use of African languages in their work. Kavanagh, *Theater and Cultural Struggle in South Africa*, *op. cit.*, p.213.

urged Christian forbearance, had been widely criticized by the intelligentsia for political timidity. But seeing rehearsals of “Shanti” in rehearsal in Soweto in 1973 strongly influenced Kente’s next play, which became the first of his politicized works, “How Long?” (Indeed, even the title was drawn from the song “Zixolise,” which opens “Shanti”: “How long shall it be, Lord!”³¹³) It was followed by “I Believe,” a critique of tribal prejudices among urban Africans centered on a romance between members of two ethnic groups. The last of these works, “Too Late,” was a powerful portrait of urban black society under apartheid, seen through the experiences of Saduva, a rural migrant living in Soweto.³¹⁴ There he lives with his aunt MaDinto, a shebeen owner, befriends her crippled daughter Ntanana, and falls in love with Totozi, the daughter’s friend. Trouble starts when MaDinto is jailed for selling liquor without a license. Then Saduva is arrested under the pass laws for illegally living in Soweto, after Ntanana is killed by a policeman while trying to prevent Saduva’s arrest. On his release, a bitter Saduva nearly kills the policeman responsible for Ntanana’s murder, but a friend stops him, and he is reunited with MaDinto and Totozi at the close. The harsh depiction of the effects and servants of apartheid in these plays, and others like them, marked a striking change in black commercial theater. It was as if Rogers and Hammerstein had penned a Brechtian denunciation of capitalism.

Kente’s new work expressed an acute political awareness, an affirmative view of black culture, and a sharp critique of the church – all positions redolent of those of the BCM. No longer was “life” the source of his characters’ problems – their difficulties were

³¹² *ibid.* p.190. “Shanti” was performed under Security Police surveillance, and for their pains, a number of PET members involved with the play were later charged in the SASO/BPC trial with inciting armed revolt.

³¹³ *ibid.* pp.228, 190.

quite squarely attributed to the reigning system of racial discrimination and privilege.³¹⁵

Youth crime is portrayed as the result of unemployment and job discrimination, not bad character, while the plight of the unfortunates stranded without the proper passes is evoked, first comically, then, for Saduva, tragically. The “official” scale of honor is inverted: the keeper of an illegal speakeasy, MaDinto, is a heroic figure holding her family together, while the authority figure – the black policeman – is the villain. Indeed, “Too Late” presents a very positive view of the urban African culture of the 1970s, in the form of local solidarities of extended family and neighbors. In its image of a socially integrated but un-racial urban community, in which most of the characters are working-class, “Too Late” is much closer to the everyday black reality of its time than was the student environment of “Shanti.”³¹⁶ But like “Shanti,” “Too Late” also contains an implicit critique of ethnic divisions in urban black society: as in “I Believe,” one of the young lovers, is Xhosa, the other Shangaan. Christianity, a central factor in urban African communities, figures in the plot of “Too Late” in two ways. On the one hand, as Kavanagh notes, it is the “source of concepts about social justice, human goodness, and love showing that the oppression of blacks is wrong.”³¹⁷ On the other, a black minister harshly criticizes the church for collaborating with apartheid: “The church is now a tabernacle of evil ... Suppressive laws are made and these are backed by some churches.”³¹⁸ In all these ways, the views expressed or implicit in the play fit solidly within the world-view expressed by Black Consciousness.

³¹⁴ Published in South African People's Plays, *op. cit.*

³¹⁵ Kavanagh, Theater and Cultural Struggle in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.129.

³¹⁶ ibid., p.174.

³¹⁷ ibid., P.127.

Kente's use of language, as well as the structure and argument of "Too Late," made the work accessible to popular audiences and a compelling indictment of the legitimacy of the regime. Kente increasingly used the language of urban Africans, both in their idiomatic English and their tendency to slip into the vernacular in moments of intimacy, warmth, or agitation. (The black poet Sipho Sepamla termed it "English toyed with as is done in our world.")³¹⁹ The structure of his plays also changed, from narratives recounting the ups and downs of individuals to sequences of didactic episodes revealing the impact of social forces on his characters.³²⁰ Within the entertainment, the overall political thrust – as the police, courts, and even the law itself are shown to be oppressive – is a clear challenge to the legitimacy of the regime. This is made explicit by the younger characters speaking the discourse of BC such as Saduva, who, after being unjustly jailed (like Thabo in "Shanti") declares, "I hate the whole system!"³²¹ The older figures, for their part, worry that youth is losing "respect for the law." In the closing soliloquy that gives the play its title, a minister wonders whether the growing bitterness will be stopped "before it's TOO LATE?"³²² Kente himself said in an interview that that his political position was, "Let us stand together and fight, but not by violent means."³²³ While some critics, including Kavanagh,

³¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.131.

³¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.140.

³²⁰ *ibid.*, p.135.

³²¹ *ibid.*, p.132. Note the similarities between the reactions to jail of Saduva ("By what crime am I here? What's my sin?") *idem.*, and Thabo in "Shanti" ("What have we done that we are so oppressed?"), Manuscript, p.8.

³²² Quoted in Kavanagh, *Theater and Cultural Struggle in South Africa*, *op. cit.*, p.133.

³²³ *The World*, May 9, 1974.

have taken this as proof of his moderation, it is no different from the public line of BC groups such as BPC, which were far more militant in private.

The Black Consciousness poetry which emerged in this period was a complement to the new black theater, offering an outlet in which blacks could speak out freely, to other blacks above all, on their lives, situation, and feelings. Some – particularly Oswald Mtshali, a Soweto messenger who was the first prominent BC poet – were ironic commentators on apartheid's denial to blacks of the normal life promised by the modern society in which they lived.³²⁴ Some take a positive view of blacks, particularly black women, though often in rather objectifying terms.³²⁵ Others were explicit in their protest against apartheid.³²⁶ Quite a few were overt calls to arms, frequently in rather strident language.³²⁷ By the mid-70s,

³²⁴ For instance, in "Boy on a Swing," ordinary questions any child today might pose were brutally juxtaposed with those facing the child of a political prisoner:

"Mother!

Where did I come from?

When will I wear long trousers?

Why was my father jailed?"

Oswald Mtshali, Sounds of a Cowhide Drum (Johannesburg, Renoster Books: 1971), p.3.

³²⁵ Thus Willie Adams wrote,

"Oh, Black woman

your naked breasts

are full and screaming

for my hairy chest."

BLAC, Black Literature and Arts Congress, vol. 1, no.2, Mowbray, (n.d.), p.6.

³²⁶ A poem in the SASO trial record compared the killing of Tiro to the martyrdom of Jesus Christ:

"Jesus of Nazareth,

Tiro of Dinokana,

Sons of the creator

You lived for the truth,

You died for the truth."

Reel 2, SASO Trial Record Microfilms, Carter-Karis-Gerhart Archive collection.

³²⁷ Thus, in a poem rather ominously entitled "The Final Solution," Thabo Molewa wrote:

"Now is the time to take up the spear.

Let the song of the gun be heard far and wide

And let the music of the bullet bring you relief

To the battlefield."

BPC publication, n.d., in Reel 2, SASO Trial Record Microfilms, Carter-Karis-Gerhart Archive collection.

there were also some younger poets, particularly colored and Indian writers who felt less called upon to respond to the white world or political imperatives than had the first BC writers, and focused more on the internal injuries produced by apartheid.³²⁸ This poetry greatly in conventional literary quality – some works possess an enduring ability to move the reader, others now see banal – but when just written, it pulsed with urgency and voiced the themes of the BCM with great vigor. As Lunn has noted, “The new poetry was expressing a response to the reality of being black what was not apologetic, servile, patient, or joyful. The poetry had a thematic strength that endorsed the BCM’s belief that in order to overcome oppression, one had to be conscious of it and cease to feel inferior, by examining the causes and roots of those feelings.”³²⁹

What gave this poetry its energy and political significance was that it was the most overt expression – indeed, the crystallization on the page and proclamation in performance – of the hidden thoughts and feelings, silenced by repression and fear, which blacks felt a deep need to share. The intensity and anger which lay behind this work was profound, transparent from the texts, and evident even in the title of one of the best-known works of

³²⁸ Black Review, 1975-76, op. cit., p.113. For instance, Leonard Koza, a colored poet, wrote in his “Die Lokasie-Bewoner,” (“The Location Resident” – unusually for BC poets, Koza wrote in Afrikaans):
 Verflenterde broek en baadjie,
 Sy meubels is verslete en verniel deur dekade se verskuiwings
 Van pondok na pondok.
 Sy hele gesig is ene landkaart van diep klowe van
 Pyne en verdriet wat hy moes verduur al die jare”
 (“Tattered trousers and coat,
 His furniture worn and ruined by decades of shifting
 From shack to shack.
 His whole face is a map with deep ridges marking
 The pain and sorrow he had to endure all these years.” (my translation)
BLAC, Black Literature and Arts Congress, op. cit., p.6.

the era: Matthews' Cry Rage.³³⁰ They were franker and fiercer than the writings of the journalists or the declarations of the politicians.³³¹ What lay behind them was the hidden transcript of private experience and secretly-shared thoughts which formed the urban black identity. Nadine Gordimer wrote that Mtshali was "pre-eminently the poet of the black Johannesburger," adding, "Township bully, road-ganger, clerk, drunk, chauffeur, night watchman – he sings of all these, and of their other, collective identity in the city – for being poor, for being black..."³³² As they reinterpreted their personal experiences, feelings, and observations through the prism of BC ideology, these poets felt, quite consciously, that they were speaking for their community. As Jeremy Cronin put it, "The emotions these poets are exploring through the body of their poetry tend to be simultaneously subjective and communal," citing Motshali's description of the process as "self-discovery as a people."³³³ Their words circulated in books by the thousand, small-scale periodicals and

³²⁹ Helen Lunn, Antecedents of the Music and Popular Culture of the African Post-1976 Generation, MA Thesis, Wits University, Johannesburg, 1986p.216. See also Jacques Alvarez-Peyrere, Les Guetteurs de l'Aube: Poesie et Apartheid (Grenoble, Presses Universitaires de Grenoble: 1979).

³³⁰ James David Matthews and Gladys Thomas, Cry Rage (Uitgeversmaatschappij: Nederlandse editie: 1973). The book's title poem opens,
 "It is said
 that poets write of beauty
 of form, of flowers, and of love
 but the words I write
 are of pain and rage."

³³¹ Of eight references to violence in the prosecution documents in the SASO-BPC trial, five are found in poems read at BC movement gatherings or in BC publications. Michael Lobban, "Black Consciousness on Trial: the SASO-BPC trial, 1974-1976," Seminar Paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1990.

³³² Introduction, Sounds of a Cowhide Drum, *op. cit.*, p.vii.

³³³ Jeremy Cronin, "Ideology and Literary Studies in south Africa: The Case of Black English Language Poetry," in Zak van Straaten, ed., Ideological Beliefs and Research in the Social Sciences (Rondebosch, University of Cape Town: 1985), p.157. As an example, Cronin points to a verse by Mongane Wally Serote:
 "Here we are
 here we come

ephemeral publications, and hand-to-hand samizdat, tying together members of circles of friends, newly-created cultural clubs, student groups, and more formal organizations and institutions. Its impact was reinforced when read publicly in performances and at political meetings, which, though relatively small in audience, made up for this in intensity, as pronouncing the forbidden word helped bond their audiences and raise the emotional temperature.³³⁴ Thus, though it reached a more elite audience than black theater, the audience and impact of the new black poetry was still considerable, making it an element in the solidarity which was created among the politicized intelligentsia and reached into the politically minded public emerging in black communities, schools, and universities.

The changes in the public sphere due to the impact of the Black Consciousness Movement on the press, politicians, and performance were the driving force in the transformation of township political culture and the movement of public opinion in directions sharply hostile to the regime. The cultural changes described in the previous chapter created a black urban culture with a sense of community and common interest, as well as the conditions for the emergence of a public opinion out of the honeycombed welter of particularisms which had made up black South Africa.³³⁵ The BCM's pervasive

one man a million men.”

³³⁴ One example of the verbal violence of this poetry is one called “Black Nana, Avenge! Arise!” by Glenn Masokoane, speaking to a black child whose mother was raped and killed by a white man:

“Rape them, fuck them, spoil them if you will!

Arise! Black Nana, arise!”

This made up part of “An Evening of Black Thoughts,” presented by PET, and made up part of the SASO trila indictment. In another dramatic reading in the indictment, presented in 1973, the narrator declared,

“Hey, you lily-livered Asiatics – what’s Revolution?

It’s war you cowards, WAR!

Hey, you disorganized Coloreds – What’s a war?

A war mean blood and sweat – fighting, killing and dying!

Hey, you misdirected Bantus – Who’s the war against?

The pigs, the pigs, the mother-fucking pigs!”

influence over the world of public discourse gave both a content and a form to this political culture which challenged the legitimacy of the regime. The institutional restrictions narrowing the public sphere were increasingly ignored by a press with unprecedented reach and impact. Issues affecting daily life were exposed and connected to national and international politics for all strata of the urban black population, a sharp contrast to the small world of newspaper readers before 1960. The ideas of the BCM were echoed by elites both in the networks and communal organizations aligned with the movement and, increasingly, by those operating in official bodies. They were expressed more vigorously in popular drama, which held up a mirror which reflected the BC image of South Africa and, sometimes stridently, provided a soap-box for its solutions. The battle for public opinion in itself was an acknowledgement that a new and potentially decisive force had emerged in South African politics, operating outside of the older channels of oral communication and clientelist rule. It was the result not of liberalization from above by “soft-liners” (in this period the *verligtes* were hardly in control), but of struggle from below: political opportunity was opened up by the social movement rather than given by the authorities. By the mid-1970s, black politics in South Africa was breaking out of the narrow apartheid mold with the emergence of a “politics of contestation.”³³⁶

³³⁵ See Chapter Four, Part III.

³³⁶ The phrase comes from Baker’s work on public opinion before the French Revolution, which aptly observes how, with the rise of public challenges to the absolute monarchy in the press and elsewhere, “The reign of silence imposed ... could no longer contain debates and contestations that made increasingly explicit appeal to a world of public opinion beyond the traditional circle of institutional actors.” Kenneth Michael Baker, “Public Opinion as Political Invention,” in *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1990), p.170.

D. The Social Impact of BC Discourse

The BCM, through the dominant position it had attained in black public discourse, was in the mid-1970s leading and mobilizing urban black public opinion against the apartheid regime. Direct exposure to the doings and sayings of the movement was part of the process, but it only made up a small proportion of the total press reporting which bore the imprint of Black Consciousness. It was the choice of content, sources to quote, wording of headlines which gave it political impact. Most important was the much greater focus on political and social issues, previously played down, which were not only presented, but interpreted from a BC viewpoint. Everyday problems which affected readers' lives and communities, which before had been seen through dominant ideologies stressing patience and personal failings, day after day were now placed into the context of the militant short, medium, and long stories of the Black Consciousness narrative. The legitimacy of black elites who collaborated with the regime was ceaselessly attacked, while increasingly bold words and deeds in opposition to white minority rule were reported at length. In terms of social movement theory, what was happening was "frame alignment," as the world-views and political ideas of urban black South Africans were increasingly brought into line with those of the BCM. Black Consciousness was becoming the "common sense" of the townships.³³⁷

³³⁷ See David Snow and Robert Benford, "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest," in Aldon Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller, *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1992). The reference to the battle to shape the common sense of the community comes, of course, from the concept of hegemony in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*.

The fact that even the BCM's black opponents had to engage in discursive competition with the movement, while borrowing much of its language and views, both reinforced the hegemony of BC before the black public and testified to the increasingly outmoded character of official legitimating ideologies. Much like the defenders of the Bourbon monarchy described by Baker, "unable to stifle these processes of political contestation, government found itself under increasing pressure to participate in them by appropriating the ideological strategies of the opposition for its own purposes."³³⁸ With the legitimating ideologies used to win acquiescence to apartheid among blacks were under challenge by the BCM, the blacks operating within the regime's institutions could hardly propound them enthusiastically. (For instance, it would have been difficult for them to argue forcefully in favor of the inferiority of blacks or the priority of tribe over nation.) Indeed, because the homeland leaders' and councillors claim to office was based on popular sovereignty and electoral legitimacy, however flawed in practice these may have been, they were forced in a way the white rulers had not been to compete directly with the BCM for the favor of black public opinion. But this process involved profoundly subversive if unintended consequences for these participants in the politics of collaboration. Their attempts to fight BC on its own discursive ground helped to confirm the hegemony of the movement's ideas (as well as ultimately to discredit among urban blacks the homeland leaders who opted for "independence.") Moreover, the very occurrence of these debates implicitly affirmed the notions that blacks had the right to think, speak, and act on national as well as local or tribal affairs and that black public opinion was the ultimate court of appeal for the contending elites – which directly

contradicted the assumptions on which the particularistic and neo-colonial political institutions of apartheid were based.

Drama and poetry influenced by the BCM was another element which helped arouse and inflame township opinion against the regime, adding a powerful emotive charge to the news delivered by the press. The aim of performance is not to inform the audience but to move it, through language, symbols, form, and gestures – and in the case of political theater, to do so on the basis of a legitimate connection to public grievances.³³⁹ Black Consciousness plays and poetry were important in part for their texts, which exposed the hidden transcript of suffering and spoke the forbidden language of defiance. But their political impact was far greater than what the text alone would imply because of their performative character.³⁴⁰ The form of the play called on the audience to identify with the characters, to experience the struggles and feelings of the people on stage as their own, in a way journalism or platform speeches could not. The plays and poetry performances used soliloquies, gestures, jokes, and human tableaux to underscore their points and increase their effect. The use of music was particularly important; the emotive mix of echoes of sacred church hymns and the sufferings of black life deeply touched audiences composed of believing black Christians. Kavanagh, who observed Kente's plays being performed in the townships, wrote, "Our own first-hand experience revealed how the music of these plays was able to fuse an audience of separate

³³⁸ Baker, "Public Opinion as Political Invention," *op. cit.*, p.171.

³³⁹ Joseph Esherick and Jeffrey Wasserstrom, "Acting Out Democracy: Political Theater in Modern China," *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 49 (1990), pp.846, 848.

³⁴⁰ Kavanagh, *Theater and Cultural Struggle in South Africa*, *op. cit.*, pp.134-138; Ian Steadman, "Towards Popular Theater in South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.16, 1990, pp.225-226.

and divided individuals in an experience of intense cultural identity."³⁴¹ This experience was repeated hundreds, if not thousands, of times, in townships all around the country.³⁴²

There is considerable evidence that the public discourse generated by the BCM evoked a substantial response from blacks in the cities. The circulation of black papers which became increasingly politicized and BC-oriented shot up in the mid-1970s, while sales of others stagnated. St. Leger notes that The World's circulation rose almost 50% between 1974 and 1977 and attributes this to its politics on the basis of the comments of journalists. He also notes that sales of the apolitical Imvo and Ilanga went flat in that period after soaring in the previous five years.³⁴³ As reporters increasingly advocated the cause of Black Consciousness, community reactions to them also changed: instead of being seen as drunks and layabouts, they became celebrities and heroes. People discussed the paper favorably at township meetings, when they met journalists on the street, in shebeens, and in letters to the editor.³⁴⁴ Reporters also found they received more co-operation from the community in the form of tips and scoops as what had been

³⁴¹ ibid., p.139.

³⁴² Steadman notes what social movement theorists would call "frame alignment" also occurred through drama: "The Black Consciousness Movement of the Seventies provided a context within which theater practitioners could articulate their vision of political liberation, and do so by creating a 'structure of feeling' in harmony with the growing political conscientization of their audience ... Through a shared 'structure of feeling' concerned with black solidarity, with resistance, and political liberation, many arguments, however defective, were able to be articulated on the basis of a commonality of discourse with audiences. The rhetoric was agreed upon. So was the common enemy." "Towards Popular Theater in South Africa," op. cit., p.221.

³⁴³ St. Leger and Couzens, The Black Press in South Africa, op. cit., p.157. The same appears to have been the case for two other major papers which were BC-aligned, Cape Herald in Cape Town and the Daily Dispatch in East London (Interviews, Rashid Seria, Cape Town, June 8, 1991, Mtintso.)

³⁴⁴ Marion Whitehead, The Black Gatekeepers (BA Honors Thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1977), p.199; Similar comments were made in Interviews, Mtintso, Phil Mtinkhulu, Johannesburg, October 18, 1991, Joe Latakomo, Johannesburg, DATE, and Mthobi Mutloatse, Johannesburg, July 30, 1991.

concealed was increasingly revealed.³⁴⁵ Similar processes were at work with black drama. The box office appeal of political black theater was first revealed by the success of “Sizwe Banzi,” some of the TECON productions, and “Shanti,” and then by Kente’s “How Long” and “Too Late,” which were smash hits. “Audiences in black areas were demonstrating that they responded to a more substantial and militant political commitment,” noted Kavanagh. And as his plays became more political, Gibson Kente received more respect from the community.³⁴⁶ Thus a feedback loop was created, in which political content helped arouse political consciousness, which in turn fed demand for political content.

Knowledgeable contemporary observers – journalists, activists, and academics – had the clear impression that the black press and theater had a strong impact in terms of conscientization of the public. To a person, reporters writing for the black press recall a change of mood and outlook as BC influence on their papers grew. Joe Latakomo, then at The World, said that press coverage “served as the basis of the conscientization that developed into the 1970s and went right through up to the middle Seventies.”³⁴⁷ “People began to know what was happening in the Border [region], to know about SASO,” recalls Thenjiwe Mtintso, who wrote for the Daily Dispatch. “We began to sensitize and politicize people.”³⁴⁸ Former activists express similar views. Curtis Nkondo, then a Soweto schoolteachers, recalled “BPC’s membership was small – they made an impact

³⁴⁵ Interviews, Mtintso and Mutloatse.

³⁴⁶ Kavanagh, Theater and Cultural Struggle in South Africa, op. cit., p.119.

³⁴⁷ Interview, Latakomo.

³⁴⁸ Interview, Mtintso.

through the papers, especially World. Every day you read somebody saying something about it, and it had an impact."³⁴⁹ A 1970s East London high school activist also recalls, "The Daily Dispatch played a significant role in projecting the influence of BC and BPC."³⁵⁰ Gerhart, who traveled to South Africa in this era, comments, "Even when the nuances of the message failed to register, a mood was communicated which could not fail to stir new thinking in the minds of many ordinary people."³⁵¹ Similarly for drama: The effect of the plays at SABTU's 1972 Cape Town drama festival were described as "soul-shaking" and an "electrifying experience" by a black journalist who attended. "One could never be the same person again," he added.³⁵² Kavanagh cites a poetry reading that "captivated" its small audience, describes the political passion and nervous excitement of the audiences at "Shanti," and writes how the thousands who went to Kente's plays "set the walls rocking with their response."³⁵³ Maqina's "Give Us This Day" was said to have "taken Soweto by storm" before "enthusiastic young audiences."³⁵⁴ "People want to hear these things," wrote Joe Thloloe in Drum. "That is why we went to see 'Give Us This Day'."³⁵⁵

The authorities shared this assessment: they were clearly concerned at the impact which BC discourse was having on the political outlook of the townships. Plays such as

³⁴⁹ Interview, Curtis Nkondo, Johannesburg, July 29, 1992.

³⁵⁰ Interview, Bangumzi Sifingo, Johannesburg, November 14, 1991.

³⁵¹ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, *op. cit.*, p.294.

³⁵² Cape Herald, December 30, 1972.

³⁵³ Kavanagh, Theater and Cultural Struggle in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.188.

³⁵⁴ ibid., p.135.

“Give Us This Day” and “Confused Mhlaba” (which dealt with a former political prisoner) fell afoul of the censors, who warned that they would excite hostility between the races.³⁵⁶ Township superintendents in the East Rand and Vaal Triangle, alarmed at the angry mood in which audiences were leaving Kente’s “How Long,” banned it from their townships.³⁵⁷ The belief that BC ideas and arguments were generating revolutionary sentiment were the basis of the state’s case and the judge’s decision convicting the defendants in the SASO-BPC trial.³⁵⁸

The security police, in particular, were deeply concerned about the effects of BC discourse and organization on mass consciousness in black communities. With their extensive network of officers, informers, and uninhibited techniques of interrogation, they were also perhaps the best situated to report on the situation. One of their toughest and best-informed officers, Col. Piet Goosen, Security Police commander for Port Elizabeth, described the effect of the BC press, theater, and organizations in the townships there:

“There was a perceptible tension that had built up over a really long period. I should say that at least 15 months before the unrest [of 1976], this tension had built up. Factors which contributed to it included the press, and especially colored and Bantu theater groups which had produced plays with highly critical themes, ‘Give Us This Day,’ among others. There were several of these plays, and they had contributed to building up the Black Power ideology and to making the people conscious of the Black Power movement as such. Organizations such as the Black People’s Convention, South African Students Organization, and SASM ... became very, very active.”³⁵⁹

³⁵⁵ Drum, January 22, 1976.

³⁵⁶ See Publications Appeal Board decision on “Confused Mhlaba,” 1976.

³⁵⁷ Kavanagh, Theater and Cultural Struggle in South Africa, *op. cit.*

³⁵⁸ Michael Lobban, “Black Consciousness on Trial: the SASO-BPC trial, 1974-1976,” *op. cit.*

³⁵⁹ Cillie Commission Testimony (Social Science Library, University of Cape Town), p.4319 (my translation from the Afrikaans). Col. Goosen’s Special Branch office in Port Elizabeth was reputed to be one of the best-informed and most brutally effective in the country. A few months after giving this evidence before the

Thus, the mobilization of township opinion and the creation of a politics of contestation by the Black Consciousness Movement, along with its knitting together of elite networks and youth groups and enlistment of black communal institutions, laid the basis for the transformation of black political culture and made possible new types of mobilization which would culminate in the revolt of 1976. Even though the Black Consciousness groups had small formal memberships, the alignment of mental frames they achieved politicized the collective identities of urban black society, turning its private spaces into the cells of an nascent mass movement. As Lunn observed, "The concept of Black Power and the political awareness of people in 1976 owed much ... to the first sustained emphasis on a secular culture of resistance as espoused by the proponents of BC. The groundwork of that awareness characterized the first half of the 1970s, its active expression emerged in the post-1976 era."³⁶⁰

CONCLUSION

This actor-centered account of the development of the crisis of apartheid stands in contrast to the structuralist approach predominant in writing on this period in South Africa and in much of the literature on regime change more generally. In the structuralist

official commission investigating the Soweto uprising, Col. Goosen became internationally infamous when Steven Biko was fatally beaten while in detention there and as a participant in the cover-up of the killing.

³⁶⁰ Lunn, *Antecedents, op. cit.*, p.228.

accounts, the driving force of change is the growth of internal and external economic and political stresses, which increased grievances and perceptions of political opportunity. It is argued that elite division and the beginnings of liberalization precede and permit movement development and mass mobilization. In the South African case, it is suggested the the stresses of inflation, followed by recession and war on the borders, explain the rebirth of mass collective action. However, the evidence of this chapter suggests that such accounts of regime transformation are at best incomplete. While the terrain of politics was shaped by structural change, in South Africa the locus of regime change lay in political struggles involving the growth of collective actors and discursive competition. Those processes drove a wedge among the dominant black and white elites as they expanded the bounds of public discourse and action.

Indeed, the evidence presented in this chapter underscores the centrality of the social movement in the development of the regime crisis in South Africa in the mid-1970s. The building of linked social movement organizations by the BCM, small but strategically placed in a society spider-webbed with institutional and informal networks of power, was a critical step towards forming a new elite and connecting it to grassroots audiences. The movement's approach, different from those of the past, was an outgrowth of dissent in student, church, and journalistic milieux. Its work was to produce a discourse that placed the experience of racial oppression at the center of the black situation, and prescribed black solidarity as a response. To advance this cause it used novel organizational forms, based on networks and workshops, not cells and bureaucracies, and novel fields of action, conscientization, infiltrative, and development activities instead of overt political or economic initiatives.

The struggles of the BC organizations to politicize the institutions and elites of urban black civil society against the regime ensured that public discourse and associations in black communities would challenge its legitimacy, rather than buttressing it as in the past. Expounding the discourse of inversion – confronting collaborators, reinterpreting traditions, proclaiming repressed rage, offering new tactics, and calling for action – they presented the BCM's identity frame to elites and the mass public in terms each could understand. For the elites, the BC narrative was a key factor in their efforts to make an autonomous black civil society a reality. At mass level, the movement's rhetoric, was a major factor in the politicization of the collective identities urban blacks had created and their development of political self-confidence. It turned the townships into oppositional communities of discourse, ripe for mobilizations where members of local networks of solidarity would knit themselves together in spontaneous co-operation. The changes in consciousness and mobilization which flowed from these developments will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Six

THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIME CRISIS: Collective Identity, Collective Action, and the Black Consciousness Movement, 1972-1976

On the evening of December 2, 1974, a crowd of 4,000 African commuters converged on the outdoor bus terminal in the East London township of Mdantsane. To protest the doubling of weekly bus fares by the local bus company, the residents had begun boycotting the busses that morning. Thousands had trudged miles to their jobs in industrial areas or the city center; others took taxis or trains, more expensive and less convenient than the busses, to make their point. Now, tired and angry, they were coming together to demonstrate their support for a rollback of the fare increase. Although the crowd was peaceful and unarmed, it was soon confronted by police in riot gear, carrying submachine guns, who ordered it to disperse. As activists harangued parts of the crowd, a trigger-happy black detective fired his gun into the air – then hid in a police van from the enraged workers. Soon stones were raining on police vehicles, and the police responded with salvos of tear gas. The crowd dispersed, then reassembled as the acrid clouds drifted away, in a potentially deadly game of cat-and-mouse that went on for 90 minutes.¹

The East London bus boycott was one of numerous popular mobilizations, revealing the new mood of militancy and capacity for collective action in black communities, that marked the development of South Africa's regime crisis in the mid-1970s. This chapter will explore the development of that crisis through the changes in

¹ This account is drawn from Daily Dispatch, December 3, 1974, and The World, December 6, 1974.

mass political consciousness and culture that took place among urban blacks, along with the new types of mass mobilization in which they participated. These are the consequences – or in social scientific terms, the dependent variables – resulting from the growth of the opposition social movement traced in the last chapter. The factors explored there – the emergence of BCM organization and discourse, the resulting autonomization of the institutions of black civil society, and the radicalization of discourse in the public sphere – are the causal factors or independent variables. In South Africa's townships during the first half of the 1970s, the effect of Black Consciousness on political thinking and culture was electric. It politicized urban black urban sub-cultures, narrowed class, ethnic, and racial divides among them, eroded the legitimacy of the regime, spread democratic values in black communities, and infused into them a new sense of political opportunity. The result of this process – when dissident elites came into contact with self-organized, aroused masses – was a series of powerful if localized popular mobilizations for the first time in a generation. Many included aspects reminiscent of the patronized, parochial protests of the past, but a new type of mass action was also evident, autonomous of local regime elites and oriented around national issues, particularly in the mobilizations directly associated with BC groups. In turn, the transformation of mass consciousness and the encouragement of new types of mass mobilization promoted by the BCM pointed the way to the revolt which would break out in Soweto in 1976.

The changes in mass consciousness and action explored in this chapter are symptomatic of the development of regime crises in an actor-oriented perspective. The politicization of black identities and sub-cultures by an opposition movement's inversionary discourse occurred because those texts were fashioned out of the life

experiences and political perceptions which made up the hidden transcripts of the subordinate black group. The popular response to the movement's public discourse that resulted was intense, as individuals and groups aligned their own outlooks with the movement's identity framework. Through this process, the rejection of the regime and those collaborating with it became an element of urban black culture and identity, part of township common sense. Along with this, BC discourse and practice helped establish a new conception of citizenship quite different from the parochial attitudes and feelings of powerlessness that had prevailed in the past. Discursive competition from the movement's alternative inspired rejection of the hegemonic doctrines of the regime; the flip side was to promote an understanding of democratic values in their place. The greater political self-confidence the movement encouraged also encouraged mass political activity and mobilization. This chapter explores several of the collective actions which resulted – the bus boycott in East London, sports activism in Port Elizabeth, widespread small-scale activism in the Cape Peninsula, and the school pupils' boycotts in Soweto. It underlines not only that social movement activity was a key factor in mass mobilization, providing the mood, rhetoric, and often, the leadership, but also that collective action increasingly took on new characteristics as a result. The new consciousness and organization the movement helped promote were essential prerequisites for the rise of a modern repertoire of collective action. The appearance of such mobilizations – autonomous, nationally-oriented collective action – opened, for the first time, the prospect of a large-scale, sustained mass challenge to the apartheid regime.

I. "PEOPLE TALK ABOUT FREEDOM": BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF URBAN BLACK POLITICAL CULTURE

The ideas popularized by the Black Consciousness Movement catalyzed important changes in the political culture of urban black South Africans in the mid-1970s, which politicized their identity and encouraged their claims to full citizenship. Increasingly, urban blacks made BC's inversionary discourse part of their daily conversation, asserting their collective identity as an oppressed group. As BC discourse, spread by institutions, organizations, and individuals connected with the movement, let them incorporate the hidden transcripts of individual experience into the movement's collective narrative, it also helped weave together local social circles into vast, submerged networks of like-minded individuals. With the growth of communal solidarity, the boundaries of ethnicity and class which had served the regime as firewalls restraining collective action were breached. Through this process, urban blacks also developed a broader sense of citizenship and political opportunities, as older legitimacies and deference were overlaid by larger identities, democratic values, and demands for inter-racial equality. Under the influence of BC, growing numbers also turned their backs on the government-created representative institutions they had previously embraced, as possibilities for political action outside the regime's channels were perceived again. Despite the persistence of repression and fear, the ferment in their townships and the struggles on the country's borders gave Black South Africans hope of change. In short, while social modernization and external conflict created the background conditions, the Black Consciousness Movement injected the spirit of

resistance back into the cells of black civil society, helping to stimulate open outbreaks of opposition for the first time in a generation.

The evidence which demonstrates these changes will be drawn from a variety of sources. One of the most important is a number of surveys of black South Africans taken in 1975 and 1976 in several of the cities where the BCM was most active – among Africans in Soweto (near Johannesburg) and Mdantsane (outside East London in the Eastern Cape) as well as among coloreds in Cape Town.² Despite the inhibitions imposed by apartheid, these surveys contain a remarkable amount of detailed information on the development of attitudes and outlooks in the black communities, obtainable from no other source. Other sources include opinions expressed publicly at that time by black South Africans in newspapers, schools, and political trials. Finally, the account here

² Regarding Soweto, this analysis draws on the work of Philip Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes (Unpublished Report, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, 1979). This study is particularly valuable because it contains results of open-ended interviews with 270 Soweto residents in 1975 and early 1976 and from a similar questionnaire administered to 254 respondents there in 1965, both times using a quota sample. It is thus possible to compare responses over time, although the data are reported in qualitative rather than quantitative form. Quantitative data on Soweto are drawn from the first two scientific random surveys of socio-political attitudes there conducted by market research companies, Quotso 1973 (Quadrant International, Johannesburg, 1973), and Quotso 75 (Markinor, Johannesburg, 1975). The former was a survey of 800 Sowetans 16 and over conducted June to September 1973, the latter one of 500 Sowetans as well as 500 African women in other major cities during April 1975. These two reports were obtained through the kindness of Christine Woessner of Markinor.

The Eastern Cape data comes from a survey conducted in Mdantsane in November 1975 by a Rhodes University team led by Les Switzer and Nancy Charton. There were 297 respondents; no information is available on sampling procedure; women appear somewhat over-represented in the sample but it otherwise appears broadly representative of all social groups and status levels. A printed copy of the dataset was discovered in the Rhodes University Library with the assistance of librarians there. It was repunched in Johannesburg, and cross-tabulated through the generosity of Daniel Cooper of the City University of New York, providing the findings presented here.

There were two surveys of coloreds in Cape Town which were useful sources. One was conducted for the Center for Inter-Groups Studies of the University of Cape Town among 528 respondents in June or July 1975. No information is available on sampling procedures; the sample appears to include residents from most of the colored townships and suburbs of Cape Town, but almost all respondents seem to be employed, thus excluding the region's students, jobless, housewives, and pensioners. Prof. H.W. van der Merwe was kind enough to make available a partial set of cross-tabulations of the results. The second poll forms the basis of Johan Groenewald's work, Reaksies op Minderheidsgroepstatus by Kleurlinge, Ph.D. thesis, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, 1987. This survey was conducted among coloreds in Cape Town in July 1976, on the eve of the explosion of unrest there. It was based on a random probability sample with an n of 226, with a follow-up wave in 1983.

draws on the recollections of activists, scholars, and historians who have written on the period and examined different aspects of the changes underway in township political culture prior to the 1976 revolt.

A. Politicizing Black Identity: The BCM and Urban Sub-Cultures

The extent to which the BCM polarized the urban black sub-cultures against the minority regime is indicated by the pervasiveness of Black Consciousness discourse in the townships by the mid-1970s. Everyday speech and thinking about the lives and problems of black people echoed ideas first voiced by the BCM. “I am one of the youth of Soweto,” a BC activist, Eric Molobi, told a court in November 1975. He continued:

“What is called Black Consciousness is very much prevalent in Soweto. People talk about freedom, people talk about advancement, people talk about the desire to be allowed to enter into trade unions as members. And you will hear it in the trains, you will hear it in the busses, you will hear it everywhere. Even ministers have taken up the stand in preaching.”³

Mayer expressed similar views on the basis of his research. “By 1975-76 the Black Consciousness Movement had made significant progress. [Organizational membership] was still confined to the ‘intellectuals,’ but slogans like ‘black is beautiful’ or ‘going Afro’ had caught on, and encouraged populist pride in being African.”⁴

More than sloganeering was involved, however: the ideas and categories emphasized by the movement were increasingly used by blacks to guide their thinking

³ Cited in Karis and Gerhart, eds. From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990, vol. 5, Nadir and Resurgence, 1964-1979 (Bloomington, Indiana University Press: 1997), p.336.

⁴ Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, op. cit., p.166.

and judgements. This was expressed both in anonymous interviews and even in letters to the newspapers, which they were often not afraid to sign. Mayer's study documented how, in 1976, unlike ten years earlier, Sowetans no longer distinguished between "good" English-speaking liberal whites and "bad" Afrikaners. (English speakers were described as "great pretenders and useless liberals" by one interviewee, while another commented that "The English are OK because they are sure of Afrikaner protection.")⁵ He also noted that "the Black Consciousness aspect came out clearly in the frequent statements of young men and women, who gave ancestor ideas priority over the white man's Christianity." One said, "I grew up in Johannesburg, so I don't know much about customs, but I know that we should worship our ancestors and forget the white man's Christianity."⁶ A letter to The World charged that black police had "no respect for their black brothers" and, paraphrasing Biko, called them "whites with black skins."⁷ The "black is beautiful" theme was often taken up: Muzi Nkwanyana of Zola, Soweto damned skin lighteners as "not part of Black Consciousness" in The World, while a Drum reader in Langa, Cape Town called a description of a man as "dark complexioned but good-looking" an insult.⁸ The movement's definition of "black" – including Africans, coloreds, and Indians – received emphatic support from many. When a colored man named Jack Peters wrote to Drum to say that he didn't want to be called black, the response was a firestorm of criticism from African and colored readers. "I am proud to be black, I think Mr. Peters is the one who is detestable," wrote Peter Lenea of Moroka,

⁵ ibid., pp.44-46.

⁶ ibid., p.218.

⁷ The World, December 20, 1974.

⁸ The World, February 16, 1973, and Drum, May 22, 1974.

Soweto, while a colored woman, E. Ruleiveld of Cape Town, wrote, "Don't forget, Mr. Peters, a colored is black."⁹ Thus, the diffusion of Black Consciousness thinking in the townships turned South Africa's black communities into politicized communities of discourse.

The spontaneity of identification with Black Consciousness discourse – and the movement which propounded it – reflected the way urban blacks saw the BC narrative as encompassing and explaining their own experiences. "Like many young South Africans, I identified immediately with the BCM, which helped me to understand the world in which I was living," recalled Sikose Mji, a Soweto activist.¹⁰ The inversionary discourse of BC had been founded on the hidden transcripts of the lives of people like them. They could easily fit their own thoughts, feelings, and lives into its broader account of the social forces responsible for their condition and the ways in which it could be changed, an account which encouraged them to shake off feelings of inferiority and build the self-confidence needed to become actors instead of objects. Mathata Tsedu, a BC-oriented journalist commented,

"The [BC] literature told me what I knew. I agreed with what was being said. The analysis was right. It said I was suffering, which was true. It said I must ditch this. If the suffering is to end, I must see to it. It made sense. The question of who was responsible for suffering, who was responsible for ending it was logical to me. BC said to me that I'm not inferior – I mustn't look at myself as inferior in any way because I'm black."¹¹ [

⁹ *Drum*, August 8, 1973.

¹⁰ *Afrique-Asie*, May 16, 1977 (my translation).

¹¹ Interview, Mathata Tsedu, Johannesburg, August 19, 1992.

Thus, though BC discourse incorporated the individual experiences of blacks into the logic of a historical story, it was deeply emotional in its power. Outside the rationalizations offered by those participating in the system, it offered the only competing discourse in South Africa at the time which explained their lives in a way which offered dignity and hope. Saki Macozoma, a BC adherent and high school activist in Port Elizabeth in the 1970s, recalled:

“BC appeals to the emotions as well [as to logic]. You don’t have to define it in a sophisticated way. It’s not an ideology you have to understand, it’s something you feel. If you feel the repression, it’s easy to relate [BC] to everyday experience. That’s why it gained the way it did. It was not possible to become politically conscious without taking this route for the 76 generation in PE.”¹²

Thus, what social movement theorists have called “frame alignment” took place as urban black South Africans fitted their own life stories into the larger story told by the movement, a discourse which reached them through communications institutions, organizations, and individuals connected with the movement.

In step with the spread of Black Consciousness, the mid-1970s witnessed a ferocious politicization of urban black communities, the consequence of the acceptance of a doctrine stressing salvation through the political kingdom. The shift was noted by black journalists. Writing in March 1976, Obed Kunene, a Durban newspaper editor, was struck by the change from the apathy and ignorance he had seen among urban blacks in the mid-1960s.

“Ten years later the same cannot be said of the ordinary black man in the street. Certainly, as far as political developments inside and beyond the borders of the country are concerned, there is a rapidly growing awareness that indicates clearly how times have changed. ... Black anger, impatience, and rejection of white domination are on the ascendancy... .”¹³

¹² Interview, Saki Macozoma, Johannesburg, June 26, 1992

¹³ The Argus, March 22, 1976.

Much the same was observed even earlier, before the crises of white rule in neighboring Mozambique and Angola had exploded, by the editor of the Cape Herald regarding the colored population of Cape Town. "The tide of colored political feeling continues to turn," he wrote, noting "the hardening attitude and growing discontent of colored society, which is growing up faster than most people realize."¹⁴ The UCT survey of colored workers in Cape town underscored the point: 54% of them said they were very interested in South African politics, and a further 24% were somewhat interested, while just 20% said they were not interested – a sharp break with the image of apathy which had marked the colored population.¹⁵

The growth of Black Consciousness ideology and political consciousness was at its most intense within the sub-culture of school pupils. Glaser's study of Soweto schools in the 1970s notes the rapid politicization of students there during this period.¹⁶ Other sources agree: Soweto teachers referred openly to their pupils as "Black Power students;" a couple of quotations from students essays in 1975 show why:

"Blacks do not benefit [from apartheid], instead they are economically exploited, politically dominated, physically oppressed, and socially humiliated."
"The object of the pass system is to channel African labor to the white man's mines, factories, farms, and kitchens."¹⁷

¹⁴ Cape Herald, April 15, 1972.

¹⁵ Unpublished cross-tabulations.

¹⁶ Clive Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, 1958-1976 (Ph.D. Thesis, Cambridge University, Cambridge: 1994), p.300ff.

¹⁷ Lynn Maree, "The Hearts and Minds of the People," in Peter Kallaway, Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1984), pp.155, 156.

Daniel Montsitsi, a leading light in SASM there, recalled “very strong – if undefined – anti-apartheid sentiment at grassroots level. As we started to mobilize kids, we found that the response was tremendous.”¹⁸ The same was true among colored pupils in Cape Town; by 1973 teachers were noticing “a new interest in political matters” among them, and by 1976, a local educational commentator observed “a new spirit in the schools and a general emergence from the dark and grim experience of the 1960s.”¹⁹ The politicization of school pupils reinforced their distinctive identity: to the sense of being part of an elite group was added the calling of leadership in liberation. As Glaser noted in his study of Soweto school pupils:

“School identity strengthened during the process of politicization. Politics provided the students with a new sense of common purpose. High school students were no longer united purely by their educational aspirations but also by liberatory camaraderie. ... It became increasingly fashionable to be politically articulate and knowledgeable.”²⁰

Thus if BC moved through the townships with the politicization of urban culture, it spread through the schools like wildfire.

Yet the attitudes of adults were not so different from those of the pupils – for both were responding to the same influences injected into their communities by the Black Consciousness Movement and the changing national and international political environments. Mayer compared 280 school pupil essays from Soweto and Port Elizabeth to his adult interviews and found the same readiness to express passionate feelings about ‘the system.’ He wrote, “The sentiments which motivated the school children ... were

¹⁸ Cited in Sean Johnson, “Youth and the Politics of Resistance,” in Sean Johnson, ed., South Africa: No Turning Back (London, Macmillan: 1988), p.101.

¹⁹ David Bond, Colored Education Struggles in South Africa: Education Boycotts in the Western Cape, 1976 (Master of Social Science Thesis, University of Cape Town, Cape Town: 1992), pp.118, 120.

²⁰ Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, *op. cit.*, p.307.

not unique to a generation or a minority of the educated or political radicals. The system of constraint under which urban blacks lived ... was denied legitimacy by the middle aged as well as the young, by the illiterates, and semi-illiterates as well as the educated." He added, "What was new was the activism of the young."²¹ These similarities in outlook bore witness to the extent to which the language of Black Consciousness had become the common currency of the townships. When Soweto residents mentioned their leaders, Black Consciousness groups and the organizations in civil society which BC had touched figured more prominently than the elites in state-created institutions.²² As Karis and Gerhart note, "The militancy of the student movement had permeated the wider society and was no longer identified merely with youthful radicalism. Although many older blacks continued to disapprove of unconventional modes of speech and behavior among the young, the BC organizations had achieved their aim of becoming opinion leaders far beyond student circles."²³ The township social networks in which, earlier, had circulated only private stories and personal gripes now reverberated with the drumbeats of Black Consciousness as well.

The BCM's linkages to grassroots social networks, largely discursive in nature, were formed through the exposure of their members to institutions, organizations, and individuals influenced by the movement. Striking evidence of the impact of this process can be found in the results of the 1975 Rhodes University survey of Mdantsane residents. The results on a number of their political attitudes were broken down by their exposure to

²¹ Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, p.258.

²² See, for example, the letter by A.S. Ramlane in The World, May 25, 1973.

²³ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, *op. cit.*, p.145.

BC-influenced social institutions (press, church, and civil society), other more conservative institutions, or none at all. (See Figure 6.1.) In the press, the Daily Dispatch of East London (edited by Biko's friend Donald Woods and including Mtintso and Mapetla from his circle among its writers) and The World of Johannesburg are classified as BC-oriented papers; results are also broken down by readership of other English papers, African language papers (chiefly the conservative Imvo), and no paper (the latter group mostly composed of illiterates). Churches are broken down into mainline Protestant (generally SACC members and experiencing the ferment of BC) and the more conservative Protestant evangelical and African independent sects. Associations are broken into secular groups (the civil society organizations which bore the brunt of the BC impact), religious groups (mostly drawn from the more conservative evangelical and African independent streams), and none at all. What Figure 6.1 clearly shows is that those reached by BC voices – through BC-oriented newspapers, mainline Protestant churches, or secular organizations – were by far the most likely to prefer BC views on political issues to more conservative positions. Solid majorities of those exposed to BC-influenced papers, churches, and groups identified with South Africa rather than their tribe, preferred a majority-ruled South Africa to a homeland, were hostile to Ciskei independence, offered little support to the ruling CNIP, and felt the reason for the wage gap was white racism, not black inferiority.²⁴ Views on these issues

²⁴ Similar findings regarding the influence of the Black Consciousness press can be found in the data in a July-August 1974 survey of residents of four homelands, KwaZulu, Lebowa, the Transkei, and Bophutatswana. In these more traditional areas (90% of respondents were rural) the overall level of support for the homelands concept was considerably higher than in urban Mdantsane. However, the same variation in response to press stimuli can be observed: some 32% of those exposed to BC-influenced papers (in this case The World, the Daily Dispatch, and the Rand Daily Mail) said that homelands were a bad idea, as opposed to 25% of the readers of other English dailies, 18% of the readers of African language weeklies, and 18% of those who read no English newspapers. Markinor Homelands Study, op. cit., Johannesburg, 1974, re-analysis of data in Tables 148, 149.

were more mixed among those exposed to more moderate institutions, such as other English papers or religious associations, and support for the CNIP was higher. Among those exposed to conservative discourse, such as the African language papers, the evangelical or independent church members, support for BC positions was much lower, as was the case among those who did not read newspapers or belong to associations, whose social worlds were still defined by orality and traditional social organization. The data clearly point to the impact on black public opinion of the urban institutional political-cultural complex in which the BCM had become the driving force.²⁵ Reading the papers, participating in the churches, and belonging to associations which it had influenced all helped bring urban blacks into the new community of discourse which the BCM had imagined.

²⁵ It would obviously be appropriate to ask the direction of influence as well, particularly since the tendency of readers to select newspapers they agree with is a well-established fact in research in South Africa as well as elsewhere. Thus it might be claimed that BC-oriented individuals were likelier to read BC-oriented papers. However it is less plausible to claim that they would be likely to join mainline churches as a result of their views, or that those who favored the homelands would shun all associations. Consequently, while multivariate analysis would be needed to disentangle the routes of influence among all these institutions, the data presented here are enough to establish a *prima facie* case that as a whole, the set of institutions the BCM influenced had a considerable impact.

Figure 6.1
Political Attitudes by Exposure to BC-Influenced Institutions
Source: Mdantsane Residents survey, November 1975, Rhodes University (cross-tabulations)

	Press Readership				Church Membership			Association Membership		
	BC-Oriented %	Other English %	African Language %	None %	Main-line Protestant %	Protestant Evangelical %	African Independent %	Secular %	Religious %	None %
ID: South Africa (not tribe)	79	58	43	34	56	28	22	72	42	17
POLITICAL SYSTEM: united SA w/majority rule (not homeland)	82	56	33	33	54	32	30	74	45	33
CISKEI INDEPENDENCE: Bad	72	42	33	29	50	28	20	60	37	29
HOMELAND VOTE: CNIP	21	36	42	38	28	48	49	29	48	32
Wage Gap Cause: White Racism (not Black inferiority)	79	69	63	51	63	52	42	77	64	52

Another institution which gave BC views entrée into local social networks was the black schools – through their teachers, pupils and student organizations. Some of the younger black teachers, many of them graduates or push-outs from campuses where the BCM was active, and others sympathetic to their point of view, were so politically committed that the older teachers called them “SASO.”²⁶ Some of the differences in their approach were perceptible in the classroom – teaching the French Revolution as an example of how a people took up arms against an oppressive ruler, or skipping a “civics” lesson on the homeland governments on the pretext of lack of time.²⁷ Outside the classroom, some of these teachers, such as O.R. Tiro, propounded BC ideals, distributed the movement’s literature, and helped student organizations which espoused its views.²⁸ Politicized students themselves played an important role in spreading the word of BC among their friends and schoolmates. In addition to personal contacts, a large part was played by debating societies (increasingly politicized in this period, with topics such as “Was the coming of the white man positive?”), with other student cultural and sport organizations also playing a role. The debate societies served as the public face of SASM; they popularized its ideas (drawing audiences of 200 – 300) and allowed new leaders to emerge (Tsietshi Mashinini and Khotso Seathlolo, among others prominent in the Soweto revolt, first aroused notice through debating prowess). Interscholastic events also forged links between leaders at different schools in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and

²⁶ Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics, *op. cit.*, p.234. See also Jonathan Hyslop, Social Conflicts Over African Education in South Africa from the 1940s to 1976 (Ph.D. Thesis, Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg: 1990), p.456, and Bond, Colored Education Struggles in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.111.

²⁷ These examples are cited in Maree, “The Hearts and Minds of the People,” in Peter Kallaway, ed., Apartheid and Education: the Education of Black South Africans (Johannesburg, Ravan: 1984), pp.154-55.

²⁸ Glaser, “School, Street, and Identity,” *op. cit.*, p.9.

elsewhere, creating what Bond termed a “loose network of communication” among student elites of different neighborhoods and races. They also helped politicize the large number of new schools without established political traditions. This was particularly important in Soweto and Cape Town. In the former, the number of African secondary schools doubled between 1972 and 1974 when the white government relaxed the its cap, and in the latter, new schools for relocated colored families were springing up in the Cape Flats townships and were not under the sway of the Unity Movement as the older colored schools were.²⁹

The interplay between schools and the other institutions touched by the BCM leveraged the influence of each within black communities. The politicization of students reflected not just events in their schools but their social and institutional environments, which had been affected in various ways by BC. Mosima “Tokyo” Sexwale, a SASM member turned ANC guerilla, recounted a whole series of influences which had brought him into the orbit of Black Consciousness: books, magazines, newspapers, movement publications, friends, SASO and SASM meetings.³⁰ Likewise, events at schools – important institutions in impoverished, marginalized communities – also fed back into the larger world of the township. Challenges from younger teachers as well as BC groups helped to undermine the authority of the conservative leaders of the black teachers’ organizations – important cogs in the regime’s system of exclusive corporatism – putting established elite groups like ATASA under pressure to make bolder claims. Their

²⁹ On the role of debate societies and other organizations see in particular Clive Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-314, and Bond, Colored Education Struggles in South Africa, *op. cit.*, pp.111-116.

³⁰ Statement made to the police, December 31, 1976, in Karis and Gerhart, eds., From Protest to Challenge, *op. cit.*, pp.693-694.

assertiveness also encouraged the black school boards to question official dictates, first in questions of hiring and firing (such as attempts by the white education authorities to dismiss BC-leaning teachers) and later over the edict that Soweto schools should provide half their instruction in Afrikaans. "A shift in urban political attitudes was taking place, especially in urban black politics," writes Hyslop, who studied the politics of education in Soweto in detail, "and this was lessening the impact of the conservative currents who had flourished in the difficult circumstances of the 1960s."³¹

The most profound of the consequences for urban black communities were the linkages which developed between the new Black Consciousness movement and what Mayer called "the old Black Consciousness," the neo-traditional discourses, practices, and networks which honeycombed the townships and organized black society from within. He wrote:

"The interplay between the old and the new Black Consciousness is complex. The rank and file have been encouraged by the approval and the slogans of the new movement; the intellectuals who try to live up to their slogans have a rich living tradition to delve into. But many who preach pride in black culture are only vaguely aware of how much pride in and knowledge of black culture existed among people who had less cause of comparison and competitions with whites than they had themselves."³²

What was happening was a re-interpretation and reinforcement of traditional practices, which themselves had been encouraged by the regime to promote ethnocentrism, but which now were seen as a form of resistance to white control. As Mayer put it, "The elite and the ordinary people alike are availing themselves of the fact that though whites can control where blacks may live or work, they cannot lay down what they may think or

³¹ Jonathan Hyslop, Social Conflict Over African Education *op. cit.*, pp.456-458.

³² Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, p.208.

value. A return to African values and modes of thought, or a freer expression of them, had become a strong current in Soweto” in 1975-76. Christianity itself had become highly controversial and politically suspect, and faith in the ancestors was strongly affirmed by many alongside or in place of Christian faith.³³ All these developments pointed to the way in which the solidarities which had developed from below in urban black communities – around kinship, homeboy, neighborhood, and other patrimonial ties – were being connected via BC discourse to an emergent new elite with a very different message and agenda from those at their apex before.

BC’s emphasis on black unity as a means to liberation gave the national black identity emerging in the urban areas higher priority, sharper edges, and greater militancy, particularly in Soweto.³⁴ While this new identity was overlaid atop the older, smaller-scale loyalties rather than obliterating them, it was given greater emphasis as a result of BC. In Mayer’s 1975-76 interviews in Soweto, respondents were asked whether they were proud to be members of their ethnic group, whether they were proud to be Africans, and which was more important. He found that 88% of the respondents expressed pride in both ‘nesting’ ethnicities, but gave greater weight to the African identity. “Among the majority,” he wrote, “the need for unity vis-à-vis the whites was the most common theme, stated in a variety of forms.” Typical remarks included:

“It is more important to me to be African because it means putting us together as one nation.”

“It links us with my brothers from different groups.”

“We can stand together as one nation of the under-privileged.”

³³ *ibid.*, p.222.

³⁴ Regarding the development of this identity from below, see Chapter Four, Part V.

Mayer reported that the “need for black unity against the white oppressor” he found widely postulated in Soweto was “given new muscle by the assertion of black identity and a common African heritage.”³⁵ Much the same feeling was widespread in student ranks as well, as an incident at Turfloop illustrated. When a white lecturer asked his students to name their tribes, he was met by a stony silence. “We are South Africans,” one of them finally said, to enthusiastic support from the rest.³⁶ In other major cities, all more closely tied to homelands than the Johannesburg townships, the same process of broadening identification was underway, although it had made less progress than in the cosmopolitan metropolis.

Along with bridging ethnic divisions, the popular spread of Black Consciousness was associated with a sharp decline in the class snobbery which had traditionally divided urban Africans. This stands out quite noticeably in the comments of many of Mayer’s middle-class Soweto respondents.

“Since political things have changed us we do not use the word ‘barbarians’ so much when we talk about the ordinary people” (man, 40, teacher, JC).

“Being civilized involves displaying sympathy for the have-nots” (woman, 28, actress, Form II).

“I respect the lower classes. They are the best people. Their homes are peaceful. When I am with ordinary people I come to their level. I don’t want to show my colors” (man, 21, high school student, Std.10).

The major reason Mayer cites for this cross-class convergence is BC’s emphasis on African values – and its stress on the value of Africans. “Among educated followers of the new Black Consciousness, ideas on the keeping of customs were on the whole very similar to those of the working men and women. They equally stressed the value of

³⁵ Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, pp. 140, 261.

³⁶ Rand Daily Mail, February 24, 1976

African customs in maintaining self-respect, and they deplored the commercialization of lobola.”³⁷ Another factor was conformity: Karis and Carter note that the “pervasive intellectual influence of the BCM” encouraged well-to-do blacks to strike more militant postures to avoid being considered sellouts.³⁸ (The exception, Mayer reports, was the “bad elite,” the state-dependent segment of the black middle classes that formed the trader-council nexus.) Above all, there seems to have been a convergence in political perceptions among middle- and working-class blacks, as middle-class blacks abandoned hope of change through white goodwill. In 1973, secondary-educated Sowetans were much more optimistic about the future of race relations than those with less than four years of schooling (52% thought black-white relations were improving in the first group, 17% in the second). By 1975, the gap had almost disappeared, as the middle class group had become far less optimistic: just 13% of better educated Sowetans thought race relations were getting better, scarcely more than the 8% who thought that among those with less than four years’ education). On this point there was little difference between Sowetans and black residents of other major cities, either in the overall level of optimism or the lack of class differences.³⁹ Increasingly, under the impulsion of Black Consciousness, all strata of the urban black communities were coming to feel that their fates were bound up together.

The diffusion of BC discourse within the colored group also had a dramatic impact, moving it politically away from the whites (in whose political system coloreds had traditionally participated) and sharply towards the Africans. This became the subject

³⁷ Mayer, *Soweto People and Their Social Universes*, *op. cit.*, pp.123a, 134, 171, and 220-221.

³⁸ Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, *op. cit.*, p.338.

of comment among both white and colored journalists in the Cape by 1971-1972.

Humphrey Tyler, editor of The Argus, wrote in 1972 that among the colored people “there is a lot of discussion of ‘Black Consciousness.’” He added, “They hate terms like ‘non-white’ because they sound too much like non-people. They want something positive and the most direct juxtaposition to White is Black.”⁴⁰ In a similar vein, the editor of the colored-oriented Cape Herald wrote in 1973:

“The withdrawal of the colored people from the white areas has been taking place for some time now. Whites close to us began to notice it some 18 months ago. ... The embryo of colored dignity and self-respect and awareness was born, a product of the discontent of apartheid and nurtured on a wave of Black Consciousness which swept through the community in the Cape.”⁴¹

By the mid-70s, the BC tide had strengthened to the point where political identification with Africans had become a commonplace for coloreds. In Groenewald’s survey, taken on the eve of the 1976 unrest in the Cape, only 23% said that the coloreds could improve their position in South Africa by looking out only for their own interests – while 54% said they could do so by standing together with the black people.⁴²

B. The Constitution of Citizens: The BCM and Perceptions of Legitimacy, Democracy, and Political Opportunity

The growth of Black Consciousness was linked as well to the construction of a new sense of citizenship among blacks, beginning with a rejection of the legitimating ideologies which had supported the minority regime. The combination of economic

³⁹ Quotso 75, op. cit., Table 26.

⁴⁰ The Argus, June 17, 1972.

⁴¹ Cape Herald, September 22, 1973.

⁴² Groenewald, Reaksies op Minderheidsgroepstatus, op. cit., p.318.

modernization, the revaluation of tradition, and BC discourse enabled blacks to break with the sense of inferiority which had encouraged acquiescence in, if not acceptance of, white domination. Increased prosperity, modern material lifestyles, and “Afro” values relieved the anxieties which had led blacks to see their culture as “barbaric” or “tribal” and the whites as the bringers of “civilization” and all things Western.⁴³ In 1975-76, unlike a decade earlier, character, not skin color, was seen as the test of civilization – and residents of the BC-influenced Soweto Mayer studied were apt to rate blacks higher on this scale than whites.

“The civilized are true Africans who still have respect and love for their fellow human beings.”

“In South Africa, the whites are the worst enemies of civilization.”⁴⁴

“In 1975-76,” Mayer commented, “Uncle Toms seemed to be practically extinct.”⁴⁵

Among the colored community in Cape Town, a similar decline was reported in negative self-image. For example, instead of being a pejorative comment, when coloreds called themselves “Ham” (a reference to the Biblical Ham and Shem), the tone was increasingly

⁴³ “Until the early 1970s blacks in the towns, especially those with more than primary education, were caught in an intellectual and moral dilemma: they resented whites spurning them as culturally inferior, but felt compelled to admit that they were the more civilized because, after all, ‘they brought civilized ways of life to us.’ Blacks seemed condemned to a pupillary condition for a very long time to come. By 1975, Soweto blacks had gone a long way to getting themselves off the hook. Secure in their self-identification as a modern urban people, they no longer seemed to care which way of life was civilized; some suspected, ‘perhaps none.’” Philip Mayer, “The Origin and Decline of Two Rural Resistance Ideologies,” in Philip Mayer, ed., *Black Villagers in an Industrial Society* (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1980), p.70.

⁴⁴ *Idem.* Mayer comments: “The particular qualities of character elected [as civilized in 1975], and the occurrence of the same ideas through the whole spectrum of blacks from the least educated, leave no doubt that the main source was in African philosophy, in the concept of *ubuntu* which is associated with kindness, gentleness, humility, respect, and love, qualities which whites, according to popular black thinking, are not well endowed.”

⁴⁵ Mayer, *Soweto People and Their Social Universes*, *op. cit.*, p.161. Only the members of the “bad elite” – the state-connected middle class and socialites – still hankered after white lifestyles, and these groups were noticeably lacking in political consciousness as well, he reported.

neutral or even favorable (“Who can beat Ham?”)⁴⁶ Significantly, Mayer also found that the elite members most skeptical of Western civilization were also the closest to the rank and file and the readiest to help and advise them – an indication of how the promotion of positive black identity by Black Consciousness had a practical effect of promoting cross-class solidarity and collective action.⁴⁷

The influences which led urban blacks to repudiate their supposed inferiority also led them by the mid-1970s to reject the claim that their inferior status flowed from competition in a race-blind market, a view widely accepted ten years earlier. By 1975-76, Soweto residents had gone over wholesale to the Black Consciousness view that their inferior status was the result of whites as a group discriminating against blacks as a group. When Mayer compared his results for this period with those from a decade before, he found much greater awareness of discrimination in hiring, promotion, and pay among blacks of every social status. “They no longer saw themselves in their working life as operating in the parameters of a ‘normal society,’” he wrote. “Many informants had come to see all whites as merely ‘using blacks to further their interests’, that their function was ‘just to make white men rich’.”⁴⁸ Cross-cutting ties to whites had been largely broken: no longer did respondents draw the careful distinctions they had ten years before between the “good” English-speakers and Jews and “bad” Afrikaners. “The impression had gained ground that ultimately all whites were equally bent on taking advantage of blacks; all blacks had to face the reality that they were up against all

⁴⁶ Gerald Stone, “Identity Among Lower-Class Cape Coloreds,” in Michael Whisson and Hendrick van der Merwe, *Colored Citizenship in South Africa* (Cape Town, Abe Bailey Institute of Interracial Studies: 1972), p.42, reporting on his research in Cape Town in 1971-72.

⁴⁷ Mayer, *Soweto People and Their Social Universes*, *op. cit.*, p.189.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.238.

whites."⁴⁹ Nor was this view confined to sophisticated Soweto; similar findings were reported among blacks in other cities at this time. In the Mdantsane survey in November 1975, Africans there too cited white racism as the reason for the wage gap by a large majority (56%, versus 21% who cited black inferiority or market-related factors). Likewise, in the UCT survey of working colored people in Cape Town taken in June of that year, 62% said the nature of the South African situation was racial discrimination, and 60% voiced discontent with their status in South African society.⁵⁰ By 1976, urban blacks were forcefully echoing the Black Consciousness doctrine, "Black man, you are on your own!"

With the spread of BC ideology, a growing self-confidence and decline in black deference to whites accompanied the waning of the inferiority complex. Mayer reported numerous instances of a new self-assertiveness among his 1975-76 Soweto interviewees compared to those of a decade earlier, including a willingness to answer back to whites "in the street, in shops, and even in the work situation." To cite just a few:

"Blacks have become clever and no longer fear whites. Instead they fear us."
"I no longer fear whites as I used to. I answer back when scolded wrongly by an employer."
"I used to have a lot of fear about being late at work even if it was not my fault. Not so anymore. I am now ready to argue with whites. I am beginning to assert myself."⁵¹

Among coloreds much the same was noted.

"You can see it even in the streets, in the shops, and the queues. The old days are gone. The colored people have lost their respect for the Whites, mister."⁵²

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.236.

⁵⁰ Unpublished cross-tabulations (both surveys).

⁵¹ Mayer, *Soweto People and Their Social Universes*, *op. cit.*, pp.233-234.

⁵² Labor Party leader Sonny Leon, quoted in *The Argus*, June 14, 1972.

Even the degrading custom of coloreds calling all white men “baas” (“boss”) was waning among coloreds.⁵³ The change of attitude was equally clear among school pupils. For instance, Lynn Maree, who conducted research in Soweto schools in 1975, recalled being asked pointed political questions by the students. “It was as though I was being tested, there was no pupil-teacher deference, and the questions came from a high degree of awareness of current events.”⁵⁴

By 1975-76, urban blacks had reached a point where they were demanding equal rights, including the vote, in a united and democratic state. Mayer reported, “The denial of full citizenship rights with all they entail was quoted by many informants as the ultimate source of their deprived condition. They spoke eloquently about being legislated for, and having no influence on, the laws on which their lives and livelihood depend.”⁵⁵ One of his respondents, a 20-year-old female cashier, put it simply: “We want power now.”⁵⁶ The findings of the Mdantsane survey were little different: there Africans preferred a majority-ruled, united South Africa to the homeland system by the margin of 45% to 28%. The desire for change was also powerful among coloreds; Groenewald found that supporters of “large” or “drastic” change in the country’s political system outnumbering those of “no” or “slight” changes by more than four to one. Factor

⁵³ Stone, “Identity Among Lower-Class Coloreds,” *op. cit.*, p.42.

⁵⁴ Maree, “The Hearts and Minds of the People,” *op. cit.*, p.155. Bond makes a similar point regarding colored pupils in Cape Town, citing the Unity Movement-aligned Education Journal in 1976, which warned, “Teachers need to be better prepared for penetrating questions from pupils. Assertive scholars placed pressures on their teacher and were more readily available to voice their protests.” (Colored Education Struggles in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.120).

⁵⁵ Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, p.225.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.235.

analysis showed that the strongest correlate of support for political change was the sense that the colored group had been treated unjustly.⁵⁷

The concessions made by the regime in the early and middle years of the decade, such as the lifting of apartheid restrictions on elevators, parks, and post office lines, or the raising of job color bars, were rejected with contempt, and often regarded as a sign of growing weakness. “Most informants made no secret of it that in their eyes the changes in white attitudes and actions were inadequate. ... They spoke of a stiffening of black attitudes.”

“Yes, some blacks have been promoted into jobs which were done by whites before, but for all that we are only becoming more stubborn.”

“They have relaxed useless laws like segregation in parks, but otherwise things are worsened. Our school going kids have to learn more Afrikaans, a useless language.”

“The whites are getting shaky and as a result have relaxed some of their stiff laws.”⁵⁸

The hardening of attitudes in Soweto was clear in the words of one of Mayer’s respondents: “We don’t want dialogue. They [whites] can speak to their homeland stooges.”

One of the most striking developments in black political culture by the mid-1970s was the growth of democratic values, which were associated with exposure to Black Consciousness discourse as well as the process of social modernization. Although the BC narrative focused on the theme of national liberation, many of its elements – the entitlement of blacks to human rights and political power, their capacity to understand and change the world, the worth of their culture – contained profoundly democratic

⁵⁷ Groenewald, *Reaksies op Minderheidsgroepstatus*, op. cit., pp.214-314. In his 1976 survey, some 8% of coloreds favored no change, 6% slight change, 61% large, gradual change, and 19% quick, drastic change.

⁵⁸ Mayer, *Soweto People and Their Social Universes*, op. cit., pp.230, 233.

implications. Moreover, as we have seen, their translation into public discourse by the mass media, particularly the press, integrated Black Consciousness into a broader liberal democratic discourse, which is how the general public encountered it. This encounter was the first in which the large new urban black public was exposed via mass media and organizations (newspapers, churches, mosques, drama, associations, etc) to a new political ideology, one which contrasted sharply with the authoritarian discourse of hierarchy and conformity which ruled the traditional political order and was used for legitimacy by the regime. The basic democratic ideas in this new discourse – equal rights for all, majority rule, respect for the rights of others – helped form the public opinion which was quickening through this initial mass encounter with the political world, as members of the mass public read, discussed, and struggled to understand the details of events far beyond the local oral domain which had been the previous horizon of most black political discourse.

Evidence of this is available from surveys taken in the mid-1970s, which strongly associate the development of a new collective identity among blacks with the spread of democratic values. (See Figure 6.2.) It has already been shown that the rejection of a tribal identity and the acceptance of a broader South African identity was linked both to exposure to Black Consciousness discourse and groups and to belief in other positions of the BCM, such as hostility to the homelands and the belief that white racism was the root of South Africa's problems. This new collective identity was also linked to values such as majority rule, political tolerance, and equal rights for women. In Mdantsane, those who identified with South Africa preferred a majority-ruled, united South Africa to the homeland system by 82% to 10%, while those who identified with their tribe preferred

the homelands by 52% to 19%. When asked about family and friends joining parties opposed to their own, those who identified with South Africa approved of political tolerance by 64% to 34%, while those identified with their tribe were intolerant, 48% to 47%. This is particularly interesting, in light of the intolerance and violence which had been part of the workings on indirect rule and the black political groups opposing it. Finally, on a topic which went to the heart of the traditional patrimonial order – equal rights for women – those who had adopted the new collective identity also took a more democratic view. The Markinor homelands study showed that while the topic was controversial (more rights for men were preferred to equal rights, 55% to 45%), nonetheless, those who opposed the homeland system (mostly men) also favored equal rights for women, 60% to 40%, while those who thought homelands were a good idea

Figure 6.2
Black Identity and Democratic Values

	All %	Identity: SA %	Identity: Tribe %
POLITICAL SYSTEM:			
United SA with majority rule	45	82	19
Homeland system	28	10	52
POLITICAL TOLERANCE:			
Approve	55	64	47
Disapprove	34	34	48
EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN		Homelands Bad	Homelands Good
Favor equal rights	45	60	45
Oppose – more rights for men	55	40	56

Sources: Mdantsane survey, 1975 (first two questions), Markinor Homelands Survey, 1974 (third)

supported male dominance, 56% to 45%. The changes in this period should not be exaggerated: democratic values were not yet established majority positions among black

South Africans. Nonetheless, democratic values were growing, driven by the political discourse to which the BCM exposed urban blacks and through their own efforts to understand and participate in the political world.

Yet even as they became more demanding regarding their rights and more understanding of the nature of democracy, urban blacks were becoming more pessimistic about their material prospects. With the sharp rise in inflation after the 1973 oil crisis, instead of rapidly (if unequally) advancing in prosperity as during the 1960s boom years, blacks across the board found themselves losing ground on a speeded-up treadmill even before the 1976 recession set in. The Quotso survey of African women in eight major urban areas in April 1975 found that 44% said their families were worse off than a year before, and only 19% were better off. This was a deterioration from the situation before the oil shock two years before, as comparison of their Soweto data with their 1973 results made clear: in 1975, 40% of Sowetans said their families were worse off and only 19% said they were better off, while in 1973 there was almost an even balance, 32% worse off and 28% better off.⁵⁹ Moreover, the pessimism extended to the future. Some 41% across the eight cities expected their families to be worse off in a year, while only 22% thought their families would be better off. Here the change in mood from 1973 was even more noteworthy: then 42% of Sowetans expected to gain and only 18% expected to lose, while in 1975 the Soweto figures virtually matched the national results, 41% expecting to become worse off in a year and only 20% expecting to be better off.⁶⁰ Equally significant, by the mid-1970s all strata of urban black society were under

⁵⁹ Quotso 1975, *op. cit.*, pp.12-13.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.14.

economic pressure: while in 1973 the younger and better educated Sowetans reported income gains and a positive outlook for further improvement, by 1975 there was little difference between their situation and those of older and the less well-educated. "The general mood is rather gloomy," commented an analyst.⁶¹

The rise of Black Consciousness ideas was also connected to a sharp decline in the legitimacy of collaborationist institutions and elites among urban blacks, which was most starkly evident at local government level. The ineffectiveness of these institutions, reflecting their limited powers in local development and increasing reliance on rents, service charges, and beerhall revenues as financial support from white local authorities was withdrawn in the early 1970s, was mercilessly highlighted by the BCM and other opponents, with telling effect. Turnouts in local government elections during the 1970s were extremely low. In Soweto, for instance, it fell from over 35% in 1968 to just 14% in 1971, with a mere 2% voting in one ward. A white government official who visited 10 polling places and found "little or no interest" was forced to recognize that "there exists among most residents [of Soweto] a general lack of interest or a critical and in some cases hostile attitude towards the Urban Bantu Council."⁶² By 1975-75 matters had worsened for the collaborators: Mayer reported that "All blacks exercising white-derived powers were seen as contaminated, whether they were policemen, or clerks in the administration offices. To many people the members of the UBC were typical stooges,

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.12.

⁶² H.J. Swanepoel, *Die Aandeel van Bantoe aan Stedelike Bantoeadministrasie in Johannesburg*, MA Thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1973, pp.83-84.

the urban equivalent of the homeland establishment.⁶³ But these trends – and attitudes – were not confined to Soweto. Turnouts fell in UBC elections around the country, while surveys in big cities and letters to newspapers from residents of smaller towns confirmed the profound unpopularity the old type of township politics and its leaders had fallen into in most areas.⁶⁴ In the colored townships the new system of local government established in the early 1970s, based on elected, segregated management committees, never succeeded in mobilizing much popular support, particularly in the Cape, home to the bulk of the colored population, where they had enjoyed the municipal franchise under varying restrictions until 1971. Only 6% of registered voters voted in Athlone, 16% in Kensington and 17% in Elsie's River, while in some areas candidates won election unopposed.⁶⁵ The resulting "leadership vacuum," as the old state-linked elite felt itself

⁶³ Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, p.249. He cites one Sowetan as saying, "We are no longer so easily flattered by any of the government stooges as was the case when Matanzima started. You see how the UBC gets less and less votes." *ibid.*, p.232.

⁶⁴ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, *op. cit.*, p.233. In Port Elizabeth, Michael de Jongh observed the Advisory Board's loss of legitimacy by the mid-1970s, noting that "the disillusionment of the residents with the AB" was "reflected in the low percentage polls achieved in elections." He cited the contempt of 1970s interviewees for the institution: "The AB is just a talking shop; It does not represent the interest of the people. It used to have influence." "I don't know anything about an AB." "I don't vote for nothing." "It is a waste of time." Interaction and Transaction: A Study of Conciliar Behavior in a Black South African Township, Ph.D. Thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1979, pp.176, 105, 135. Moller et al., who conducted a survey in KwaMashu, Durban's largest township, in 1975, concluded that their "respondents put little faith in [the UBC] and its members, and donot fee that their interests are adequately represented by the Council." The comments they quoted were devastating: "We have no say in this township and we have no rights as residents." "They [the councilors] are powerless." "Whites have taken us for a ride. This is said to be our place, but look who controls it and how. Look at the ineffectiveness of the Urban Council, it's really a joke, it's what Chief Buthelezi calls a 'toy telephone'." Valerie Moller et al., A Black Township in Durban: A Study of Needs and Problems (Durban, Center for Applied Social Sciences: 1978), pp.23-24. A quick survey of press clips shows numerous residents of smaller towns voicing hostility to the UBCs, including Carletonville ("Allow me ... to express my disgust at the UBC of Khutsong, near Carletonville ... Take a closer look at the composition of the local UBC, one will, without doubt, notice that it consists strictly of rich people aiming at filling their own stomachs," The World, December 18, 1974), Standerton ("Since the inception of the Urban Bantu council system, progress in Standerton has come to a halt ... They do absolutely nothing for the people of Sakhile: The World, December 27, 1974, and Uitenhage ("Here in Uitenhage we have a group of men known as the Urban Bantu Council. Of what benefit to the community are these men?" Drum, February 22, 1976).

⁶⁵ Cape Times, September 19, 1973.

threatened on all sides, was poignantly described by Brandel-Syrier, who conducted a second wave of research on the conservative black elite of Germiston in the early 1970s: “snubbed by their own politicians, whose power they resented; threatened by their own masses, whose violence they feared; and with much of the suspicion and jealousy previously felt for the white man now directed against themselves, the elite of [Germiston] sat in their golden-yellow facebrick houses on their red-plush settees with their front doors locked and their windows burglar-proofed ... They had become the fence-sitters, trying to keep friends in all camps, and preparing themselves for all eventualities ...”⁶⁶ At public meetings and professional meetings they were challenged to their faces as collaborators, quislings, and the like. As an alert white observer noted at the time, “Black Consciousness is entirely against what the elite represents.”⁶⁷ With the challenge to white power and its allies represented by Black Consciousness, a key prop of the old elite at the apex of indirect rule had been knocked loose.

Under the assault of BC and the threat of the loss of citizenship on homeland independence, among urban blacks the ethnic institutions set up by the white regime as substitutes for direct parliamentary representations also appeared to be losing the measure of legitimacy they had possessed by the 1970s, particularly in the two largest urban areas, Johannesburg and Cape Town. Elections to homeland legislative assemblies

⁶⁶ Mia Brandel-Syrier, Coming Through: the Search for a New Cultural Identity (Johannesburg; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978), pp.127-8. The phrase “leadership vacuum” is drawn from Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, who noted that the attitudes Brandel-Syrier described were typical of the “bad elite” (the shopkeeper-government employee-councilor elite), and reports similar attitudes among their peers in Soweto, pp.252-254. “Successful businessmen who were active in community affairs within the given framework were accused of being stooges.” *ibid.*, p. 246.

⁶⁷ Ken Hartshorne, the Bantu Education planner who became a noted critic of the system, cited in Brandel-Syrier, Coming Through: The Search for a New Cultural Identity, (New York, McGraw-Hill: 1978), p.120.

– for Bophutatswana in 1972 and the Transkei in 1973 – drew miniscule turnouts among potential voters living in urban areas in white South Africa, largely concentrated around Johannesburg and Cape Town.⁶⁸ Participation in the elections for the Colored Persons Representatives Council fell sharply between the first election in 1969 and the second in 1975: in the first poll 76% of those eligible registered and 37% voted, while in the second election only 53% bothered to register and 28% voted.⁶⁹ The impressions left by the participation rates is reinforced by survey data. Mayer concluded that “the official endeavor to fit black urban residents into the multinational model by stressing their homeland affiliations has not carried much conviction among Soweto residents, and the Quotso surveys reported that the star of even the most militant of the homeland leaders, Gathsa Buthelezi, had waned there between 1973 and 1975.⁷⁰ Focus groups conducted in 1973 reported particular hostility to the homeland system among teachers and students in Soweto.⁷¹ Steady growth was also evident in indifference and hostility to the CPRC

⁶⁸ In the 1972 Bophutatswana election only 4,661 out of a total of 50,000 registered Tswana voters in urban areas participated, while the vast majority of adults who lived within the homeland voted. This conclusion is drawn from data in Butler, Jeffrey, Rotberg, Robert, and Adams, John, The Black Homelands of South Africa: The Political and Economic Development of Bophutatswana and KwaZulu (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1977), p.53. In the Transkeian election of 1973, only 39,000 voters in white South Africa participated out of a total of 323,000 voters, 12% of the total, even though 42% of blacks classified as “Transkeians” lived in the common area. Urban participation in the Transkeian vote was probably concentrated in the cities of the Eastern Cape, to judge by the voting in the Ciskeian election of 1973, where few votes were cast in Johannesburg and Cape Town, but turnout was heavy in Port Elizabeth and East London. Roger Southall, South Africa’s Transkei: The Political Economy of an “Independent” Bantustan (New York, Monthly Review Press: 1983), p.135, 145.

⁶⁹ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, *op. cit.*, p.239. Moreover, even the party which won the election – the Labor Party – campaigned on a platform of shutting down the CPRC.

⁷⁰ Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, p.243. In the 1973 Quotso survey, Buthelezi was cited as the person most admired by 10% of respondents, compared to just 3% in 1975, even though the question had been re-worded to focus on public figures and exclude family members. Quotso 1975, *op. cit.*, p.35.

⁷¹ Quotso 73, *op. cit.* p.113. Comments by participants included, “Homelands are ethnically grouped, so that its occupants should always have faction fights.” “Homelands are a death bed of Africans created by whites.”

among coloreds in the Cape. An informal survey of colored residents of Cape Town by reporters for The Argus in 1974 found that more than two-thirds of those they interviewed “had little interest in the colored political structure or in the names and ideals of their leaders,” and the UCT poll of employed coloreds in 1975 reported that 53% said they were not interested in colored politics (though only 20% were not interested in South African politics).⁷² The erosion of the legitimacy of the CPRC appears to have accelerated in 1975-76: in the UCT poll 44% of respondents were unwilling to choose between the parties within it, compared to 67% of those who answered Groenewald’s survey a year later – at which time only 37% of coloreds in the Cape believed that coloreds could use existing political institutions to advance their position.⁷³ The situation was somewhat different in the rural areas of the Western Cape, where the colored population was more conservative, and in the cities with townships in homelands (Durban, surrounded by KwaZulu, and Port Elizabeth and East London, with their residents from the Ciskei and Transkei), where the populist politics of Buthelezi, Sebe, and Matanzima had won a measure of support for them, if not for the homeland system.⁷⁴ But in South Africa’s two largest cities, where the Black Consciousness movement had

⁷² The Argus, September 7, 1974, and unpublished tabulations of the UCT survey. Comments by Argus interviewees included an unemployed carpenter, Peter Abrahams, who said, “colored politics is a lost cause,” Frederik Eruopa, a community organizer, who said, “One of the things wrong is that there is too much talking, and the people who can get things done just don’t do anything,” and widow and boutique manager Penelope de Vos, who said, “I would like equal rights. That embraces everything.”

⁷³ UCT survey tabulations, and Groenewald, Reaksies op Minderheidsgroepstatus, *op. cit.* p.318.

⁷⁴ The 1975 Quotso survey showed that while Buthelezi’s urban support was largely concentrated in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, in those cities he remained the most admired figure. Quotso 75, *op. cit.*, p.35. Sebe’s urban support in the Eastern Cape was noted in Chapter Three, pp.215-221, and in the Mdantsane survey he and the Transkei’s Matanzima were the two most popular leaders, chosen as best leader by 25% and 19% respectively (with Buthelezi in third place at 10%). However this personalist support did not necessarily translate into support for the homeland system itself. Buthelezi had, in part, made his name by campaigning against homeland independence, and sentiment in Mdantsane was somewhat hostile to independence, with 38% opposed, 23% in favor, and 36% uncertain.

its strongest outlets and representation, the movement's aim of shattering the legitimacy of government-created representative bodies largely had been achieved.

The regime's thorough-going loss of legitimacy was illustrated in the large proportions of blacks in Johannesburg who said they would not oppose – or would even welcome – a foreign invasion of the country that could bring down white rule. In March 1976, as Cuban and Angolan troops were pushing the South African intervention force in Angola back towards the Namibian frontier, The World of Johannesburg pointedly asked its readers, "Would you fight for South Africa if we are invaded from Angola?" The answer was an overwhelming "no": 203 of 244 letters received in response (83%) said they would not fight.⁷⁵ These findings were paralleled by the results of a study of colored opinion in Riverlea, Johannesburg, three years earlier, which found that in the event of outside attack, only 42% would have supported the government.⁷⁶ The reasons cited by The World's readers were straightforward – blacks saw no reason to defend a regime that denied them the rights of citizenship.

"Let us call a spade a spade. African are being robbed of equal rights in their motherland. So why fight on the border?"

"To fight for South Africa against Angola – or anywhere else for that matter – is fighting to maintain the status quo and that would be ridiculous. ... The vast majority of non-white South Africans believe, rightly or wrongly, that an invasion from Angola would be regarded as a liberation."

"Why should we blacks risk our dear lives by defending an indefensible and unacceptable policy – apartheid? No, we cannot do it."

Some even used the regime's own claims against it.

⁷⁵ The World, March 11, 1976.

⁷⁶ The Argus, September 8, 1973. Equally ominous for the government, Groenewald's survey showed that in the Cape in July 1976, less than half of colored adults (49%) felt that coloreds should use non-violence to advance their position. Reaksies op Minderheidsgroepstatus, op. cit., p.318.

"I'm a Bantu homeland citizen, so I'd be indulging myself in foreign politics – South Africa's!"

"Now I am expected to undergo military training in a very short time and help South Africa to fight its enemies. ... How can I be a horse after spending a hundred years being a donkey?"

"The whites represent the blacks in parliament, so tell them to represent us in this war."⁷⁷

These attitudes contrasted sharply to those of blacks during World War II, when patriotic sentiment was strong and tens of thousands had served as unarmed volunteers in the South African Army. They revealed the extent of the regime's loss of black support on the eve of the Soweto revolt, and implicitly suggested that they might well support violence against it.

By 1975-76 there was also a greater outspokenness on the part of urban blacks, which pointed to their declining sense of constraint and growing sense of political opportunity. Blacks were openly willing to speak of hostility to whites and a readiness to confront them.

"Blacks are not more afraid to fight a white man even if it means he got to be arrested. I hate them now."

"There is a cold war between us and them."

"The Blacks have lost the respect they used to have for whites. Except for the highly religious the ordinary black is hating the white man and is willing to kill him if he got a chance."

"We will fight them at every possible opportunity."

"If only [blacks] had fought for their rights, we, the youth of today, would have no reason to rebel ... Our love for our so-called [white] fellow man has dried up like the drought that gets worse with every summer."⁷⁸

The new mood was evident to social researchers working in the townships during this period. When an attempt was made to launch a political survey in Soweto in early 1976

⁷⁷ The World, March 11, 1976. Obed Kunene of Ilanga reported similar attitudes in Durban about this time. The Argus, Cape Town, March 22, 1976.

⁷⁸ Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, pp.234-235; first four quotes; the last comes from letter to the colored-oriented Cape Herald, July 21, 1973..

on behalf of Theo Hanf's team from the University of Freiburg, interviewing was halted, because "many of the black interviewers themselves became fearful of the openly radical opinions that were sometimes expressed." Mayer, who also had interviewers in Soweto at this time, reported "similar difficulties," a sharp contrast to findings there in 1965.⁷⁹ Nor was the change confined to Johannesburg: when Thomas Nyquist, who had conducted interviews in the Eastern Cape town of Grahamstown in 1966, went back for a second wave in 1975, he found that people there, too, spoke more freely.⁸⁰ In Cape Town, Groenewald, who was working with a team of colored field workers in the townships in the six weeks prior to the outbreak of the 1976 unrest there, recalled, "Impressionistically, it was becoming evident that coloreds had become sufficiently alienated at this time, that they would – unlike in former clashes (eg Sharpeville 1960) – now come out in support of the Africans."⁸¹

The perception of new political opportunities translated into an impatient expectation of change, a sense that the white regime's power was weakening, and a growing anticipation of confrontation between white and black. Mayer writes of the "blacks' belief that things were moving in their favor and giving them increased bargaining power." He noted that in 1965, "the inferior position of blacks was still widely accepted as immutable," but that in 1975-76 "answers in this vein were

⁷⁹ Theodor Hanf, South Africa, The Prospects Of Peaceful Change : An Empirical Enquiry Into The Possibility Of Democratic Conflict Regulation, (London : R. Collings; Bloomington : Indiana University Press: 1981), p.67; Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, p.1

⁸⁰ Thomas Nyquist, African Middle Class Elite (Grahamstown, South Africa : Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, 1983), p.273.

⁸¹ Johan Groenewald, Personal communication, October 22, 1998.

exceptional.”⁸² Asked when they would be equal with whites, typical responses of Sowetans included:

“Ten, perhaps twenty years.”

“Very soon.”

“If Frelimo can achieve freedom [in Mozambique] then ours is not far behind.”

Maree, too, reports that in 1975 the Soweto students with whom she worked were “overwhelmingly optimistic about the position of blacks” in the future, and Saki Macozoma, then a high school activist, recalls that the same was true of students in Port Elizabeth.⁸³ These anticipations of impending freedom were tied to a sense that white power was waning:

“Afrikaners are getting softer. They know that their time is over.”

“The English have improved because they realize the end is near.”

“The whites are trying to appease the blacks if they can, so they are nicer to us than they used to be, but it is only because they are scared of being ruled by blacks.”

They also were aligned with a sense of impending black-white confrontation which was shared by the authorities, activists, and rank-and-file alike. In early 1975 a Soweto police station commander, Major Gerrit Viljoen, sent his superiors a report warning that unrest was brewing in the vast township.⁸⁴ Later that year, the ANC’s Natal command reported to the organization’s headquarters that a major popular upheaval was brewing in the country.⁸⁵ Ordinary blacks shared this sense. “It is a pity that there will be bloodshed as the whites will not willingly hand over,” commented one of Mayer’s interviewees. One

⁸² Mayer, *Soweto People and Their Social Universes*, *op. cit.*, pp.261, 227, 228.

⁸³ Maree, “The Hearts and Minds of the People,” *op. cit.*, p.155, Interview, Macozoma.

⁸⁴ *Eastern Province Herald*, September 15, 1976.

⁸⁵ Barrell, *MK: The ANC’s Armed Struggle*, (Johannesburg, Penguin: 1990), p.30. However, the ANC group erred in anticipating that black workers and not black students would be the spark for the unrest.

of Maree's students wrote an essay which predicted, "Riots are going to occur. We are now going to event things for ourselves" [sic].⁸⁶

The new sense of political possibility reflected the intermingled effects of two influences which had built up the self-confidence of blacks in their ability to effect change: the teachings of the Black Consciousness Movement and the successes of popular struggles against white power inside the country and especially in its neighbors. BC discourse – with its unwillingness to accept the status quo and its stress on black self-reliance as the mainspring of change – clearly had a growing resonance in black communities. A SASM activist recalled that the "movement awakened the youth to the political world by helping them to question anything that could appear immutable."⁸⁷ As early as 1973, an American diplomat monitoring black politics noted, "Black Consciousness and the organizations such as SASO and the BPC which propagate it are important elements in the new mood of self-confidence and determination to bring change through their own efforts that seems to be taking root among Africans."⁸⁸ The claims of BC were confirmed, in part, by the "demonstration effect" of black victories in struggles inside and outside South Africa (which reached the public through the efforts of BC-oriented journalists). For instance, after the massive black workers' strikes in Durban in early 1973 won major wage concessions, a survey of workers there found that 70% felt

⁸⁶ Mayer, *Soweto People and Their Social Universes*, *op. cit.*, p.228, Maree, "The Hearts and Minds of the People," *op. cit.*, p.156.

⁸⁷ *Afrique-Asie*, May 16, 1977 (my translation).

⁸⁸ Airgram A-51, American Embassy Cape Town to Department of State, May 18, 1973, State Department Archives.

that workers would strike again if disaffected.⁸⁹ Even more electrifying were events in Mozambique in 1974, as the guerillas of Frelimo claimed power and white rule collapsed in a neighboring country whose capital was only six hours' drive from Johannesburg and Durban. After a banned pro-Frelimo rally in Durban called by SASO and BPC attracted a crowd of 1,500 before it was dispersed, an American diplomat observed in a cable:

“[The] gathering by such [an] unexpectedly large crowd for a pro-Frelimo rally – in open and risky defiance of [a] specific government ban – [is a] further indication of [the] manner in which Frelimo successes just over [the] Natal border have caught [the] imagination of non-whites in this area. It [is] also [a] clear portent of [the] rapidly rising militancy which such Black Power organizations as SASO and BPC and others will continue to exploit. [The] tremendous publicity given by [the] press and even government radio to those organizations' role in [the] aborted rally, together with the arrests of [their] leaders, will undoubtedly give [an] added fillip to their power.”⁹⁰

A later dispatch on the rally emphasized the broad base of support which was emerging.

“That the success of Frelimo in Mozambique has had a significant effect on the entire

African community is apparent from the heterogeneous nature of the rally crowd:

Africans of all age groups and educational levels were present. The attendance by such a

broad sample of the African community in defiance of the Government's ban is

indicative of the growing support upon which black organizations can potentially

draw.”⁹¹ The lesson was driven home further by the rout of the South African troops who

invaded Angola in early 1976 to attempt to install their allies in power. In 1975-1976,

⁸⁹ Institute for Industrial Education, *The Durban Strikes* (Durban, 1974). The sample was drawn from workers who had joined a benefit fund associated with the fledgling black unions there after the strikes and involved only 95 interviews, so it cannot be considered representative of Durban's workers in general, but the findings do offer some sense of what the popular reaction to the strikes was.

⁹⁰ Telegram Durban 347, American Consulate Durban to Secretary of State, September 26, 1974, State Department Archives.

⁹¹ Airgram A-101, American Consulate Durban to Department of State, October 9, 1974, State Department Archives.

Mayer's research confirmed the far-reaching combined effects of BC discourse and black victories on rank-and-file opinion. "[T]he increasing confidence of the people vis-à-vis whites came to light in the changes that have taken place in their ideas of what it meant to be civilized, and what place to assign to African customs and beliefs – both changes in the direction away from white 'thought control.' The new confidence was confirmed in replies to a number of attitude questions, such as on reactions to the Frelimo victory, the relaxation of petty apartheid regulations, and other white 'concessions'."⁹²

Although by the mid-1970s, political fears and inhibitions had abated enough to make political engagement and mobilization thinkable once more for a substantial number, they still remained very real for many black South Africans. For example, black editor Obed Kunene, while reporting the keen attention which blacks paid to political developments, noted in early 1976 in Durban that "there is still considerable reluctance on the part of many to express publicly or privately their honest opinions on current events" due to fear of the police and informers.⁹³ Journalists who interviewed colored people in Cape Town two years earlier came to much the same conclusion: "In many cases the 'don't knows' appeared more reluctant to speak of politics for fear of police action, rather than ignorance."⁹⁴ Even if wider than before, the public sphere remained a narrow one: surveys by the Rhodes University team in Mdantsane in 1975 and Groenewald in Cape Town in 1976 both showed that opponents of state-created institutions were more fearful and less likely to speak out, attend meetings, or otherwise

⁹² Mayer, Soweto People and Their Social Universes, *op. cit.*, p.227.

⁹³ The Argus, March 22, 1976.

⁹⁴ The Argus, September 27, 1974.

be politically active than were their supporters.⁹⁵ However, this makes the greater willingness to speak and act noted above – in surveys, interviews with journalists, and even signed letters to the editor – particularly significant compared to the silence which largely had prevailed during the preceding decade. Indeed, it is impressive that in Mdantsane, of those who identified with South Africa rather than their tribe, 33% were willing to discuss their political views with anyone, even if 43% said they would not discuss them with some people. In the same vein, when African workers in Durban were asked why they had not supported a widely-publicized call for a train boycott which failed during the 1973 strikes, some 30% cited fear of police action or job loss, but 40% did not voice such fears and gave other reasons (poor organization, the greater importance of the strikes, or disagreement with the call).⁹⁶

Thus, the transformation of urban black political culture which took place under the impetus of the Black Consciousness Movement during the first half of the 1970s was extensive. Urban blacks read about its ideas in their newspapers, heard about them in churches, schools, organizations, and plays, and discussed them among themselves. The roots of its discourse in popular experience, along with its success in diffusing its ideas to the public and making them the common currency of the elite, gave the BCM's narrative tremendous grassroots resonance. The movement politicized the emergent urban black identity, linking local social networks into city- and country-wide communities of discourse, thus realizing the potential for a new identity which had been created by social modernization. As this happened, older and more parochial types of loyalties were

⁹⁵ Unpublished tabulations, Mdantsane survey, and Groenewald, *Reaksies op Minderheidsgroepstatus*, op. cit., pp.321-322.

⁹⁶ Institute for Industrial Education, *The Durban Strikes* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1974).

eclipsed, a stronger sense of democratic citizenship grew, and hostility began to erupt against the regime's institutions and black allies in the cities. Along with the examples offered by nearby guerilla and domestic mass struggles, BC discourse also played a vital role in helping black South Africans to feel a new sense of political potency and opportunity, a requisite for collective action. In these ways the changes in political culture associated with the BCM helped lay the groundwork for mobilization on a scale and in ways never seen before in South Africa. By mid-1976, the movement had largely accomplished its aim, particularly in the country's two largest urban areas, Johannesburg and Cape Town: the mass public had been conscientized and was ready for action.⁹⁷

II. THE REBIRTH OF MASS RESISTANCE: NEW MODES OF LOCAL MOBILIZATION

The first half of the 1970s was marked by deeds as well as words: in South Africa's urban black communities it was the time when mass mobilization against the apartheid regime's policies was re-awakened. After a decade of near-absence, bus

⁹⁷ "This transformation of black political culture was not so much a gradual adaptation to new circumstances as it was a dramatic rupture with long-standing habits of mass accommodation to inferior status. Catalyzed and spread through the writings and agitational activities of the South African Students' organization, the new culture of self-confidence, positive identity, and bold defiance shook the older generation of urban Africans out of its paralysis of fear, and awakened a thirst for political knowledge among the young. Attitudes of dependency and defeatism gave way to an aggressive new assertiveness and a repudiation of white allies as the trustees and interpreters of black interests. Blacks who had been selected as leaders through 'the system' found themselves spurned and vilified, their followings confined to rural traditionalists or to such networks of political clientelage as Pretoria's patronage enabled them to maintain. Into the organizational vacuum created by the repression of the 1960s had moved anew generation of black activists, much larger in number, more self-reliant, and better prepared with organizational and leadership skills than nationalists of any preceding era." Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, op. cit. pp.336-337.

boycotts, strikes, conflicts over sports organizations, student protests, and other challenges to the white authorities and their black allies mushroomed around the land. The spirit of resistance – increasingly present, but bottled up in civil society and narrow public spaces – now swirled into intense local-level collective actions with the addition of leadership and publicity. They were based upon informal social networks which were linked together by discourse and shared perceptions that the object of protest represented the character of the whole regime. However, the nature of collective action also began to change compared to earlier eras, in step with the change in political culture underway. While in the past, collective action had been largely parochial in scope and organized around followings of local patrons, in the 1970s it became increasingly national in ambition and independent of the older elites. The result was not a neat division between “traditional” and “modern mobilizations,” but various hybrid modes of collective action in which old and new elites and agendas all were present in uneasy and unstable mixtures. In these dramas, groups and individuals linked to the Black Consciousness Movement played key roles: they became the chief protagonists of the struggles pointing towards the new mode of collective action, were active in many of the others, and did much to create the mood and linkages on which all these mobilizations relied. Consequently, though these collective actions were brief and fragile, they were profoundly important, signifying the re-emergence of mass mobilization and foreshadowing larger, more militant actions than ever before in South Africa.

In the early and mid-1970s, the resurgence of popular protest in many of South Africa’s urban black communities gathered force around a large variety of issues. The largest were township-wide mobilizations on behalf of bus boycotts, demanding lower

fares and African ownership of transport lines. There were no fewer than eight major bus boycott campaigns, beginning in the colored township of Gelvandale (Port Elizabeth) (1971), followed by the African townships of Hammarsdale, Mphopomeni, and Volksrust in Natal, as well as a train boycott by Indians in Chatsworth (1972-73), the African township of Mdantsane, East London (1974), the colored townships of Cape Town and the African township of Newcastle, Natal (1975), and by Africans in Springs, east of Johannesburg, in early 1976.⁹⁸ Two urban centers experienced major strike waves by black workers – Durban in early 1973 and East London the next year – and hundreds of strikes later hit individual factories and firms around the country (246 in 1973, 374 in 1974, and 119 in 1975).⁹⁹ Urban black communities also supported dissident sports leagues on a large scale, as tens of thousands joined or backed groups opposed to segregated official sports bodies.¹⁰⁰ Black student protest spread downwards in the educational system, beginning with the SASO university boycotts of 1972-73, then moving into urban black schools in from 1974 to 1976.¹⁰¹ The return of public protest

⁹⁸ On the bus boycotts, see Brooks and Brickhill, Whirlwind Before the Storm: The Origins and Development of the Uprising in Soweto (London, International Defense and Aid Fund: 1980), p.183ff. and Baruch Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash – The Soweto Revolt: Roots of a Revolution (London, Zed Press: 1979), pp.153, 164-65.

⁹⁹ Strike data is drawn from Race Relations Survey, 1974, p.325, and Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash, *op. cit.*, pp.151, 154. On the Durban strikes, which have received the most attention from the literature, see Steven Friedman, Building Tomorrow Today: African Workers in Trade Unions 1970-1984 (Johannesburg, Ravan Press:1987), pp.37-68, and Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash, *op. cit.*, pp.133-142; for contemporaneous accounts see Institute for Industrial Education, The Durban Strikes, (FULL CITATION), and Drum, February 22, 1973, and March 22, 1973.

¹⁰⁰ While vast amounts of ink were spilt to critique the government's racially discriminatory sporting policies and justify the international sports boycott against it, unfortunately the principal body fighting for non-racial sport within the country, the South African Council on Sport, has yet to find its historian.

¹⁰¹ The most important studies include Mokhubung Nkomo, Student Culture and Activism in Black South African Universities: The Roots of Resistance (Westport, CT, Greenwood Press: 1984), Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, *op. cit.*, Hyslop, Social Conflict Over African Education in South Africa, *op. cit.*, and Bond, Colored Students Educational Struggles in South Africa, *op. cit.*, and The

was also marked by hundreds of meetings and demonstrations around numerous issues, including living conditions, political detainees and prisoners, officially-sanctioned representative bodies and celebrations, and tours by foreign performers or sports teams.¹⁰² In short, black South Africa found its voice again.

The grievances blacks suffered were numerous and substantial – so much so, in fact, that it is impossible to construct an “econocentric” explanation of the pattern of collective action. Subjectively, the complaints of urban blacks were fairly similar, no matter where they lived: surveys showed that poverty was by far the most important issue, followed by problems such as crime, housing, transportation, discrimination, pass laws, and the lack of political representation or freedom.¹⁰³ From the evidence available there does not appear to be one area where complaints were substantially greater or different from the rest, so no simple connections can be established between them and when and where mass action occurred. Objectively, there does not appear to be any direct connection between economic deprivation and collective action. The black communities which engaged in bus boycotts included some of the more prosperous (Gelvandale and Springs), some of the least (Mdantsane and Volksrust), and some in the middle (Hammarsdale and Newcastle). Similarly, a study of black wages in seven cities in 1973 showed that the proportions of households in poverty in the two cities which would experience strike waves, Durban and East London, while large, were little

Origins and Development of the South African Students' Movement (SASM): 1968-1976,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 18 (1991).

¹⁰² The files of the West Rand Administration Board for the 1975-76 contained police notes on scores of meetings in Soweto alone. Carter-Karis-Gerhart Archive.

¹⁰³ Similar results regarding urban African grievances were reported by the Rhodes University Mdantsane survey (unpublished tabulations), the *Quotso 73* survey in Soweto (*op. cit.*, p.101), and Moller's KwaMashu survey, *A Black Township in Durban, op. cit.*, ch.1 and 2.

different from those of two comparable cities (Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage) which would not.¹⁰⁴ While increasing grievances do help produce collective action, it is methodologically unsound to “explain” it in terms of the grievance cited by participants as its trigger, because in the vast majority of cases where the trigger was pulled, nothing went off. Bus fare increases were frequent, for example; yet even in areas with a history of complaints about them, successful boycotts were rare.¹⁰⁵

Explaining the re-emergence of collective action in this period thus requires an examination of the specifically political logic which allowed protests to occur, as political opportunity was seized from below through movement organization, discourse, and the mobilization of social institutions, networks, and identities. Such a “logocentric” explanation of local mobilization would focus on the temporary coming-together of the elements of social movements at the local level, as protest-oriented elites used the reopened public sphere to aggregate politically-aroused grassroots networks of solidarity through calls for collective action. The ability to inspire mass action depended not just on community provocation through an act which aggravated grievances, but rather on the ability through public discourse to interpret the situation as a simulacrum of the larger South African situation. Only when this was done in a persuasive and organized way, through effective argument in mass meetings, media, and personal contacts with local opinion leaders and ordinary residents, could the inversionary discourse of protest

¹⁰⁴ The proportions of male-headed multi-member households under the poverty line were 37% in East London, 33% in Uitenhage, 28% in Durban, and 25% in Port Elizabeth, according to a survey by the University of South Africa’s Bureau for Market Research, cited in *Race Relations Survey 1973*, p.202.

¹⁰⁵ The contrast between East London and Cape Town, is instructive: in Mdantsane the boycott call was successful, while in Cape Town soon afterwards the campaign failed, despite endemic complaints about fares and services in both cities.

become assimilated into the voice of the people and the call to action an occasion to express the collective rage and solidarity normally held back.¹⁰⁶ Activists' capacity to inspire mobilization in these ways depended on various factors, including their status, persuasiveness, timing, allies, and community ties. Equally necessary was a perception that political opportunity was real and participation safe, usually thanks to the protection of local patrons recognized by the regime and broad community-wide solidarity offering the shield of anonymity. When mobilization succeeded, the resulting protests offered lessons to black South Africa on the possibilities and power of collective action. These developments were quite independent of the postures and positions of the white regime; they began before and continued after the détente and reform initiatives of 1972-74, in an official climate increasingly intolerant of organized black political activity, and represented challenges which the authorities could not stamp out and wrested official concessions. The emergence of extra-parliamentary mass action was not the result of concessions by soft-liners in the regime, extremely limited in the Vorster years; liberalization was forced from below before it was recognized from above.

In these years the BCM was a key actor in the development of a new, more powerful protest repertoire in black communities, even as people and groups involved with it were active in many other struggles and the broader identity it had helped to stimulate became a background factor in the entire cycle of protest. Charles Tilly has described two types of "protest repertoires." The older type of actions, associated with Ancien Regime Europe, was patronized and parochial, dependent on local power-holders

¹⁰⁶ Here the argument attempts to operationalize how the public expression of inversionary discourse or hidden transcripts can lead to collective action, building on the work of David Apter, "Democracy and Emancipatory Movements: Notes Towards a Theory of Inversionary Discourse," Development and

for protection and focused on immediate local grievances, while the newer type, found in 19th- and 20th-century Europe, is national and autonomous, seeking satisfaction for national-level demands and interests through organization independent of and even directly opposed to regime power holders.¹⁰⁷ The first type of action, characteristic of a pre-national society where local and particularistic identities predominate, was typical of black protest in South Africa before the 1970s; the second, marked by national, collective identities, grew under the impulsion of the BCM after 1970, ultimately to become the dominant mode of mass action. The first and clearest example of this new type of action came in the 1972 student strikes, the first nationally-coordinated collective action in a generation, which presented a combination of national and local demands. But the movement's activities were crucial in shaping the emergence of the new mode of political action in other situations as well, for it was the only effective black national political network, and one whose discourse contained new, nationally-oriented identity, tactics, and strategies. Of course, the BC organizations were not the driving force in most of the protest mobilizations which occurred during this time, but many individuals and groups associated with the movement were active in them even where they were not in charge. Most fundamentally, BC discourse, along with the political awareness, solidarity, and militancy which it helped inspire, was an integral element in all manifestations of action, whether the movement itself was involved or not. The growth of a militant black identity at the grassroots, on a national scale, was associated with the development of a capacity

Change, vol.23 (1992), and of James Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1990).

¹⁰⁷ Charles Tilly, "Speaking Your Mind Without Elections, Surveys, or Social Movements," Public Opinion Quarterly, vol. 47 (1983), pp.463-469. See also Sidney Tarrow, Power in Movement: Social Movement, Collective Action, and Politics (New York, Cambridge University Press: 1994), pp.31 ff.

for militant action, on a larger scale than that associated with the patronized and parochial complaints of the past and no longer constrained by compromise with the collaborationist elites.

The emergence of the new mode of collective action in the 1970s was reflected in a continuum of types of collective action in black communities ranging from patronized and parochial to national and autonomous, with various cases in-between. This continuum will be the focus of this section, which will present four brief case studies which illustrate the combinations of different types of political action while presenting the situations in different regions as the pressure built up leading to the explosion of 1976. They involved Black Consciousness activists to varying degrees, and they threatened the regime in different ways. They also illustrate how, while mobilization was initially dependent on the protection provided by the support and shelter of in-system elements, the BCM sought and developed a capacity for autonomous mobilization. The first concerns the East London bus boycott, the largest, which, though a patronized protest, was one in which BC elements played a subordinate if significant role and which illustrates how protests backed by pro-government elites could boomerang. The second, also in the Eastern Cape, examines the emergence of the KwaZakhele Rugby Union (KWARU) in Port Elizabeth, a sustained mobilization of the community on behalf of a dissident sports league impelled by a mix of in-system, Black Consciousness, and other elements, which showed how the splits developing in the established black elites could create political space for opponents of the system and permit grassroots radicalization. The third focuses on the development of a culture of activism in the Western Cape by the BCM in 1974–1976, as it moved increasingly into confrontation with the in-system elites

while building the beginnings of an independent social base through trial and error. Finally, the section examines the development of a powerful school pupil's movement under BC auspices, centered in the Johannesburg region but reaching into other regions, whose militancy, autonomy, and public support led to the outbreak of the Soweto revolt.

A. Patrons and Protesters: the East London Bus Boycott of 1974-75

The Mdantsane bus boycott, an epic of popular resistance which ran from early December 1974 through mid-January 1975, was the largest and longest up to that time.¹⁰⁸ The fast-growing township's population was estimated at 200,000, the majority removed from the old Duncan Village location, and minorities from the rural Ciskei and Transkei.¹⁰⁹ Although the country's largest township after Soweto, it looked different, set amid green hills, with four-roomed houses painted pastel colors, unlike the flat, monotonous grey rows of Johannesburg's sister city. Yet this would have made life even harder for bus boycotters, who had to trudge up and down the hills before and after the 10-mile walk to East London. Transport had been an issue from the township's birth in the 1960s, since Duncan Village was much closer to town and far more compact; now commuters had to take one bus across the sprawling new township to the central terminus, then another to town; many left home between 4 and 5 am and returned

¹⁰⁸ The principal published source on the boycott is Roger Omond, "Azikwelwa," South African Labor Bulletin, vol.1 (Jan-Feb. 1975), pp.51-57. This account also draws on a set of fieldworker notes and a 1975 handwritten manuscript, "The Bus Boycott: Post Mortem," both apparently by Gordon kaTyakwadi, found in the Rhodes University Library.

¹⁰⁹ The official population figure in 1975 was 98,000, but it is generally agreed that the real figure was much higher. This number and population composition data from Gillian Cook and Jeff Opland, Mdantsane: Transitional City (Grahamston, Institute of Social and Economic Research: 1980), pp.14, 16.

between 7 and 8 pm. The busses were few and crowded, waits long and, on rainy days, wet, breakdowns and accidents frequent, drivers discourteous, and fares far higher than on the shorter Duncan Village run. In 1972, a Cabinet Memo warned that “the poor transport system” in Mdantsane had “led to dissatisfaction and unrest among the Bantu workers,” and in 1973 the white MP for East London called transport conditions there “inhuman,” but nothing was done.¹¹⁰ In July 1974, the climax of the East London strike wave was a bus drivers’ strike, which paralyzed the city and won a speedy wage hike.¹¹¹ But transport issues remained on the front burner: in the September 1974 Township Council elections, all the candidates included it in their manifestos.¹¹² The last straw was an announcement by the white-owned bus company of a 50% fare increase on the feeder busses and a doubling of prices for weekly commuter tickets to pay for the wage settlement, effective December 1. The boycott began the next day.

Mobilization for the boycott, initially patronized by the Township Council, developed such momentum that it outstripped the control of the original sponsors. The boycott was launched after the councilors proposed it at meetings in their zones on Sunday, December 1, to an enthusiastic public response.¹¹³ The mobilization was populist and discursive – through mass meetings and speeches rather than through on-the-ground organization – but in the climate prevailing in Mdantsane, it was effective. The grassroots response was massive and solidary: neighbors came together as one behind the

¹¹⁰ “Road Transport of Bantu Workers: Mdantsane – East London,” Draft Cabinet memo, April 21, 1972. BAO file A9/1489, vol.699, State Archives, Pretoria; Daily Dispatch, East London, March 20, 1973.

¹¹¹ “The East London Strikes,” South African Labor Bulletin, vol.1 (August 1974), p.26.

¹¹² kaTyakwadi, The Development of the Political Party System in the Ciskei, MA Thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1978, p.208.

¹¹³ Fieldworkers notes, Rhodes University Library; Daily Dispatch, December 4, 1974.

boycott. No one used the busses, black taxi owners cut fares, and owners of private cars gave boycotters lifts. Popular resolve was stiffened by some intimidation and public violence: four busses were stoned and one hijacked the first day of the boycott, a police car was stoned and two ticket offices burnt the second day, a few bus riders were assaulted a week later, and busses were stoned again after a New Years' attempt to break the boycott.¹¹⁴ (Some of the violence was a response to police action, as in the incident with which this chapter opened.) But while public violence did feature in the protest, public discourse and consensus-building was more important. Even the police accepted that protesters were "generally well behaved," and other observers reported that the foundation of the boycott was a community consensus of support, not fear. A white industrialist, R. A. Williams, reported, "We at work employ a number of Africans and I have spoke to them about the reasons for the boycott. They tell me they are not being intimidated, but that they are all completely fed up with the bus company."¹¹⁵

Community solidarity was breached only at year-end, when the Ciskei National Independence Party (CNIP), dominating both the Council and the Ciskei homeland (in which Mdantsane fell) moved to buy out the bus company and end the boycott. At zonal

¹¹⁴ The Argus, December 2, 1974, December 4, 1974, December 9, 1974, The World, December 6, 1974, Weekend World, January 5, 1975, Daily Dispatch, December 3, 1974, December 4, 1974, Omond, "Azikwelwa," *op. cit.*, p.56. What distinguished these outbreaks from the unorganized riot in Ceres described in Chapter Four (p.332ff) was the fact that they were linked to a broader, organized protest movement.

¹¹⁵ Daily Dispatch, December 18, 1974. In the same edition, a black resident, Fezile Gwabe, wrote that intimidation was not a major factor in the boycott. Similarly, despite the incidents of intimidation, the black journalist Leslie Xinwa wrote that "almost every resident of Mdantsane has said, in trains, taxis, shebeens, and in the bar, that [the boycott] was started with all the good intentions." He also noted as further evidence of community solidarity that conflict between the ruling CNIP and opposition CNP had, up to then, halted during the boycott. Daily Dispatch, December 27, 1974, Indaba supplement. Further evidence of spontaneous support is shown by the fact that only 20% of the usual number of weekly tickets was sold on the Sunday, December 1, the day before the boycott began, prior to the incidents of

meetings Sunday, January 5 addressed by CNIP leaders, all but one rejected the move, while a CNIP leader accused its opponents of backing the opposition Ciskei National Party (CNP). The CNIP patrons then sought to mobilize their ethnic Rharhabe majority, first at private nightly meetings, then at a township-wide rally of 3,000 on Sunday, January 12. At that tightly-controlled meeting (no questions allowed, contrary to usual practice), the leaders' call for an end to boycott was reportedly accepted, but part of the crowd booed and, minutes later, stoned busses again. The next day, Monday, January 13, CNIP leaders appeared at the bus terminus to urge commuters to ride, along with stick-wielding CNIP supporters – allegedly leading businessmen – who forcibly backed their suggestions and prevented bus stoning. Busses left full. The boycott was over.¹¹⁶

It appears that the role in the boycott of Black Consciousness activists, and other anti-regime elites, though limited, helped provide the movement with its muscle, voice, and militancy. Although the bases of BC activity were small – the township had only two senior high schools, and fairly weak ties with the more active Eastern Cape BC circles of King Williams Town and Fort Hare – there was BC activity, and a wider circle of influence, through SASM and SCM in the schools and the Border Youth Union.¹¹⁷ It seems likely that some of their followers were active in promoting the boycott: the press reported that school pupils or youths were in the forefront of crowds stoning busses and other incidents during the conflict; a number were arrested in connection with these

intimidation. Daily Dispatch, December 3, 1974. Spontaneity is also emphasized in "The Bus Boycott: A Post-Mortem," op.cit.

¹¹⁶ This account of the end of the boycott draws on the Fieldworker Notes and "The Bus Boycott: A Post Mortem," op.cit., as well as Omond, "Ázikwelwa," op. cit., pp.56-57, and The Argus, January 13, 1975.

¹¹⁷ Interviews, Thenjiwe Mtintso No.2, Johannesburg, June 10, 1991, Abner Jack No.1, Cape Town, July 5, 1991, Mathe Diseko No.2, August 28, 1991, Joseph Mati, East London, DATE, and Mzimkhulu Gwentshe, East London, December 5, 1991.

incidents, and one later found dead in his cell, presumably tortured by police suspicious about his role.¹¹⁸ In the public meetings on the boycott and in private, underground ANC activists also tried to stoke mass militancy; a similar role may have been played by the BC-oriented youth.¹¹⁹ Perhaps most important, the community's general mood of militancy had been strengthened by the BCM, through The World and particularly the Daily Dispatch, where the legendary friendship between its editor, Donald Woods, and Biko had opened its pages to the movement.

The discourse – and power – of the bus boycott flowed from the fusion of grievances over bus fares and perceived opportunities into a moral moment of resistance to the white regime and its black allies. While the grievances of the boycotters were very real, it was the political and ideological contextualization which occurred that allowed them first to erupt into, and then sustain, militant protest. In the initial meetings which launched the boycott, the councilors stressed not just the immediate economic trigger – the fare increase hitting impoverished blacks – but also a series of offenses against the human dignity and worth of blacks (delays, waiting in the rain, discourteous treatment, etc), placing the issue in the context of the larger social position of blacks. At the same time, the support of these influential local power brokers, freshly elected, must have encouraged a belief that political opportunity for protest existed and encouraged participation by their followers and the non-aligned. The recent, successful strike wave just four months earlier must have been an effective demonstration of the potential for mass action to many of the workers who would join the long walk, along with their

¹¹⁸ See The Argus, December 4, 1974, January 13, 1975, Weekend World, December 8, 1974, Daily Dispatch, December 4, 1974, December 5, 1974.

family members. A black worker must have spoken for many when he was quoted as saying, "Something can be done about this."¹²⁰ After the initial impulse, the movement was given more momentum by a white bus company manager, who proclaimed that it could not hold out because blacks were too poor to withstand the resulting hardship. There were also confrontations at the bus terminus on the first two days between several thousand commuters returning from work in the afternoon and police, who tear-gassed the unruly crowds.¹²¹ Together, these incidents helped turn the boycott into a moral moment, in which the community was fighting together for its own pride against white arrogance and power. Later in the conflict, as it became clear that the CNIP and its allies, local black business, had developed a vested interest in taking over the bus service, there was also popular reaction against them, reflected in the unwillingness to end the boycott.

The movement's results were both substantive and attitudinal: fares were rolled back, subsidies increased, and the bus service transferred to the black elite – but for the latter it was a pyrrhic victory, for it also aroused the public's ire and consciousness of its power. Bus fares were reduced to the pre-boycott levels, a big gain (The World headlined it a "major victory") despite the failure to meet other demands.¹²² Indeed, the boycott wave of which the Mdantsane dispute formed a part convinced government to raise bus subsidies in order to prevent future boycotts – an impressive demonstration of the power of mass action to change policy, perhaps the first publicly acknowledged by

¹¹⁹ Interviews, Tom Chalmani, East London, May 25, 1992, Themba Sobandla, Mdantsane, May 25, 1992.

¹²⁰ Black Review, 1974, *op. cit.*, p.49.

¹²¹ These incidents are recounted in "The Bus Boycott: A Post Mortem," *op. cit.*, and in The Argus, December 3, 1974, and Daily Dispatch, December 3, 1974, December 4, 1974.

¹²² The World, January 7, 1975.

the regime.¹²³ Since the Ciskeian government could not afford to buy out the bus service on its own, a consortium was created between the parastatal Xhosa Development Corporation and leading CNIP-aligned black businessmen to take it over.¹²⁴ (Their takeover of the bus service was a double-edged sword, however, for it meant that in future, the ruling party would be held responsible for dissatisfaction with the bus service.) In the immediate aftermath of the boycott, the black conservatives' injection of Ciskei party politics in order to bring mass militancy to heel also had a price. Although they had prevailed through a combination of factional mobilization and force, a black journalist wrote just after the boycott that "the CNIP has some homework to do to regain its image even among its own supporters."¹²⁵ Indeed, although the November 1975 Mdantsane survey found that Sebe retained plurality support, the indifference or hostility of the majority may well have been linked, in part, to the outcome of the boycott. A fieldworker observed: "The boycott as a movement is now past but it has left in its wake a spirit of disgruntledness, dissatisfaction, and a realization that the people of Mdantsane have common troubles."¹²⁶ In this combination of discontent and solidarity lay the possibility of mass action: a journalist wrote presciently that "the spontaneous solidarity of the community is a pointer for the future."¹²⁷

¹²³ The Argus, November 8, 1975.

¹²⁴ Black Review 1974-75, *op. cit.*, p.50, Black Review 1975-76, *op. cit.*, p.41.

¹²⁵ Cited in Omond, "Azikwelwa," *op. cit.*, p.57.

¹²⁶ Fieldworker notes, Rhodes University Library.

¹²⁷ Omond, "Azikwelwa," *op. cit.*, p.57. Indeed, Mdantsane saw student activism in 1976-77, major struggles around the emergence of the South African Allied Workers Union in 1980-81, and a boycott directed against the African-run bus company which had emerged from the 1974 boycott in 1983. On the events of 1980 and after, see Mark Swilling, "The Busses Smell of Blood,: The East London Boycott," South African Labor Bulletin, vol.9 (March 1984), pp.45-74.

B. Strange Bedfellows: the Rise of KWARU in Port Elizabeth

The second case study of mass mobilization, the rise of the KwaZakhele Rugby Union (KWARU) in Port Elizabeth, is the story of the emergence of something from (apparently) nothing: a popular, successful, and opposition-minded black sports league in an impoverished, tightly controlled black community with little overt anti-government political organization. Its origins lay in a 1971 split in the Port Elizabeth African Rugby Board, which, as previously noted, was a key element in local political and social life, bringing together the patrons who dominated the Advisory Board and other township institutions, as well as their followings.¹²⁸ The split largely reflected local parish-pump quarrels (corruption charges) and old factional rivalries (the lines were similar to the previous split in 1956-58), though there were political overtones – the dissidents opposed participation in segregated, government-sponsored national and international competitions, led by Mono Badela, local correspondent of The World.¹²⁹ The breakaway group, calling itself KWARU, joined the anti-government South African Rugby Union, till then a largely-colored SACOS affiliated opposed to sport segregation, not for ideological reasons (it was courting the local white administration at the same time) but for pragmatic ones: it needed facilities, competitors, and a national league. The result, however, was increasing hostility and harassment from the white regime, committed to racially separated sport, while KWARU became able to mobilize an impressive and

¹²⁸ See Chapter Two, p.73, and Chapter Three, p.151.

steadily growing following in the townships. “The following and support that KWARU got from the residents was phenomenal,” wrote de Jongh. “Large and enthusiastic crowds turned up for every match.”¹³⁰ At the end of its first season in 1972, 20,000 watched the KWARU semi-finals, while the officially-supported league played before empty stands. Their following was disciplined as well as large: when KWARU teams were shut out of a government-owned stadium and forced to play in an open field, fans waited patiently in line and paid what turned out to be a record gate – despite the lack of an enclosure to keep free riders out (an occurrence which should give rational choice theorists pause).¹³¹ The birth and growth of KWARU thus was the occasion for widespread, repeated demonstrations of community solidarity uniting Africans and coloreds.

The mobilization which made KWARU possible drew in part on the classic pattern of black communal protest, in which the support of older (and newer) patrons was an important condition. The success of the new league depended on mass mobilization for large-scale fan support and the resources required for its operation (equipment, a new stadium, etc.), while the participation of members of the established elite offered a measure of protection from Port Elizabeth’s notoriously efficient Special Branch for more militant elements. Thus, as the elite split sharpened, the faction which founded KWARU sought new allies in the community, and found them in the emergent grassroots oppositional elite, particularly among youth and students. In part this also reflect

¹²⁹ Except where otherwise attributed, the account of KWARU which follows is on those in “Rugby in the Eastern Cape: A History,” *Work in Progress* no.17 (April 1981), pp. 1-5 (attributed to Jeff Peires), and de Jongh, *Interaction and Transaction*, *op. cit.*, pp.212-222.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p.222.

¹³¹ *Eastern Province Herald*, September 8, 1975.

pressures from below, because sports participants, and to a large degree fans, were young people, who at this time were strongly influenced by the same organizational networks and elite which was setting the political tone in schools and for young people. Monde Mditshwa, then a student activist and young sportsman, recalled:

“If you look at KWARU as a body – how it was run administratively, etc – and the teams affiliated to KWARU – there were lots of student rugby players. Most of those were politically involved and active in their communities. ... In Port Elizabeth, especially in that era, outside the sports bodies – the only organized formation in communities – the youth were very strong – they were a force. If you needed a solid ally in PE, you had to have the youth on your side.”¹³²

Many students played for KWARU teams rather than for their own high schools, affiliated to such as Dan Qeqe, a longtime AB member, prominent businessman, and CNIP supporter, developed increasingly close relations with the students and other figures involved in local opposition politics, and struck more militant postures reflecting their efforts at pressure and persuasion. As this occurred, the followings of the “little big men” of BC were drawn behind KWARU, overlapping with, and helping politicize, those of the older politicians.

Even more important than the older political dynamic, however, was the newer type of mobilization: the force which drove KWARU forward was the collective judgement that it was the authentic incarnation of the community’s struggle against the white regime and its allies, reflecting the impact of new collective identities and means of influence. Since the regime would not support unauthorized collective initiatives by blacks, what began as a factional dispute within black civil society was turned into a series of political confrontations between regime allies and opponents. As Qeqe puts it,

¹³² Interview No.2, Monde Mditshwa, Johannesburg, June 3, 1992.

“It began over administration, then on one issue after another KWARU was on the opposite side from government.”¹³³ Thus, as in the East London bus boycott, in Port Elizabeth the conflict over rugby became, in its own way, a simulacrum, pitting KWARU – seen as the real representative of the community – against the white regime and its black collaborators. As a result, those opposed to the government, particularly the youth, identified with it, in an unorganized and spontaneous fashion, even if they had no personal ties to its leaders. The reason was simple: KWARU was anti-government and so were they.¹³⁴ Each subsequent clash with the government strengthened this perception. Moreover, the support from civil society required to build the league increased community involvement: to build the new stadium, officials collected money from the crowds at games, supporters (including women) organized fundraisers, dances, and raffles, while volunteers worked the turf to prepare for play, giving thousands a personal stake in the league. In these ways KWARU politically mobilized the larger identity with a city-wide urban black culture transcending neighborhood ties (see Chapter Four, pp.276-278), while tapping into the increasingly militant national black culture which was evolving (Section V above). Its success also reflect the triumph of the mass medium of print over the old oral world: though banned from Radio Bantu, the large-scale coverage it received from the English-language press sufficed to reach its following. Both older and newer influences were at work with players and fans. KWARU attracted the top local rugby talent through a mix of prowess, politics,

¹³³ Interview, Dan Qeqe, Port Elizabeth, May 20, 1992. The moral moment which led to the launch of KWARU helped strengthen this perception. After rising tensions, the split came when PEARB officials refused to cancel rugby matches after the death in a car crash of a popular black rugby player, Eric Majola, as had been the custom. This was both a transgression against African values – respect for the dead – and a practical affront to teammates, players, and fans who wished to attend the funeral.

¹³⁴ Interviews, Mike Xego, Port Elizabeth, May 19, 1992, Macozoma.

patronage, and prestige – and this, in turn, helped it grow rapidly from 15 teams to 39 and to defeat colored teams who had crushed African clubs before.¹³⁵ Together, the mobilization of older and newer identities meant that the community identified with the new league and was ready to support it. “Each victory for KWARU was a victory not only for the rugby team but also for the entire community which had put them on the road.”¹³⁶

Although KWARU was not a Black Consciousness organization as such, the role of BC-oriented groups and people within it was considerable during the 1970s, and played an important role in its mobilizing black civil society on its behalf. The movement enjoyed considerable influence on the mood and political thinking of the black community of Port Elizabeth, as even the Special Branch acknowledged (p.485 above). An important BC leader, Biko’s friend Barney Pitso, had been based in Port Elizabeth since being banned there in 1973, and he was widely known and respected. Although formal BC organizations were small, networks of influence radiated out from the BPC chapter, student and youth groups, a number of churches, and the press. The president of the BPC chapter, Moki Cekisani, was also the head of the one openly BC-aligned club in KWARU, the Walmer Wheels, and a well-known teacher.¹³⁷ The young people involved in student and youth groups (SASM or SCM were present in almost every school), who

¹³⁵ Interview, Xego; de Jongh, *Interaction and Transaction*, *op. cit.*, p.222.

¹³⁶ “Rugby in the Eastern Cape,” *op.cit.*, p.4. An article by a black journalist on the triumphant reception accorded a KWARU team despite its defeat in the 1972 rugby final in Cape Town is cited: “There was no greater sight to see new Brighton and KwaZakhele turn out amidst wild jubilation to roll out the carpet as their heroes returned home with The Bill Meyer Runners-Up trophy ... The scenes were enough to wring tears from even the hardened supporter.”

¹³⁷ Interviews, Moki Cekisani, Port Elizabeth, May 19, 1992, Xego.

spread BC influence among school pupils and church-oriented youth, were the same ones who helped lead youth to KWARU, while the more politicized black teachers, sympathetic to BC, also encouraged their students to back the new league.¹³⁸ The student activists and community pillars involved in KWARU also had ties to a few churches which had marked sympathy to BC, such as those of Reverends James Haya and Mzwandile Maqina (whose political play, "Give Us This Day," had been very popular with the youth).¹³⁹ In the press, Badela and his KWARU-friendly black colleagues were card-carrying members of the Union of Black Journalists. Thus, as the principal force in black elite politics outside the collaborative bodies, BC activists were present and active in all the groups and institutions which helped to build popular support for KWARU.¹⁴⁰ More generally, the identity and militancy that the BCM had worked so hard to develop was a key element in the spontaneity and vigor of the community's identification with KWARU. This was regularly embodied in an emblematic act: the use of the movement's Black Power salute at every KWARU game.

KWARU became both a field of political discourse for the BCM and a signifier of authenticity and legitimacy within the black community, although, indeed because, it had no pretence to being an overtly political party or group. In fact, it was the formally "non-political" character of sport as part of civil society which made it an area where it was safe to publicly express dissent; even ordinary black workers were unafraid to do so by

¹³⁸ Interviews, Mditshwa No.3, and Macozoma.

¹³⁹ Interview, James Haya, Port Elizabeth, May 19, 1992.

¹⁴⁰ Although the Unity Movement was the driving force in SACOS affiliates, including rugby, in colored and Indian communities, and an important factor in political sport groups in rural African communities in the Eastern Cape through its role in teacher organization there, it had never had a strong presence in Port Elizabeth, where the ANC had been relatively strong up to the mid-1960s.

the mid-1970s, underlining the political opportunities offered in this area.¹⁴¹ At the same time, the common denominator in the discourse of all SACOS affiliates – the slogan “No normal sport in an abnormal society,” was an invitation to explanation and discussion of why South African society was abnormal and thus an important politicizing factor in the community. Given the prevalence of BC discourse in the community at large and among the activists, BC discourse, often in a crude form, filtered down to large numbers of club members and fans.¹⁴² It received added symbolic power through the dramaturgy of KWARU’s struggles, where each victory for KWARU became a victory for the ideas espoused within its ranks. The impact was also perceptible on many of the KWARU leaders drawn from the older elite, such as Qeqe; as the organization was increasingly identified with the opposition, they, too, increasingly identified with it.¹⁴³ This became increasingly evident in their public statements, snubbing Sebe, criticizing Bantu Education, and even damning the Advisory Board on which they served.¹⁴⁴

The sustained mobilization behind KWARU helped to recast black politics in Port Elizabeth, discrediting collaborators with the regime while forging a new elite and fusing old-fashioned clienteles and new identities into a mass following with novel possibilities for collective action and organization. The opposition on the rugby field spilled over

¹⁴¹ Interview, Xego.

¹⁴² Interviews, Macozoma, Mditshwa.

¹⁴³ Interview, Xego.

¹⁴⁴ See, eg. Eastern Province Herald, October 25, 1975 (Qeqe criticizes Bantu Education), January 15, 1975 (A.Z. Lamani calls Buthelezi and Lebowa’s Phatudi, the Bantustan leaders outspokenly opposed to “independence,” the only spokesmen for urban blacks, and pointedly omits Sebe). Qeqe told de Jongh, “Whether it is the Ciskei government or the Advisory Board, with them it is meaningless. The little influence it can bring is a waste of time. Quite a number of [young activists] have written letters, though in the *nom de plume* style, and they suggest the best is to be directly involved [with the opposition.] High schools, Fort Hare students, they tear us to pieces. They say it is a waste of time.” Interaction and Transaction, *op. cit.*, p.743.

onto the Advisory Board, as the opposing factions faced off there as well. The years from 1972 to 1976 witnessed a sharp increase in the criticism of government policies on sport, transportation, education, and race relations in board sessions, as well as a much more aggressive tone, as the KWARU faction raised its voice and their conservative opponents followed suit.¹⁴⁵ Posturing by the state-aligned faction paid few dividends, however, because their stances on the rugby issue had cost their words public credibility. As de Jongh noted, "Few other fields of activity had such an all-pervading effect on life (especially the political life) in the townships as did rugby."¹⁴⁶ Consequently, KWARU's struggle also did much to erode the legitimacy of the Advisory Board itself: it "had a great influence at mass level," recalls one former activist, because it created a "resistance culture at the level of resistance to local authorities."¹⁴⁷ Ultimately, the coming-together of the new BC-oriented elite and part of the old one, as well as the overlaps of the new identity-based and older patronized modes of mobilization, were turning KWARU into a new kind of connection among black South Africans: "a body no longer belonging to the executive or individuals, but which was closer to the people and the community."¹⁴⁸ The capacity for mass action and organization which resulted would become evident in 1976 and after.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p.664, 668.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Interview, Macozoma.

¹⁴⁸ Interview No.2, Mditshwa.

C. In Search of Autonomy: Activism in the Western Cape

Meanwhile, in the Western Cape, where the black population was mostly colored and ranged in outlook from moderates to various radical tendencies, from 1973 to 1976 the BCM played a crucial role in awakening a culture of activism in the region. At UWC, where the student walk-outs after the 1972 and 1973 boycotts had drained most of the campus SASO leadership, a lull lasted for most of 1974, deepened by the detentions after the September pro-Frelimo rallies. But SASO re-organized on campus, while the former student activists were injected into political life off campus, resulting in a series of campaigns as BC took a turn towards the community.¹⁴⁹ They were helped by the dense linkages possible between the colored campus and community in Cape Town, unlike the situation of the African universities, far from the big cities. The action began in 1974 with small-scale campaigns about local civic issues, such as a petition drive and media campaign against a so-called "infill" plan to increase density in the crowded Bonteheuwel township by building "maisonettes" behind existing houses.¹⁵⁰ In late 1974 and early 1975, they led a drive to release or charge the SASO-BPC detainees, with campus meetings, church vigils, and articles in sympathetic media, the first of many campaigns to come of solidarity with political prisoners.¹⁵¹ The start of 1975 saw an attempt to launch a bus boycott to challenge a large fare increase, on the heels of the successful movement

¹⁴⁹ Black Review 1974-75, p.181; Interviews, Johnny Issel, Cape Town, June 4, 1991, Trevor Manuel, Johannesburg, August 11, 1992.

¹⁵⁰ Muslim News, February 1, 1974, April 12, 1974, Cape Herald, February 9, 1974, April 13, 1974.

¹⁵¹ Muslim News, November 22, 1974, January 17, 1975, Cape Herald, December 21, 1974.

in East London.¹⁵² The same year, BC activists spearheaded a drive to boycott elections for the Colored Persons Representatives Council (CPRC), directly confronting the moderate Labor Party.¹⁵³ From mid-1975, when the white authorities battled to bulldoze the squatter camps mushrooming around the Cape Peninsula, the BC activists were among those who took up their cause, as SASO activists built a symbolic shanty and the BC-oriented press reported sympathetically on their plight.¹⁵⁴ Thus, as university students, former students, community notables, and even high school pupils got involved, the BCM spread political ferment through the colored communities of greater Cape Town even before the outbreak of the Soweto unrest.

In the Western Cape, the BCM forged an activist-oriented new elite, which increasingly struggled for autonomy from the older leadership groups in the colored community. More than in other regions, it confronted there more complex opponents, including the Labor Party, which preached change through the system, the Unity Movement with its militant abstention from political action, and a welter of smaller groupings, including remnants of the PAC and ANC. Their debates swirled through the townships and city, in public meetings, reading groups, and private arguments, as their networks overlapped, clashed, and at times fused, in a dynamic process in which BC gradually got the upper hand.¹⁵⁵ In this era BC secured its predominance at UWC, which had supplanted the UM-dominated Hewat Teacher Training College as the principal

¹⁵² Interview, Manuel.

¹⁵³ Black Review 1974-75, *op. cit.*, p.181.

¹⁵⁴ Muslim News, June 6, 1975, Cape Herald, June 26, 1975.

¹⁵⁵ "They were little pockets of politicians rather than activists – people who had gone through UWC met as a social circle to discuss." Interview, Manuel.

colored institution of higher education, winning support not only among students but also from colored faculty and tolerance from the new colored rector, Richard van der Ross, appointed as a result of their struggles in 1972-73.¹⁵⁶ In the schools, a growing number of BC-oriented teachers, many UWC-trained, were challenging the sway of the Unity Movement, especially in the new, working-class colored schools in the Cape Flats townships swelling through forced removals, where the older Trotskyite movement had never had a firm grip. Off campus, the BCM took root in a variety of small civic organizations, such as KAGRO, the Kensington Action Group, and its counterparts in other townships, as well as in a BPC chapter. At the same time its partisans were working to wean the other major institutional resources of colored civil society away from the Labor Party – particularly the mosques, the NGSK, and the two major colored-oriented newspapers.¹⁵⁷ By the time of the 1975 anti-CPRC battle, the results were evident: unlike 1969, colored religious institutions refused to lend their prestige to participation or their halls for Labor Party meetings, severely hampering its campaign. Cape Herald refused to urge voters to participate and Muslim News urged them to stay away – though both had endorsed voting in the 1969 CPRC election.¹⁵⁸ Equally impressive was the broad support the movement developed in the elite of colored civil society for non-voting, which included prominent leaders of major Muslim institutions, social welfare, and community organizations, as well as intellectuals.¹⁵⁹ “During that

¹⁵⁶ Interview, Richard Stevens, Cape Town, July 4, 1991, The Argus, September 5, 1975.

¹⁵⁷ Imam Haroun’s Mosque on Stegman Road was a center of political Islam in the 1970s, and the Clermont Road mosque also had an important impact, its congregation had been removed and took its message back to the townships where they lived. Interview, Farid Sayyed, Cape Town, June 5, 1991

¹⁵⁸ Interviews, Stevens, Sayyed, The Argus, March 8, 1975, Cape Herald, March 22, 1975.

¹⁵⁹ Cape Times, March 19, 1975.

period,” recalls Johnny Issel, a leading BC activist in this period, “you began to see the drawing in of other people” into the BC networks alongside the movement’s hard-core activists.¹⁶⁰

In this period, the movement staged one hugely successful mass mobilization – the June 1973 rally with which the last chapter opened – as well as others which were unsuccessful or only partially successful, reflecting its complex relations with other elites, its own political inexperience, and the moral charge of the issues confronted. The rally displayed an extraordinary unity among the elites of the militant and moderate black movements, as leaders of SASO, the Labor Party, and Inkatha all shared the platform. The result was exceptional in terms of mobilizing power, protection for participants, and the resulting pressure on the authorities.¹⁶¹ But the rally was also the climax of a careful, large-scale effort of organization: meetings had been held in colored communities all around the region and country to put across the UWC students’ case, and sympathetic press coverage had been used to do the same.¹⁶² The large scale of the conflict, touching every colored community and the future of the youth in which its hopes were invested, as well as its character – a united black community versus the white university authorities – also gave it enormous moral urgency. The dramatic confrontation over racial inequality and the high stakes made it a simulacrum for the national struggle: UWC “became the

¹⁶⁰ Interview, Issel.

¹⁶¹ It also proved to be the only such rally: Isaacs was severely criticized within SASO ranks for agreeing to a joint appearance with leaders operating within the system, and no SASO leader did so again. Interview, Henry Isaacs, Washington, DC, 1989.

¹⁶² Interviews, Issel, Williams, Rashid Seria, Cape Town, June 8, 1991.

focal point for conflict in the Western Cape ... [T]his serious confrontation with the authorities at UWC affected the entire region."¹⁶³

The 1973 rally contrasted sharply with other, less successful attempts at autonomous mobilizations by the BCM, such as the bus boycott and anti-CPRC campaigns of early 1975. In these struggles, BC activists were simultaneously trying to cooperate with the Labor Party, itself distracted from serious commitment by the approaching the election, and distance themselves from it, as they campaigned for a boycott of the vote.¹⁶⁴ The leadership of the Busfares Action Committee was plagued by internal squabbles among participating groups, which meant that no effective, united attempt at mobilization was made.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, the BC activists of the small civic groups driving the campaign under-estimated the difficulties of building support for the boycott. It was launched with a set of small meetings, a disappointing city-wide rally which drew only 500, and a handful of boycotters marching with sandwich boards.¹⁶⁶ (The strategic situation they faced was also more difficult than that of the Mdantsane boycotters: there was no central bus terminus – riders picked up busses all over the Peninsula – so there was no place which served as the focal point for confrontation or where the boycott could be easily enforced.) The anti-CPRC campaign was also fairly limited in scope; publicly fronted by a group called the Anti-CRC Committee (ACROM) made up of SASO and BPC activists, it involved relatively small-scale pamphlet and

¹⁶³ Interview, Issel, Williams.

¹⁶⁴ Interview, Manuel, The World, January 2, 1975.

¹⁶⁵ Muslim News, April 11, 1975.

¹⁶⁶ Interview, Manuel, Cape Times, January 18, 1975, January 21, 1975, Cape Herald, March 1, 1975, March 8, 1975, Muslim News, January 21, 1975, March 14, 1975, April 11, 1975.

postering efforts in colored townships, as well as issuing statements which received prominent press coverage. But the movement did not canvass house-to-house or conduct its own meetings; instead at least meetings of the Labor and Federal Parties were disrupted, with mixed results (in one case the crowd walked out in support of the ACROM activists; in another they assaulted them).¹⁶⁷ The campaign may have had some effect in keeping turnout down, but the net effect on the total vote turnout appears to have been limited: registration (conducted before the campaign) was down 14% on the previous election in 1969, while the actual vote was down 17%.¹⁶⁸ Thus, while the post-1973 campaigns in the Western Cape helped develop BC activist networks and experience, they underlined that mobilization was less successful in the absence of an overriding issue that would force the region's fractious elites to work together, help to mobilize communities, and crystallize the underlying political issues.

Yet despite the movement's mixed record of mobilizations in the Western Cape, its activity there put new issues on the public agenda and its discourse spread the gospel of Black Consciousness, resonating in popular consciousness if not on the streets. The change of tone and content in the colored-oriented media was as striking as in The World of Johannesburg. They echoed the positions of the movement, the Cape Herald more cautiously, Muslim News more stridently, and its views increasingly found expression in the white-oriented dailies with large colored readerships, The Argus and Cape Times, as well. As a result a succession of issues pushed their way onto the public record – student activism, detentions, the housing crisis, transportation, the anti-CPRC campaign, and the

¹⁶⁷ Interviews, Issel, Williams, Manuel, Black Review 1974-75, *op. cit.*, pp.66-67; Cape Herald, February 1, 1975, February 8, 1975, March 15, 1975, Drum, March 22, 1975.

¹⁶⁸ Race Relations Survey, 1975.

cause of squatters among them. Important in themselves, these issues also provided examples and substantiation of the movement's claims. Common problems, such as detentions, and heart-rending plights, like those of the squatters, helped make the case for colored-African solidarity, while instances which highlighted the failure of protests from institutionalized elites, such as the maisonette or anti-CPRC campaigns, challenged the legitimacy of the existing system. Alongside the movement's issues also came the opportunity to air its discourse: ACROM saw "themselves as the vanguard of black resistance," and they aimed at "politicizing the people and making them aware of the values of Black Consciousness."¹⁶⁹ The group's publications and press coverage provided an opportunity to present at some length the movement's take on the definition of blackness, the institutional causes of their situation, and its assessment of their political problems and solutions.¹⁷⁰ Even though many of the campaigns were not great successes in terms of their declared objectives, the emergence of this culture of activism helped to change public consciousness over time. The UCT survey, for example, showed that more than half of those in the sample who participated in the 1969 CPRC election did not vote again in 1975, and that this group was largely hostile to the CPRC, and tended to be younger, better-educated, and male – the groups most exposed to the BCM.¹⁷¹ The course of events after the election, when Labor took up its CPRC seats in violation of

¹⁶⁹ Black Review 1974-5, pp.132-33.

¹⁷⁰ See, for example, Muslim News, February 14, 1975. For several examples see the ACROM documents reprinted in Pierre Hugo, ed. Quislings or Realists? A Documentary Study of "Colored" Politics in South Africa (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1978), pp. 475ff.

¹⁷¹ Unpublished tabulations. The fall-off in the total vote was less because of first-time voters in 1975 – largely drawn from women, older people, and the less educated, who had the least exposure to Black Consciousness and the largest dependence on the type of patronage which the institutionalized elites provided.

pre-election pledges not to, responded to student protests at the Council's chambers with arrests instead of dialog, and was outmaneuvered by the authorities when it tried to shut down the council, only served to drive home the young activists' message that nothing could be expected from official representative bodies.¹⁷² This and other challenges undoubtedly lay behind a large part of the increased opposition to the regime noted among coloreds in the Western Cape in the months before the 1976 unrest.

Perhaps the most significant consequence of the spread of Black Consciousness ideas and networks in the Western Cape was the growing mobilization of high school students and youth. They were inspired by the SASO activists who had gained notoriety in the UWC conflicts (particularly Isaacs and Issel) and tutored by them and sympathetic teachers, using the facilities of their schools and the Christian Institute. They managed to build followings and make contacts in all walks of student life, through debate clubs, poetry readings, and even chess matches where political speeches were made.¹⁷³ BC adherents launched a fierce and increasingly successful challenge to the Unity Movement in the few older, elite institutions its teachers had dominated, and swept through the newer colored schools on the Cape Flats as well as the handful of secondary schools in the African townships. Their activity was spearheaded from 1972 to 1974 by the South African Black Scholars Association (SABSA), which managed to form contacts between the city's colored and African schools before collapsing under pressure from school

¹⁷² The Argus, September 5, 1975, September 7, 1975. One student in the demonstration at the Council offices taunted Labor party deputy leader David Curry, "You are such a loud-mouthed supporter of Black Consciousness, tell us now if you are with the people or not?" This was also the incident which led Prof. Van der Ross to align himself – and thus UWC as an institution – with the protestors.

¹⁷³ This account of the spread of BC among young people in the Western Cape is based on Interviews, Greg Ruiters, Johannesburg, June 17, 1991, Ashik Mani, Cape Town, July 8, 1991, Monde Tolwana, Cape Town, November 11, 1992, Issel, Williams, Isaacs, and Bond, Colored Education Struggles in South Africa, *op. cit.*, pp.113 ff.

authorities and the Security Police. Equally significant, however, was the linkage and politicization of the religious youth organizations – Christian and Muslim – which shaped the culture of non-*tsotsi* urban youth during and after their school years. These young people were drawn to BC by the militancy of its discourse, its offer of tactics and strategies, and above all its promise of action, confirmed by the dramatic events at UWC and sharply contrasting with the intellectualism and quietism of the Unity Movement.¹⁷⁴ Even after the demise of SABSA, they remained active in their local youth groups and schools. By 1975, protest mobilization spread to the colored high schools as well. Pupils from old Unity Movement schools – such as Harold Cressey, Trafalgar, and Livingstone – as well as the new Hanover Park High were the strongest supporters of the bus boycott, while pupils at another of the newer schools, Alexander Sinton in Athlone, demonstrated against the use of their school as a polling place for the CPRC elections.¹⁷⁵ Colored and African activists also fought successfully to replace appointed prefects with elected Students Representatives Councils (SRCs) in a number of schools, old and new – including Harold Cressey, Livingstone, Grassy Park, Crestway, Salt River, and others, then used their contacts to form a “super-SRC” which organized interscholastic meetings and BC leadership training. Thus, as an activist recalled, “’76 came and we were ready for it. We had this structure – the super-SRC – which could mobilize with speed and militancy under the banner of BC and black unity.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ “People had a lot of respect for them [the Unity Movement], but they turned against these masters because they couldn’t give you the action young people wanted.” Interview, Ruiters.

¹⁷⁵ Muslim News, March 14, 1975, March 28, 1975, The Argus, March 29, 1975.

¹⁷⁶ Interview, Ruiters.

D. The Afrikaans Issue and the Soweto School Boycotts

But by mid-1976, the focal point of the student movement – and the driving force in urban black politics – had become the network of high school pupil and other BC organizations centering on Johannesburg, above all in Soweto. Soweto was the epicenter of the pupils' movement for several reasons: it was the largest African township by far, with the fastest-growing concentration of pupils (half of all those in the Southern Transvaal region, including Pretoria, greater Johannesburg, and the Vaal Triangle), and the strongest student organizations. SASM and NAYO had gradually grown out of their Soweto base from 1972 on, but they were hit hard in 1974 by the detentions preceding the NAYO trial. In 1975-76, however, an energetic new Executive and a strong issue (the imposition of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in African schools) pumped new vigor into the organization.¹⁷⁷ In Soweto alone, there is evidence that between 1970 and 1976, active SASM membership soared from roughly young people concentrated in three older, elite schools to several hundred in a score of schools, including many newer ones around the township, with a much larger circle of sympathizers.¹⁷⁸ The leaders were in regular contact with older BC militants in Soweto – consulting with SASO and BPC activists members – and a core group also maintained discreet links to underground

¹⁷⁷ Noziph Diseko, "The Origins and Development of the South African Students Movement, 1968-1976," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1991, Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, *op. cit.*, pp.160-1, "Minutes of the Annual General Students' Council of SASM, Roodepoort, May 28-30, 1976," in *idem.*, p.573, Brooks and Brickhill, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, pp.86-88, Interviews, Super Moloji, Johannesburg, August 18, 1992, Billy Masetla, Johannesburg, August 17, 1992.

¹⁷⁸ Glaser, *Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto*, *op. cit.*, p.305. By the mid-1970s the organization had also come to terms with SCM in Soweto, the one area where both had been highly active and in conflict; a number of SCM figures had joined SASM as well, further extending its reach and influence, *ibid.*, Interviews, Montsitsi, Molefe.

ANC members.¹⁷⁹ By the middle of the decade, SASM's growth also was spurred by its growing success in organizing black teacher training colleges, widening the stream of young pro-BC teachers flowing into the schools.¹⁸⁰ By this time the organization also had spread its tentacles to the towns and cities of the Eastern Cape, as well as the Transkei and Ciskei homelands, reaching out from the Fort Hare campus and Biko's circle at King William's Town, stretching out from Turfloop to the Lebowa and Venda homelands of the Northern Transvaal, and from Mafikeng and Pretoria to Bophutatswana and a few towns in the Western Transvaal, with branches in Middleburg, the Eastern Transvaal and the Free State as well.¹⁸¹ (Linkages remained weak with students in the Western Cape, and the organization was never strong in Natal, where the pro-Buthelezi Inkatha Youth Brigade largely had frozen it out.¹⁸²) Nationally, a leader of SASM estimated that the organization had 1,000-1,500 members by 1976, with a similar number of former students, church activists, and the like in NAYO.¹⁸³

As student organizations grew, the 1970s were increasingly marked by a wave of pupil protests in black schools reflecting the new political culture of which they were part. The type of disturbances noted in the early years of the decade – mobilizations like those of the 1940s and 1950s, set largely in rural and boarding schools, focused on

¹⁷⁹ Diseko, "The South African Students Movement," *op. cit.*, p.61, Interviews, Diseko No.1, Montsitsi, Masetla, Nkadimeng.

¹⁸⁰ Interview, Masetla.

¹⁸¹ Southall, *South Africa's Transkei*, *op. cit.*, p.185, Interviews, Diseko No.2, Macozoma, Peter Mokaba, Johannesburg, July 24, 1992, Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, Johannesburg, September 25, 1992, Elleck Nchabeleng, Johannesburg, August 10, 1992, Tsedu No.1, Masetla.

¹⁸² Interviews, Diseko No.2, Mani, Ziba Jiyane, New Haven, August 30, 1989, Sishi Chonco, Durban, September 10, 1992. Buthelezi's combination of militant discourse and patronage politics meant that his was the only homeland party to develop a significant youth wing in this era.

¹⁸³ Interview, Diseko, No.2.

immediate grievances (food, discipline, scheduling), tending to involve spontaneous outbreaks of violence, without the involvement of national student organizations – continued right up to 1976.¹⁸⁴ But a new type of protest supplanted them. It began to appear in 1974 in African schools in towns of the Border region of the Eastern Cape, where Biko's circle had actively helped pupils organize, producing the strongest region of SASM and SCM after Johannesburg. The first such outbreak may have been the one at Thembalabantu High School in Zwelitsha in the Ciskei, where had Sebe staged his triumphal election meeting of September 30, 1974 (see Chapter Three, p.126); students there struck in October over the expulsion of three of their number who had contributed to the SASM Newsletter and the following May over a list of school grievances they presented. In May 1975, students of Nathaniel Nyaluza High School in nearby Grahamstown also staged demonstrations and boycotts over a list of educational grievances, including unqualified and drunken teachers, sexual harassment, book shortages, and rundown buildings, occupying the school for two weeks and holding mass meetings to discuss their plans. These protests involved several new elements: student action now involved urban day schools, raised educational and political demands rather than material and parochial ones, and involved organization and strategic protest, frequently led by activists belonging to one of the national student organizations. During 1975, similar protests spread to African schools in cities elsewhere, including Pretoria and Mafikeng (and, as noted above, to colored and African schools in the Western

¹⁸⁴ Hyslop, Social Conflict Over African Education in South Africa, *op. cit.*, pp.394, 461; see also the reports on disturbances over food at Blythwood College in the Transkei, The World, October 8, 1975, expulsions, at Nongoma Vocational College in Zululand, Weekend World, October 20, 1975, and Makhabelance High School in QwaQwa, over vacation scheduling, The World, April 14, 1976.

Cape).¹⁸⁵ As Hyslop observed, the new mode of collective action was a “symptom of far deeper changes which were transforming the culture and politics of black urban youth. The secondary and higher primary schools were awakening politically, for the first time developing their own autonomous tradition and repertoire of action.”¹⁸⁶

By late 1975, the focus of mobilization and activism was swinging to the militant pupils and youth of Soweto, who became involved in a series of increasingly militant clashes with the authorities in the township and even in the streets of white Johannesburg. The political atmosphere was super-charged: the end of white rule in Maputo, as close as Durban, was being followed by the unfolding South African defeat in Angola, while the SASO-BPC and NAYO trials, along with the BCM’s other displays of defiance, kept the movement daily in the headlines. Openly challenging the regime’s legitimacy, and displaying enormous self-confidence, young activists were involved in a series of confrontations, some violent, with the police and school authorities. In September 1975, when police who had interrogated a student at Morris Isaacson High School returned there, a student demonstration blocked their entrance.¹⁸⁷ On October 15, students from the same school stormed a police station and got into a fist-fight with police, demanding that a man arrested on allegations of assaulting a student be turned over to them for their own rough justice.¹⁸⁸ At year end, students at the Shangaan Junior Secondary School boycotted a final exam, because they believed one student had received the test in

¹⁸⁵ Hyslop, Social Conflict Over African Education in South Africa, *op. cit.*, pp.461-463.

¹⁸⁶ Jonathan Hyslop, “Food, Authority, and Politics: Student Riots in South African Schools, 1945-76,” in Stephen Clingman, ed, Regions and Repertoires: Topics in South African Politics and Culture (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1991), p.107.

¹⁸⁷ Hyslop, Social Conflict Over African Education in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.462.

¹⁸⁸ The World, February 13, 1976.

advance.¹⁸⁹ Student power manifested itself again in April, when pupils at Ngunguyane Secondary School and Mawila Higher Primary school struck to demand the reinstatement of their headmaster, dismissed in a dispute over homeland politics – and won a week later.¹⁹⁰ Mass mobilization, both at the older, elite institutions with activist traditions that had provided the initial core of SASM, such as Morris Isaacson, and at newer, lower-level schools elsewhere in the township, was striking evidence of how widely organization and activism had spread. How explosive were the results was graphically shown before the dome and pillars of the Rand Supreme Court, where the NAYO trial was underway, when a demonstration by young activists turned into a riot in downtown Johannesburg. After several hundred young people gathered outside the court late in the afternoon of March 18, 1976, to distribute leaflets on upcoming Sharpeville Day meetings and cheer the defendants with cries of “*Amandla*,” clashes with police followed. Thousands of black commuters on their way to the nearby railway station joined the activists to pelt the police with stones and attack busses and cars. Riot police, dogs, and soldiers had to be called in to restore order. The open challenge to the authorities by the student activists in the center city was startling enough; the spontaneous cooperation between the workers and students was even more so – and both

¹⁸⁹ The World, February 19, 1976.

¹⁹⁰ The World, April 8, 1976, April 9, 1976, April 14, 1976; Commission of Inquiry Into the Riots At Soweto and Other Places (Pretoria, Government Printer: 1980), hereafter referred to as Cillie Commission Report, pp.64-65.

foreshadowed the student struggles and community solidarity which would erupt on a far vaster scale three months later.¹⁹¹

Class boycotts began to spread among Soweto schools in mid-May 1976 over the enforcement of an official regulation that half of all subjects in African schools be taught in Afrikaans. Blacks hated the rule for several reasons: symbolic (Afrikaans was the “language of the oppressor”); economic (English was more useful to get work); and practical (few African teachers or students spoke it well, especially in towns). In the major cities, it had been honored more in the breach than in the observance, but as the *verligte-verkrampste* dispute intensified during the 1970s, pressure to enforce it grew. The appointment in January 1976 of arch-*verkrampste* Andries Treurnicht as Deputy Minister for Bantu Education meant that the rule would henceforth be applied implacably.¹⁹² (A cartoonist showed two blacks discussing Treurnicht’s nomination; one remarked, “He’s now part of Mr. Vorster’s anti-Uncle Toms cabinet!”)¹⁹³ Opposition had been building to the rule among black teachers’ groups and school boards for several years, but soon after Treurnicht’s appointment, two members of a Soweto board which had expressed opposition to the so-called 50-50 rule were sacked, and the rest resigned in protest.¹⁹⁴ Local parents vigorously supported the board at a public meeting in March, as did other parent protest gatherings, one attracting a crowd of 1,500 who voted unanimously against

¹⁹¹ The World, March 19, 1976, Weekend World, March 21, 1976, The Argus, March 19, 1976; an eyewitness account by an anonymous participant in the riot is found in “Account by unknown spectator of disturbance,” in Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, *op. cit.*, pp.561-563.

¹⁹² Hyslop, Social Conflict Over African Education in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.473.

¹⁹³ Drum, February 22, 1976.

¹⁹⁴ Hyslop, Social Conflict Over African Education in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.472.

the rule; this, too, was ignored.¹⁹⁵ On May 17, students at Orlando West Junior Secondary began boycotting classes to demand the reinstatement of the dismissed school board members. Within a week, five other schools had gone out (three were local feeder schools for Orlando West); another joined them June 1. The protests began amid tumultuous, boisterous, sometimes threatening scenes: rowdy demonstrations by pupils, lockouts of staff and boycott-breaking students, and the seizure of a tape-recorder from a teacher accused of being an informer. Students sent a letter protesting the Afrikaans rule to the regional director of Bantu Education; the reply filtered back that the Department was “doing nothing about the matter.” By late May, 2,000 pupils were out on boycott, defying a call from a parents’ meeting to return to classes. On May 29, SASM’s national conference in Roodeport, just west of Soweto, backed the strikes and condemned the Afrikaans rule and segregated schooling. As the temperature rose, violence began: a pupil stabbed a black Afrikaans teacher at a boycott school and students stoned police who tried to arrest him; stones were hurled at boycott-breakers at another; when Security Police came to a third, a crowd of stone-throwing students trapped them in an office, burned out their car, and threw stones again when police returned the next day. As the chaos worsened, on June 7 a Soweto UBC delegation’s plea to relax the 50-50 rule was rebuffed by the Department of Bantu Education; this rejection helped shift the political focus to a new group formed the day before at a meeting of Soweto’s professional and associational elite, the Soweto Parents Association, in a bid to give civil society a voice outside the official political bodies. Finally, Treurnicht announced in Parliament June 11

¹⁹⁵ The World, March 5, 1976, March 8, 1975, March 15, 1976.

that he had rejected applications to exempt five of the boycotted schools from the Afrikaans requirement. The deadlock was total.¹⁹⁶

With the development of the battle over the Afrikaans issue, the growing militancy and mobilizing capacity of the Black Consciousness Movement had spiraled into a crisis of legitimacy for the regime. This confrontation was qualitatively different in character from black mobilization prior to 1960: although the focus was Soweto, it was national in the scope of issues and linkages involved, with leading roles played by autonomous actors who had moved beyond the tradition of patronized protest which had helped launch it, to become the fullest manifestation of the new mode of mobilization and political identity of black South Africa. The crisis broke out first in Soweto, but the issues were clearly national both in their character – the Afrikaans ruling applied to all African schools – and their target – the central government. Indeed, it was precisely for this reason that the white regime's officials felt they could not back down: they feared that "if any concessions were made to the striking pupils, such concessions would set up as chain reaction, the end of which could not be foreseen."¹⁹⁷ Thus both sides saw the issue as not just important in itself but as a simulacrum of the relationship between the regime and the people. Consequently, official intransigence ratcheted up the confrontation and raised the stakes, as the involvement of the black community on the issue became steadily wider and deeper in response. Each rebuff from the regime also delivered the coup de grace to the credibility of the older conservative elites, one after

¹⁹⁶ This account is based on Hyslop, Social Conflict Over African Education in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.474-5, South Africa in Travail: the Disturbances of 1976-77 (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations: 1978), hereafter cited as South Africa in Travail; pp.3-5, Cillie Commission Report, pp.70ff, and The World, May 18, 1976, May 19, 1976, May 20, 1976, May 24, 1976.

¹⁹⁷ Cillie Commission Report, p.89.

another: the school boards, the teachers association leadership, the UBC, and parents and elders more generally, as the impotence of each was underlined. The regime's unresponsiveness helped create the leadership vacuum which permitted the emergence of autonomous organizations linked to the BCM, the students' movement and the parents' association. It also reinforced the solidarity of the community, driving parents and students together into a consensus over ends, if not means.¹⁹⁸ The new movement was national in its linkages as well, operating through the press, secular and religious organization, and student and youth groups, outside the spheres of action of the old patrimonial-patronage networks. The new mode of mode of collective action which was emerging, national and autonomous, marked the mobilization of the new urban collective identity politicized by the BCM, as Hyslop observed. "The new political culture that had arisen amongst the urban youth during the first half of the 1970s began to express itself on a wider scale, and more forcefully, as the school students of Soweto began to revolt against the [Afrikaans] policy from the beginning of 1976. Having ignored the representations of teachers and school boards against the policy, the Department of Bantu Education had itself opened up a situation where the students could no longer have any hope that the mediation of township elites would resolve their problems."¹⁹⁹ The combination of a simulacrum which rendered concession impossible and co-option discredited, the emergence of new leadership and organization, and a national political culture was transformed into crisis by one more factor: empowerment. Successful episodes of defiance and victories widened perceived political opportunities and created

¹⁹⁸ T.W. Kambule, principal of Orlando High School, commented in an article in Weekend World of June 13, 1976, "School children are doing exactly what the parents and everybody feels about Afrikaans – only they had the courage to stand up against it." Cited in South Africa in Travail, p.7.

among the young activists a readiness for confrontation with the regime. A black teacher eloquently summed up the situation on the eve of the unrest in a newspaper article published June 13:

“The issue has become, in a way, a symbol of resistance among the youth to white oppression and white authority. The children have learned that they can defy the principal, the School Board, they can defy the inspectors – and they have in the process learned the lesson of solidarity, which is new to them. ... The children show no signs of breaking and there is a danger that the strike will spread. The children, aged between 13 and 18, have the sympathy of their parents and teachers ... The situation is potentially explosive.”²⁰⁰

CONCLUSION

The evidence presented in this chapter shows new political attitudes, confidence, and mobilization evident in South Africa's townships as the regime crisis developed in the 1970s were causally linked to the development of the Black Consciousness Movement. Contact with the movement and its discourse helped to swing urban black identity and culture sharply against the white minority regime, while its concept of blackness helped build political unity among urban blacks across different ethnic and racial groups. It sharply reduced the legitimacy of apartheid institutions and the prestige of collaborators, promoted democratic values, and encouraged political resistance. All these elements were manifest in the enormous variety of organized mobilizations which took place, beginning as patronized protests recalling the past and finishing with a new

¹⁹⁹ Hyslop, *Social Conflict Over African Education in South Africa*, *op. cit.*, p.472

²⁰⁰ B. Ngakane, writing in *Sunday Tribune*, June 13, 1976, cited in *South Africa in Travail*, p.66

type of autonomous, anti-regime action. The point here is not that BC groups led or even directly participated in all the collective actions of the 1970s, for they did not. The BCM's role was crucial because as a movement it helped form the "collective individualism" underlying all the mass actions, its activists were involved to varying degrees in many of them, promoting mobilization and militancy, and they were the protagonists of explicitly political struggles aimed at building a national, autonomous mass movement of black South Africans against their white rulers, broader in scope and more militant in character than any which had gone before. Even though the Black Consciousness groups had small formal memberships, the alignment of mental frames they achieved politicized the collective identities of urban black society, turning its private spaces into the cells of an nascent mass movement. As Lunn observed, "The concept of Black Power and the political awareness of people in 1976 owed much ... to the first sustained emphasis on a secular culture of resistance as espoused by the proponents of BC. The groundwork of that awareness characterized the first half of the 1970s, its active expression emerged in the post-1976 era."²⁰¹

This actor-oriented account of the development of South Africa's regime crisis of the 1970s, and the central role in it played by public discourse, collective identity, and the Black Consciousness Movement, contrasts in a number of significant ways to the structuralist or "econocentric" alternative. From a structuralist perspective the development of regime crisis is the cause of the social movement development, rather than the other way around. Regime crisis develops as a result of economic crisis and foreign entanglements, which intensify grievances, leading to popular mobilizations

²⁰¹ Lunn, *Antecedents, op. cit.*, p.228.

spread via bandwagon effects, and force a degree of political liberalization, reflecting the regime's divisions and declining coercive capacity. Mass mobilization is sparked off by middle-class movement entrepreneurs working through formal organizational networks to mobilize members and resources, pushed by worsening economic and political conditions, and encouraged by perceived reductions in the cost of protest. Micro-mobilization that activates individual involvement is seen as the product of individual rational choice shaped through institutions, social structures, and political opportunities; the concepts of legitimacy and solidarity are evacuated or assumed. Social movements are the aggregates of individuals which result from micro-mobilization. In some accounts, which emphasize the causation of mass action by structural economic factors, the representation of the masses by opposition elites is little more than virtual. In others, their influence depends on whether the elite develops the right tactics and ideology to exploit the opportunities presented by the situation. In either case, the mass public serves as object, not subject, while the formation of elites and the nature of their relationship to the mass is not an issue. Most of these fundamental claims are cast into doubt by the version of crisis development presented here.

However, the development of the political crisis in South Africa in 1976 cannot be explained merely through economic crisis and external developments which increased grievances and opportunities. Undoubtedly, worsening grievances as the economy cooled and excitement at guerilla victories nearby increased social volatility, and bandwagon effects helped perpetuate protest after it re-emerged. Yet at best these factors can explain why mobilization was somewhat more likely; they cannot explain why, or where, it occurred. Although economic stress affected all blacks, only certain

communities, factories, and social groups were actually involved in mobilizations. Moreover, mobilization was multi-faceted; not all cases centered on economic stress: those involving university students, sport, or the CPRC, for example, were expressive and political, not material and economic in orientation. (Indeed, even ostensibly economic mobilizations, such as bus boycotts or strikes, were recognized to have a substantial expressive dimension.) Timing also argues against an econocentric account: mobilizations began while the economy was still booming and before the armed struggles in neighboring territories produced results. The first bus boycott, in Gelvandale, occurred in 1971; the university boycotts and the rise of KWARU in 1972; the first big strike in Durban the same year and the strike wave there at the start of 1973. The economic and political shocks came later: inflation after the oil crisis of October 1973, slowing growth in 1975, and the spectacular guerilla gains in Mozambique, Angola, and Zimbabwe in 1974-76. Nor can political liberalization be seen as increasing political opportunities in these years. Repression continued and intensified, while white elite divisions prior to the Soweto riots tightened the lid on the racial regime, rather than loosening them.²⁰² It is true that black elites operating “within the system” won a measure of freedom to speak, and that their support, like that of patrons in the past, was an important factor of protection and mobilization in many protests. But mass mobilization in South Africa prior to 1976 also involved a number of other common

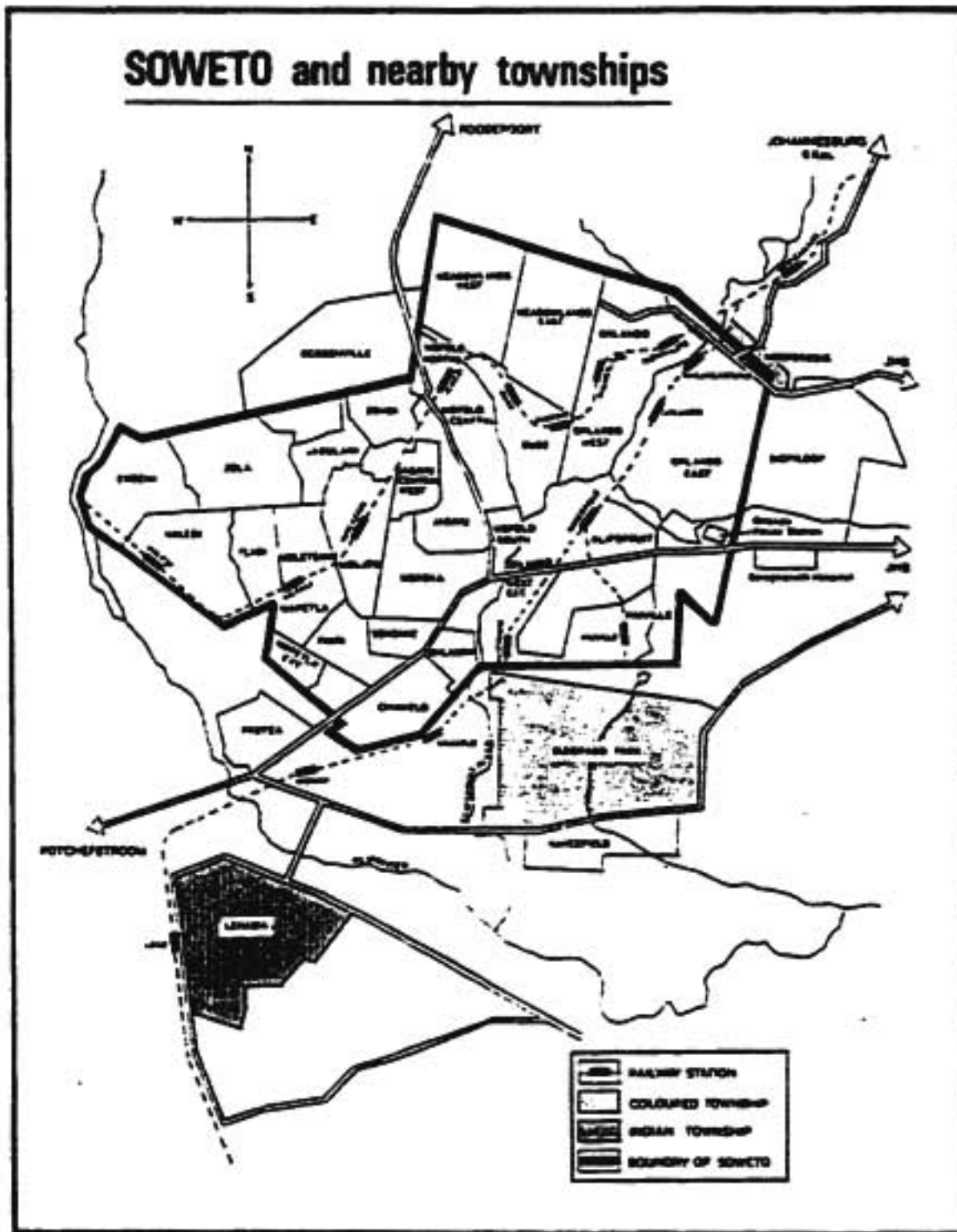
²⁰² The regime’s widely-publicized “détente” initiatives of the early 1970s were aimed at improving its relations with other African states and the West. They proved to be public relations measures for foreign consumption rather than the start of domestic reforms. They collapsed amid the South African intervention in Angola in 1975-76 and the repression of the Soweto revolt. The Information Scandal of 1977-78 revealed the seamy domestic corruption and foreign influence-peddling beneath the rhetoric of détente. As to domestic policy, the *verligte-verkrampste* struggle had resulted in no relaxation of apartheid beyond token gestures (the elimination of apartheid in elevators, post office queues, parks, etc). Indeed, as noted above, it produced the stricter application of apartheid laws where it mattered: homeland citizenship, independence, and above all, Afrikaans-medium instruction.

denominators: a protest elite with grassroots ties and access to the public sphere, which succeeded in interpreting the conflict as a simulacrum for the broader South African society. Mobilization developed via the discursive links which connected dissident elites to the submerged cultural networks of civil society, united by shared identities, experiences, and relationships, and driven by the growing illegitimacy of the racial regime and the creation of political opportunity by the popular movement's active re-opening of the public sphere. These were the factors which allowed local networks of solidarity to come together under a common, collective identity for the struggle.

Although the Black Consciousness-led initiatives – many experimental and groping – were hardly all successful, by mid-June 1976, the development of the schools crisis showed that the efforts of the BCM to prepare black civil society to confront the regime were bearing fruit. Over the next few days, the pace of events quickened and took a fateful turning. Treurnicht's June 11 rejection of flexibility on the Afrikaans issue incensed Sowetans. The lines of confrontation sharpened as the students on boycott refused to take mid-year exams and the Soweto Parents Association announced plans to challenge the official school boards as representatives of black parents. SASM members in one of the boycotted schools called a regional meeting of the organization for Sunday, June 13 to discuss the crisis, and its leaders consulted those of other BC and other black civic groups in the township on possible next steps. The June 13 meeting, attended by 300 – 400 students from most Soweto schools, formed an Action Committee of two members from each school, chaired by star debater Tsietsi Mashinini, to co-ordinate

plans and draw in schools not in SASM. It also decided to call on students throughout the township to join a peaceful, one-day protest march and rally against the Afrikaans rule and set the date for June 16.²⁰³

²⁰³ Sources for this account of the run-up to the June 16 protest are Tebello Motapanyane, "How June 16 Demo Was Planned, Sechaba, 2nd Quarter 1977, p.56, South Africa in Travail, p.6, Cillie Commission Report, pp.94-98, Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, *op. cit.*, pp.51-2, and Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, *op. cit.*, pp.319-320.



International Defense and Aid Fund for Southern Africa

Source: Alan Brooks and Jeremy Brickhill, Whirlwind Before the Storm: The Origins and Development of the Uprising in Soweto and the rest of South Africa from June to December 1976 (London, International Defense and Aid Fund: 1979)

Map 7.2: The Cape Town Area



Source: Alan Brooks and Jeremy Brickhill. Whirlwind Before the Storm: The Origins and Development of the Uprising in Soweto and the rest of South Africa from June to December 1976 (London, International Defense and Aid Fund: 1979)

Chapter Seven

THE OUTCOME OF REGIME CRISIS: The Soweto Revolt, the Black Consciousness Movement, and the Reconstitution of Political Opportunity, 1976-79

In the chilly early morning sunshine of June 16, 1976, more than a dozen groups of school pupils, each several hundred strong, were marching through the dusty streets of Soweto. Most were in their teens or early twenties and wore school uniforms, white blouses or shirts under dark sweaters, black trousers for boys, black skirts for girls. They laughed and sang; some carried crude signs attacking the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction (“Down with Afrikaans” read one; another, ironic, said, “If we must do Afrikaans, Vorster must do Zulu”.) Yet if the mood was buoyant, a handful of clashes with bystanders and police along their routes were reminders of the tension running through the township. By 9 am, many of the marchers had converged at Orlando West High School, forming a crowd estimated at 10,000, spilling out from the grounds of the squat yellow-brick school onto the street in front, with more constantly arriving. A convoy of nine white jeeps and vans roared up, blue lights flashing, and 50 armed policemen, both white and black, fanned out, facing the crowd. Some students made peace signs; others taunted the police, whistling and waving their placards. While much of the crowd was singing the Sotho version of the black national anthem, “*Nkosi Sikelele Afrika*,” the police hurled several tear gas grenades, while some students threw stones at them. The crowd grew angry, and the police tried and failed to disperse it with German shepherds – two of the animals were killed by the crowd – then drove it back briefly by charging with nightsticks. But when they retreated in the direction of their

vehicles, the crowd moved towards them. With no warning, the police commander drew his revolver and fired shots towards the pupils; on this, his men, terrified by the advancing crowd, began shooting directly into the mass of students, and pandemonium erupted. Out of the chaos emerged a tall young man in overalls, his face distorted by grief, carrying a dying 13-year-old, Hector Peterson, a scene which would be seared into the memory of the country and the world. By the time the police fled in their vehicles under a hail of missiles, a dozen pupils had been shot dead or wounded. Soon barricades were being thrown across streets by outraged students, and billows of smoke marked arson attacks around the township. The Soweto revolt had begun.¹

The country-wide uprising which broke out in Soweto on June 16, 1976 became the greatest popular challenge the apartheid regime had ever faced, changing political culture and opportunities in ways that marked the beginning of the end of white rule in South Africa. The mobilizations, starting as student protests that turned into riots in the face of police violence, changed into purposeful community-wide collective actions – general strikes and campaigns – targeting the white regime and its black allies. Soweto itself became a mobilization space: a living metaphor for the clash of black power and white ruler, producing mass action through the linkage of social movement organizations aligned with Black Consciousness to the community's own loyalties and identities. In turn, it mobilized other urban black communities through the invocation of organization and solidarity. In this process, the institutions of black civil society – media, religious,

¹ Sources on the events of June 16 include Alan Brooks and Jeremy Brickhill, Whirlwind Before the Storm: The Origins and Development of the Uprising in Soweto and the rest of South Africa from June to December 1976 (London, International Defense and Aid Fund: 1979), pp.7-10; Commission of Inquiry into the Riots at Soweto and other Places (Pretoria, Government Printer: 1980), (hereafter referred to as Cillie Commission Report), pp.109-121; South Africa in Travail: The Disturbances of 1976-77 (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations: 1978), p.7, and Baruch Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash: The Soweto Revolt – Roots of a Revolution? (London, Zed Press: 1979), pp.180-182.

and professional – became both actors and objects, involved in the conflict through their activities even as it deepened their political commitment. The fragile bonds between leaders and followers which sustained the movement were maintained by public discourse and public violence, a language of liberation, driven home through performative acts and underscored by a symbolic (though sometimes deadly) use of force, that confronted the patrimonial discourse and violence of the regime and its supportive elites. Sanctified by the mass struggles and sacrifices which resulted, the changes in political culture underway among urban blacks – the acceptance of a national identity, the regime's illegitimacy, democratic majority rule, and speaking and acting politically – were rapidly consolidated and advanced. The other legacy of the revolt – and of the Black Consciousness Movement, its moving force – was to widen, from below, the political opportunities available to black South Africans. With civil society mobilized, the urban public engaged, the limits to discourse revised, and old elites displaced, political space was reconstituted, opening the way to the establishment of mass extra-parliamentary political and worker organizations unprecedented in scale and character in South Africa. Apartheid's hegemony had been broken; the popular movements that succeeded the BCM were on the offensive, while the white regime would remain on the defensive until forced to admit it could no longer endure.

In all these respects, the Soweto revolt offers an opportunity to observe the unfolding of a social explosion and its influence on the outcome of a regime crisis in a transition to democracy. In this case, as elsewhere, a specific conflict becomes a simulacrum representing the entire political order at a moment of heightened tension, touching off a cascade of grievances among dominated groups as social movement

organizations leap into the fray. As word of this mobilization space spreads into the public sphere via the institutions of civil society, society as a whole swings against the state. Representation is discursive rather than organizational; as hidden transcripts explode into the open and inversionary discourse rules the day, the oppressed recognize themselves in the words and symbolic acts of the mass movement. The result is a huge outpouring of voice as controls on expression collapse and submerged networks coalesce into collective actions, intensifying the identity of the dominated groups into a millenarian sense of fraternity and community. Yet the very force of the movement – its discursive nature – is also its weakness: while repression intensifies the ardor of the base rather than weakening it, at least initially, the fragility of organization makes it vulnerable to sustained assault by the authorities. But while state action can halt mass mobilization, it may at most hide, but not undo, the changes produced by a social explosion: an autonomized civil society, new perceptions of the nature of power and political opportunity, and unwillingness to submit to old forms of rule. The rise of organizations outside the ambit of the regime, a quickened public opinion, and alternative discourses and legitimacy, marks a key turning point in regime transitions. Even when the regime survives the explosion and the changes which result, as in South Africa in 1976-77, the transition has advanced from the struggle for liberalization to the battle for democracy.

I. THE COURSE OF THE REVOLT: BOYCOTTS, RIOTS, AND STAY-AWAYS

The development of the revolt which broke out in Soweto can be divided into six phases.

1. The first week (June 16 – 22, 1976): After the shootings outside Orlando West High School, angry students went on a rampage, burning out offices of the township council, administration, and businesses, blocking roads, and stoning white-owned or driven-vehicles. Police were briefly driven out of part of the township while the students and *tsotsis* joined in the violence. In the evening, when workers returned from their jobs and darkness hampered the authorities, there were more attacks on official buildings and on police patrols. Soweto's unrest continued on June 17 and spread to Kagiso (Krugersdorp) to the west, where, once more, police precipitated mass anger by firing into a crowd. By Friday, June 18, Soweto was calmer, but rioting continued in Kagiso and spread to Mohlakeng, the next township to the west, and the eastern townships of Natalspruit, Vosloorus, and Tembisa. Particularly intense conflict broke out in Alexandra, north of Johannesburg and adjacent to white suburbs, where fierce street fighting broke out between police and crowds of students and workers, some armed. Black universities staged solidarity demonstrations with Soweto at the Universities of the North, Zululand, and Natal. Over the weekend, the townships quieted down, but Monday, June 21 saw unrest return and grow in the African townships east of Johannesburg. More alarming, riots exploded in the three townships of the capital,

Pretoria, and student demonstrations in nearby parts of the Bophutatswana homeland. The same day, school disturbances spread up to the Northern Transvaal, erupting in the region's major towns, Pietersburg and Potgietersrus, and the Venda and Lebowa homelands. Trouble continued the next day east of Johannesburg and around Pretoria, before sputtering out, temporarily, June 23. During this week, the thin blue line was stretched to the limit – every available policeman was committed to riot control, and the police and army reserves were called in – and the police response to the vastly superior numbers of protesters was brutal. “Convoys of police toured the township, firing teargas and bullets into the crowds, smashing demonstrations, and escorting Bantu Affairs officials and vehicles out of the townships,” records one history of the protests.² As a result, the toll was high: on June 24 unrest-related deaths were put at 176 (widely thought an under-estimate), while hundreds more had been injured.³

2. *Pause and reprise (June 24 – July 31, 1976)*: The first three weeks of this period were marked by an uneasy, false calm; the last two, by an upswing of unrest. In Soweto and Alexandra, the last weekend of June and the first in July were dominated by huge funerals for victims of police violence during the riots. On July 6, the government reversed course on the 50-50 Afrikaans rule, allowing principals in African schools to choose the language of instruction. But the re-opening of African schools during the week of July 19, after the winter break, was met by a renewed class boycott, with demonstrations, arson, and stoning incidents reported, particularly in townships west of Johannesburg and in the Western Transvaal, the big Eastern Transvaal townships of

² Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p.24.

³ *ibid.* pp.10-25, 307-308; *South Africa in Travail*, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-11, and Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, *op. cit.*, pp.188-189.

Witbank and Middleburg, in Sharpeville and its surrounds south of Johannesburg, and in Soweto itself. Arson attempts took place at 50 schools. Tension mounted in Soweto the week of July 26, with clashes between police and demonstrators. Two portentous developments closed the period: student in Soweto began to circulate leaflets for a general strike by workers (a “stay-away,” in South African parlance), while in Cape Town students at the University of the Western Cape launched a class boycott.⁴

3 The apogee of the uprising (August – September 1976): As opposition movements simultaneously soared in four of the five largest cities and many smaller towns, the regime itself seemed to totter. The acute phase began August 4, when the stay-away called in Soweto – the first since 1961 – by the Soweto Students Representatives Council (SSRC), the renamed SASM Action Committee, was heeded by 60% of the workers. Three days later, riots broke out in Port Elizabeth’s New Brighton township; schools were firebombed in Mdantsane the next day, and pupil protests spread to the Ciskei capital of Zwelitsha September 10. In Soweto, Alexandra, and other Johannesburg and Pretoria townships, August 9 to 12 were marked by barricades and fierce street fighting with the police, followed by a wave of arson attacks and demonstrations. In Port Elizabeth, police triggered unrest when they dispersed protesting students August 16 and tried to detain Mzimkhulu Gwentshe the next day; on August 18th, Mdantsane’s students were out on boycott and by August 19th Port Elizabeth’s townships were sealed off amid fierce clashes. The movement spread to Cape Town the same week: African pupils demonstrated, police fired, and class

⁴ Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, pp.308-313, Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945* (London, Longman: 1983), p.329.

boycotts, demonstrations, and riots followed; colored pupils demonstrated in solidarity on August 16. On August 23, a three-day stay-away in Johannesburg began, more successful than the first, though marred by clashes between townspeople and migrant workers hostile to the strike. Meanwhile, in Cape Town, police violence against demonstrating colored school pupils touched off spreading school boycotts and riots; by August 31 they had convulsed the colored areas of the city and were spreading into the smaller towns of the Western Cape. The first week of September brought incredible scenes: police pursued demonstrating black pupils even in central Cape Town, with tear gas, stun grenades, and shotgun blasts under the graceful colonial setting of Adderly Street, indiscriminately striking at pupils and passersby; protesters responded with vandalism in white areas, riots in black townships, and stoning cars on the highways. Another three-day general strike was launched September 13 in Johannesburg, the most successful of all, overlapping with an unprecedented two-day stay-away September 15 and 16 supported by both colored and African workers in Cape Town and the Western Cape, and a renewal of pupil protests and riots in the townships of Port Elizabeth. A general strike also paralyzed Tembisa, north of Johannesburg, while Soweto's pupils protested American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's visit to Vorster over the Rhodesian crisis, then, days later, clashed with police at the center city's Eloff Street bus rank. Vorster declared, "Law and order must be restored"—but things seemed to be skidding out of control.⁵

4. *Turning tides, changing directions (October – December 1976)*: In these months the popular upsurge against the regime ebbed, while the activists campaigning

⁵ Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, op. cit., pp.309-333, *South Africa in Travail*, op. cit., p.69ff.

against it sought to revive it through new initiatives. The school boycotts continued in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and elsewhere, and increasing parallels in plans and campaigns pointed to growing co-ordination among their leaders, but a call for a five-day stay-away from November 1 in the two largest cities failed. As police action made demonstrations increasingly difficult, the funerals of blacks who died in the unrest or under torture in detention became the major form of mass gathering, drawing crowds of up to 15,000 and also becoming subject to police attack. Campaigns launched by students in Johannesburg and Cape Town were more focused on the internal life of black communities rather than the regime. Calling for mourning for the dead, they called for a halt to liquor sales and the closure of shebeens, as well as abstention from normal Christmas festivities and holiday purchases at white stores in town. Reinforcing the class boycott, they also called on students to boycott year-end exams, although this sparked controversy. Meanwhile, an armed "Suicide Squad" secretly linked to the SSRC carried out several guerilla actions, including an attack on a police station, a rail line, and a nightclub which defied the liquor ban. Increasingly, however, the students felt the effects of police pressure, including mass arrests and manhunts for activists, and these detentions, along with the flight into exile of hundreds of students they provoked, deprived their movement of many leaders and advisors. Although the anti-liquor and Christmas campaigns achieved a degree of observance, the year ended with painful blows against the students in the two main centers. The last week of December was marked by violent clashes in Cape Town's African townships between migrant workers backed by police and students and other residents (recalling the incidents during the September Johannesburg stay-away), while in Johannesburg, police picked up many of the SSRC

activists most closely linked to the ANC, as well as the ANC activists comprising an important part of the organization's underground machinery in the Transvaal province.⁶

5. Uncertainty and reassertion (January – June 1977): As these months began, the opposition stood at low ebb, with the student groups split and their township backing compromised, but successful struggle against collaborationist elites rebuilt community support, while the uprising's first anniversary offered an opportunity to re-launch public protest. The new year opened on a sour note, as student elites in the Transvaal and Cape were unsure whether to take make-up final exams or write off a year's schooling. The Soweto and Pretoria leaders, divided, let individual students decide; most took the tests, after severe conflict in student ranks. In Cape Town, colored students also went black to the classroom, and Africans, with some reluctance, followed them. In March, a week of meetings and events to commemorate the 1960 Sharpeville massacre called by the BPC and SSRC was fairly successful and largely peaceful, letting the movement reassert itself. The next month, government announced a rent hike in Soweto which the UBC had not opposed, and the SSRC launched a campaign against both the increase and the institution. A mass meeting April 23 condemned the rent hike and four days later thousands of students staged a protest march, which ended in stonings, teargas, and arson. The rent hike was suspended and by June 2 the students had forced the resignation of the entire UBC. Soon after, at a meeting at the offices of The World, a civic body, the Committee of Ten, was formed of leaders of civil society and UBC dissidents to represent Soweto's

⁶ Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm op. cit., pp.335-343, South Africa in Travail, op. cit. pp.24-32, Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945 op.cit., pp.329-330, Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash, op. cit., p.252, Thomas Karis and Gail Gerhart, eds., From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990, vol.5, Nadir and Resurgence, 1964-1979 (Bloomington, Indiana University Press: 1997), pp.175-176, Interview, Billy Masethla, Johannesburg, August 17, 1992.

residents in place of the discredited Council. With the approach of the first anniversary of the uprising, the protest movement was back on the upswing, with meetings and boycotts in some schools, clashes with police and stoning incidents, and leaflets calling for a stay-away June 16. In Soweto, the week of June 16 was marked by large public meetings, a complete school boycott, and a worker stay-away estimated at 40%. The following week, police beat African pupils gathered peacefully outside the main police station in Johannesburg and clashed with marching pupils and tear-gassed funerals of unrest victims in Soweto and Pretoria; classrooms in both cities emptied. Unrest also returned to the Eastern Cape, with stoning incidents involving youth in Port Elizabeth and riots in Uitenhage after pupils' arrests. Thus, the apparent calm of early 1977 proved an illusion; a year after the uprising began, the regime once more faced a spreading popular protest movement.⁷

6. *Resurgence, banning, and aftermath (July – December 1977)*: In the revolt's final months, mass action was resurgent around Johannesburg and in the Eastern Cape, particularly after the killing of Steven Biko, but it died out after government banned the BC organizations and detained their remaining leaders – except in Port Elizabeth, where the new politics the uprising had made possible soon became visible. When schools reopened July 20 after winter break, attendance was high, but a week later high school pupils in Soweto and Atteridgeville (Pretoria) were out again, calling on the black school boards to quit. Within weeks most of the boards had done so; in response Pretoria announced that it run Soweto's high schools directly. When the state take-over became effective in early September, secondary schooling in Soweto collapsed altogether: the

⁷ *Race Relations Survey, 1977*, pp.35, 56-62, 405-404; Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, *op. cit.*, pp.268-275; Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol.5, *op. cit.*, pp.177-178.

boycott became total and the SSRC demanded that teachers resign, of whom 475 out of 700 did. In August there had also been school boycotts in the African townships of Cape Town to commemorate the first anniversary of the revolt there, while unrest simmered in the Eastern Cape, where pupils were involved in incidents in Port Elizabeth, East London, and several smaller towns. On the announcement of Biko's death in detention September 17 – he had been held incommunicado since August 6 – protest spread in schools in the Johannesburg-Pretoria area, extended itself to the homelands and towns of the Northern and Western Transvaal, and convulsed the Eastern Cape. By early October, in addition to those of Soweto and Atteridgeville, pupils in Springs and Brakpan east of Johannesburg, Alexandra and Tembisa north of it, and Mamelodi and Garankua near Pretoria had gone out. In the Northern Transvaal, where Turfloop went on boycott September 15, protests shut all schools in the Venda homeland, many in Gazankulu and Lebowa, and others in Pietersburg and other white towns. Schooling in Bophutatswana was also in chaos. But the impact was even greater in the Eastern Cape, where Biko had grown up and worked since his 1973 banning; there news of his death moved like an electric shock through the towns where he and his circle had helped organize young people. By mid-October, African schools were shut in the cities of East London and Port Elizabeth (where riots raged), while boycotts, riots, and arson had broken out in the larger towns, including King William's Town, Queenstown, Fort Beaufort, Grahamstown, Cradock, Graaf-Reinet, as well as Zwelitsha, Dimbaza and Sada in the Ciskei. Although government had detained thousands of activists and rank-and-filers since June 1976 in its attempt to stem the unrest, far from dying out, the movement seemed to be spreading. But the regime had one more card to play: on October 19, it banned 19 Black

Consciousness-affiliated organizations, including SASO, BPC, SASM, the SSRC, all the regional youth organizations, the BPA, The World, the UBJ, BCP, and the Christian Institute, as well as detaining those of their leaders still at large and, for good measure, the Soweto Committee of Ten. Unrest sputtered on among students – Soweto's pupils remained out, and sporadic trouble was reported in the Northern Transvaal and Western Cape. By the end of 1977, however, the movement had run out of steam in most of the country; in 1978 pupils returned to school and the situation was quiet in most places. The exception was Port Elizabeth, where the political activity which began in mid-1977 never halted, even after the bans. Rather, activists there used the new political opportunities the revolt had created to offer the first demonstration of the possibility of mass civic and worker organization – the vehicles which would advance South Africa's struggle for democracy to ultimate victory in the years ahead.⁸

Thus, the revolt which began in Soweto on June 16, 1976 was by far the most powerful display of resistance which South Africa had ever experienced, far exceeding the Sharpeville crisis of 1960 in its endurance, dimensions, and internal and external consequences. While Sharpeville was over in a matter of weeks and largely touched the biggest cities, the Soweto crisis reached all the major cities except Durban, many smaller ones, and vast rural areas as well. It galvanized South Africa's black population, produced unprecedented unity among Africans and colored people, and transformed the political consciousness and opportunities of black South Africans. It diffused new forms of collective action on a national scale. It triggered capital flight on a scale far greater than Sharpeville had, denting investor confidence and plunging the country into its

⁸ Race Relations Survey, 1977, pp.62-67, Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash, op. cit., pp.275-279.

deepest postwar recession. The brutality of the regime's repression shattered its international image, and after Biko's death made it a pariah state, subject to United Nations sanctions (a mandatory arms embargo). Most remarkable of all is the fact that this whole process was touched off and steered by a couple of thousand high school pupils and youth activists.⁹ The rest of this chapter examines how all this happened, exploring how Black Consciousness organizations, the collective identity of black communities, and the institutions of black civil society together turned the cry of "Power!" into its reality.

II. SOWETO AS MOBILIZATION SPACE: ORGANIZATION, SPONTANEITY, AND SOLIDARITY

The Soweto revolt was not a classic armed insurrection, yet nor was it merely a random series of riots: it was an uprising in which Soweto became a space for sustained mobilization.¹⁰ It was spearheaded by high school pupils' organizations which emerged from the Black Consciousness Movement – the SSRC and the counterparts it inspired elsewhere – who organized protest campaigns and led confrontations with the authorities. They liaised with other groups – including BCM organizations, the ANC, and various

⁹ Indeed, although university students were involved in the leadership of protest or revolutionary movements in many other societies (France in 1968, the Argentine *Cordobazo* of 1969, the Senegalese general strike of 1968, the Czech "velvet revolution" of 1988, and many other examples), the Soweto revolt appears to be the only example anywhere of a national mass movement led by high school pupils.

¹⁰ The concept of a "mobilization space" is drawn from David Apter and Tony Saich: "Moral boundaries superimposed on physical ones sacralize the terrain, turning it into a mobilization space." *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press: 1994), p.9.

community bodies – to obtain strategic advice, light arms, and connections to civil society in the townships. But the power to inspire massive collective action developed from the snowballing of protest from opposition to Afrikaans-language instruction to one which voiced the collective grievances of the black community against the white regime, through the medium of Black Consciousness and black solidarity. The solidarity of community members with the students in Soweto was reinforced, at the individual level, by a mixture of agreement with their aims, anger at police repression, guilt at past inaction, and respect for their power. Spontaneous co-operation in support of their activities was also the product of their implication in the struggle of collectives – large, complex networks of family, neighbors, friends, and other members of the community. The response of other black communities to Soweto reflected, when the necessary organizational basis was present, a powerful sentiment of solidarity, for Soweto had become the symbol of the struggle of black South Africa against the apartheid regime, nationally and even internationally. Once protest was in motion, the same mechanisms of individual choice and collective connection which had operated in Soweto came into play elsewhere. The result was the widest and most sustained episode of resistance which the regime had yet experienced, one far greater than the Sharpeville unrest of 1960, and in which, unlike that instance, the rulers were never quite able to extinguish the spark of revolt.

The driving force of the revolt, the SSRC, was born July 18, 1976, when the Action Committee of SASM re-named itself and selected Mashinini as chair.¹¹ Like its predecessor, the Council consisted of two representatives of each secondary school in

¹¹ Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p.96.

Soweto, led by an Executive committee with a chairman.¹² The SSRC's chair and members were not chosen through contested elections, but rather "emerged" from a consensus born in private debates and deals among the pupils' informal leaders.¹³ This multi-layered structure reflected the habits of elite politics, reinforced by the semi-clandestine conditions of revolt: a publicity-shy core of Soweto SASM leaders, with ANC sympathies, and a public leadership, better known but less influential internally, mixing non-ANC figures (Mashinini and Seathlolo) and ANC supporters (Motapanyane, Montsitsi).¹⁴ The activists behind them in the schools tended to be better educated, urban born and bred youth, who drew on the political experience and leadership training they had received over the past several years – the flower of the new urban political culture and the BCM.¹⁵ To discuss developments and plan action, the Council met at schools, at least weekly, shifting meetings one to another for security from police and contact with the base.¹⁶ To reach students, leaders addressed mass meetings at schools; to reach their parents and the broader public they used leaflets (with runs of up to 40,000), the press, and the pupils themselves.¹⁷ In the weeks after June 16, marked by the most intense violence of the revolt and minimal deliberate planning, the Soweto SASM leadership

¹² John Kane-Berman, Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1978), p.109.

¹³ The World, July 31, 1977, August 7, 1977.

¹⁴ Nozipho Diseko, "The Origins and Development of the South African Students Movement, 1968-1976," Journal of Southern African Studies, vol. 18, no. 1 (1991); Interview, Super Molozi, Johannesburg, August 18, 1992.

¹⁵ Philip Frankel, "The Dynamics of a Political Renaissance: The Soweto Students Representative Council," Journal of African Studies, vol.7, no.3 (1980), p.169; Sechaba, 2nd Quarter 1977, p.31.

¹⁶ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, *op. cit.*, p.173.

¹⁷ *Idem.*; Kane-Berman, Soweto, *op. cit.*, p.110.

struggled to build contacts among schools and establish a measure of control over the movement they had unleashed. By mid-July, when they changed their name, they had become broadly representative of Soweto's pupils; ultimately members from 22 secondary schools sat on the SSRC, and at least 55 schools joined in its actions.¹⁸ The SSRC succeeded in winding down the violence and developing the capacity to formulate strategy and co-ordinate activity. Brickhill and Brooks, authors of the most detailed study of the uprising, comment, "The organized student movement in Soweto, led by the SSRC, had come to be the pacesetter for the movement as a whole. ... To pose this issue in terms of control is to miss the point; it is rather a matter of leadership and influence."¹⁹

The SSRC owed a good part of its position of leadership to carefully-nurtured connections, organizational and personal, to the overlapping set of groups and networks which formed the emergent counter-elite of civil and political society in Soweto. The best known of these was the Black Parents Association (BPA), as the Soweto Parents Association re-named itself after June 16. Chaired by the highly respected Bishop and Black Theology writer Manas Buthelezi, its leadership also included Lekgau Matabathe, school principal and chair of Soweto ATASA, Winnie Mandela, activist and wife of the jailed ANC leader, Ntatho Motlana, a prominent doctor and one-time ANC Youth Leaguer, and other well-known individuals associated with important institutions, including the YM and YWCA, SACC, CI, BPC, and SSRC itself. Thus the BPA was "effectively linked with SASO, SASM, and allied BC organizations, the churches, the

¹⁸ Indictment, *State v. Twala* (the SSRC trial), in Glenn Moss, ed., *Political Trials South Africa: 1976-1979* (Johannesburg, Development Studies Group: 1979), pp.245-247.

¹⁹ Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, pp.103, 351; Frankel, "The Dynamics of a Political Renaissance," *op. cit.*, pp.169-170.

school teachers and principals, the professional strata, and other elements in Soweto.²⁰ In addition to the institutions represented via the BPA, the SSRC also interacted directly with organized interests in township society on particular issues where its campaigns or activities touched them, such as the sports leagues, taxi owners, shebeen owners, and the like.²¹ It also had strong ties to other BC groups, particularly BPC and SASO – pupils regularly consulted figures such as Aubrey Mokoena and Drake Koka before and after June 16 – as well as the churches and pressmen, who were important channels of contact with the community.²² Finally, student linkages to ANC leadership ran not just through Winnie Mandela, but through prior contact with a number of senior figures – including Joe Gqabi, Martin Ramokgadi, John Nkadimeng, and Eliot Shabangu (uncle of one SASM leader) – to whom they continued to turn for advice, and several SSRC members also went to Swaziland to consult with ANC officials there.²³ The SSRC leadership was also sought out by a handful of young guerillas sent in by the ANC after the uprising began – including ex-SASM member Mosima “Tokyo” Sexwale – to build up underground structures and linkages to the students.²⁴

²⁰ Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p.107. On the BPA, see also Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, *op. cit.*, pp.196-198, and “Black Attitudes Series: Black Political Groups in South Africa,” American Consulate Johannesburg to Department of State, Airgram A-26, March 14, 1977, p.11, State Department Archives.

²¹ See, for example, Kane-Berman, *Soweto*, *op. cit.* p.112ff.

²² Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol.5, *op. cit.*, p.182.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.181; Indictment, *State v.Twala*, in Glenn Moss, ed., *Political Trials South Africa*, *op. cit.* ; Interviews, John Nkadimeng No.2, Johannesburg, August 10, 1992, Martin Ramokgadi, Sandton, October 4, 1992.

²⁴ In a meeting in Soweto in December 1976, an ANC guerilla proposed that the SSRC should affiliate with the ANC, but Seathlolo declined, reflecting a decision taken by the student leadership (including its pro-ANC elements). However, over the course of the uprising, parallel aims and interests had led to increasing contact and co-operation in specific actions between the SSRC and ANC, which continued in 1977. Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p.162, Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, *op.*

Thus, while the SSRC remained autonomous and called its own shots, its connections to the new networks of power in black society gave it access to advice, communications, resources, and underground facilities and arms. Contact with the BPA and other organizations helped the students keep in touch with the mood of the township. Strategic discussions with older activists in the BPC and ANC led to the use of the stay-away, and the older leaders' influence was also evident first in the broadening of the students' campaign from educational issues to a direct challenge to the regime, then the narrowing of its focus to shebeens, collaborators, etc.²⁵ The ANC's clandestine network also helped build support for the students, backing them in its underground publications and issuing leaflets jointly with the SSRC calling a general strike and the shebeens boycott.²⁶ Larger-scale publicity came from mass meetings – in church halls provided by sympathetic clergy, newspapers – in articles by friendly journalists, and the BPA itself – which functioned as a mouthpiece for the semi-clandestine SSRC with the authorities.²⁷ Members of the BPA, the churches, and other organized supporters also provided vital resources, channeling funds – for which the SACC was a particularly important source – to families of the dead, wounded, and detained, as well as, discreetly, to the students, and mobilizing myriad forms of material resistance from within township society – medical

cit. p.251, State v. Sexwale, in Moss, Political Trials in South Africa, op. cit.; Interview, Mosima "Tokyo" Sexwale, Johannesburg, August 1992.

²⁵ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, op. cit., pp.181-182, Sechaba, 2nd quarter 1977, p.58; Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash, op. cit, pp.251-252; see also the testimony of Aubrey Mokoena and Murphy Morobe, Testimony before the Cillie Commission, African Studies Library, University of Cape Town (hereafter cited as Cillie Commission Testimony).

²⁶ Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., p.94, Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash, op. cit., p.245, Cillie Commission Report, p.157.

²⁷ Ibid., p.198; Kane-Berman, Soweto, op. cit., p.110.

help, transportation, consoiling, undertakers, lawyers, credit, supplies in kind, etc.²⁸ As police pressure on the students increased in the second half of 1976, and growing numbers wanted to flee abroad to ensure their security or join the armed struggle, the ANC underground structures functioned efficiently at the purpose for which they had been intended, conveying potential recruits out of the country in large numbers.²⁹ The government charged that a single underground cell, involving Tokyo Sexwale's brother, spirited 260 people to Swaziland.³⁰ Due to the limits of its infrastructure and logistics inside the country, the movement could send much less in the other direction, but the ANC was able to funnel small amounts of arms and explosives to the students, and provide small groups of them with crash courses in their use, allowing them to move beyond firebomb attacks to a number of small-scale incidents of sabotage and armed attacks.³¹ Together, all these contributions meant that the students could draw on the wisdom and organized strength of Soweto's civil society, while providing it with a militant new direction for action. As one of them put it at the time, "All the organizations began to take their lead from the SSRC. The students were in control."³²

The spread of the uprising to other areas after June 16 also was the result of action by school pupils' organizations – particularly SASM – although only in Cape Town did

²⁸ Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash, op. cit., pp.196-197; Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., p.106.

²⁹ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, op. cit., pp.281-282, Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, op. cit., pp.339-340.

³⁰ Moss, ed., Political Trials in South Africa, op. cit., p.31.

³¹ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, op. cit., p.281, Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash, op. cit., pp.251-252, the accounts of the Sexwale and Twala trials in Moss, ed., Political Trials in South Africa, op. cit., and Interviews, John Daniel, Grahamstown, December 3, 1991, Billy Masethla, Johannesburg, August 17, 1992, and Moloï.

³² Cited in Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., p.351.

they produce an co-ordinating body of a scale and sophistication to rival the SSRC. Immediately after the Orlando West shootings, the Action Committee sent students to SASM branches in other townships, asking them to launch protests of their own. The progress of these emissaries can be traced in the string of outbursts around the Transvaal east and west of Johannesburg and along the main road to the north. In some areas, student needed no prompting, however, and took action on their own.³³ SRCs emerged in a number of townships, including those of Pretoria, several townships east of Johannesburg, and Port Elizabeth, but on a far smaller scale, since these areas had many fewer secondary schools.³⁴ The most sophisticated in the Transvaal outside Soweto was in Kagiso, the center of PAC activity, where the PAC-aligned Young African Christian Movement was drawn into the protests, and which developed its own SRC and BPA.³⁵ In general, the map of the uprising in the Transvaal and Eastern Cape would correspond to a map of SASM branches.³⁶ In the Western Cape, word of the uprising reached activists through the media, as well as some local high school pupils studying in Soweto who had returned after the unrest closed schools and SASO members who had been dispatched to inquire into the situation.³⁷ Contacts remained among African and colored activists through the now-defunct SABSA, the WCYO, their ties with SASO, and the

³³ *Ibid.*, p.92, *Sechaba*, 2nd quarter 1977, p.57.

³⁴ Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p.162, Interview, Mike Xego, Port Elizabeth, May 19, 1992.

³⁵ Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, *op. cit.*, pp.192, 202, Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p.110.

³⁶ Interviews, Mathe Diseko, Johannesburg, August 1991.

³⁷ D.F.D. Bond, *Colored Education Struggles in South Africa: Education Boycotts in the Western Cape, 1976*, M.Soc.Sci thesis, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1984, p.143, Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, *op. cit.*, p.192, *Cillie Commission Report*, p.261.

linkages among schools in the super-SRC, and this network came to provide the leadership in the Cape Town struggles.³⁸ Initially, protests were co-ordinated separately among schools in the African and colored townships. But by early September, as the joint colored and African protests merged downtown (and pulled in the Unity Movement schools located in town, to the chagrin of their staffs), the super-SRC turned into a co-ordinating body, the United Students Front.³⁹ It linked students from at least a dozen schools, but was more fluid in its operations than the SSRC, operating through daily mass meetings, making it more vulnerable to repression. It appears to have broken down or been driven underground by police after its existence was disclosed by the press, although an offshoot of the student movement in the African townships resurfaced in the "Comrades" movement which clashed with migrant workers in December 1976.⁴⁰ However, in late 1976, there was growing evidence of contact and coordination between the students in the Cape and those in Johannesburg.⁴¹ By the early months of 1977, the SSRC was reaching out not only to the pupils in Cape Town, but also strengthening ties

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.146, Interviews, No.2, Henry Isaacs, Washington, DC, November 22, 1989, Johnny Issel, Cape Town, June 4, 1991.

³⁹ Bond, *Colored Education Struggles in South Africa*, *op. cit.*, pp.146-148, Carol Hermer, ed., *The Diary of Maria Tholo* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1980), pp.38-39, *Cape Times*, October 25, 1976, *Cillie Commission Report*, p.278.

⁴⁰ Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p.150; Carol Hermer, ed., *The Diary of Maria Tholo*, *op. cit.*, Interview, Monde Tolwana, Cape Town, November 11, 1992.

⁴¹ Leaflets appeared simultaneously in both areas publicizing the failed November stay-away, and the anti-shebeen campaigns in both areas occurred at the same times as well. Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p.143.

with students in the townships and homelands of the Transvaal and Eastern Cape, where the boycott would revive in the second half of the year.⁴²

However, the support communities gave the school pupils was due to more than just organization; the movement swelled as it gained power from the public expression of discontents blacks had held back for a generation. Even before the unrest began, hostility to Bantu Education was intense and widespread among both students and members of the community, as a number of surveys had shown.⁴³ But once the mobilizations began, the grievances cascaded one after another: the student protests, which initially centered on Afrikaans, became a challenge to the unequal systems of Bantu and colored education throughout the country. Then, in Soweto, Cape Town, and some other areas, they escalated into a confrontation with the regime and all forms of racial discrimination, followed by a settling of accounts with those seen as agents of apartheid in black communities (councilors, shebeen keepers, police, etc). As SASM Secretary-General Tebello Motapanyane, put it, "Afrikaans was not the real issue. It provided the spark that fell on top of the powder keg that was building up among the African people as a whole."⁴⁴ In social terms, the breach occurred when the protest campaigns of the widely-spread student organizations became the first public airing of part of the hidden

⁴² See the allegations in the SSRC trial indictment in Moss, ed., Political Trials in South Africa, op. cit., pp.254-267.

⁴³ Comments from focus groups among students and teachers in 1973 revealed strong discontent with Bantu Education, seen as a means of keeping blacks down. "There is no such thing as education in it. ... With this education the African will always be a servant to the white man." "It is designed to keep us backwards." Quotso 73 (Johannesburg, Quadrant International: 1973), pp.16, 77. These results paralleled the findings of earlier studies by Melville Edelstein and Gillian Lobban, cited in Chapter Four. (Edelstein himself, ironically, was one of the few whites to be killed during the uprising, trapped in Soweto by a crowd of enraged students on June 16.)

⁴⁴ Sechaba, 2nd Quarter 1977, p.58. See also the comments of Jonathan Hyslop, in "Food, Authority, and Politics: Student Riots in South African Schools, 1945-76," in Stephen Clingman, ed., Regions and Repertoires: Topics in South African Politics and Culture (Johannesburg, Ravan: 1991), p.111.

transcripts of blacks on a national scale in 16 years, triggering off an explosion of voice as the raising of each issue called forth the exposure of other, related concerns. Muslim News reflected the mood of the times, commenting in late 1976, "The schoolchildren's protest triggered off the pent-up frustrations of a people who are contained by legislation from having all the rights of the land."⁴⁵ A Soweto resident speaking in a focus group during the unrest commented, "It is now our time to show the makers of these [discriminatory] laws that we are tired." The feelings of many blacks were voiced by an mechanic in Alexandra, who told a journalist soon after the outbreak of the unrest. "In our country the time has come for bursting out."⁴⁶

What made Soweto into a mobilization space which linked together the diverse claims and components of the movement into a positive, even exhilarating affirmation of power and solidarity, was the inversionary discourse of Black Consciousness. Black Consciousness ideology linked together the Afrikaans issue and a myriad of others into the perception that white oppression was a totality which had to be opposed by black unity.⁴⁷ As the uprising developed, it thus mobilized an urban black culture which had already been politicized, in large part by the BCM, in the years prior to 1976. Although

⁴⁵ Muslim News, December 3, 1976, cited in Bond, Colored Education Struggles in South Africa, *op. cit.*, p.168.

⁴⁶ Eric Mafuna, A Black Viewpoint of the South African Way of Life, Unpublished Report (Johannesburg, J.Walter Thompson: 1977), p.11; Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, *op. cit.*, p.20.

⁴⁷ Philip Frankel writes of Soweto, "It was notions of Black Consciousness with their emphasis on psycho-cultural liberation as a precursor to effective political struggle which crystallized the critiques of the principles of Bantu Education just prior to 1976, and in June 1976 it was Black Consciousness which allowed for the elevation of the single issue of the medium of educational instruction into a critique of the whole socio-political system." "The Dynamics of a Political Renaissance," *op. cit.*, p.169. Similarly, Bond notes that in Cape Town, the political demands of the protestors "drew upon widespread hostility amongst Blacks towards apartheid. This was the nature of the Black Consciousness ideology which encouraged blacks to identify and unite around their perception of a common oppression. A strength of the ...

the widely varying levels of political literacy and sophistication within the black public left many unfamiliar with the finer points of BC doctrine, the movement's basic slogans and its concepts of black identity and solidarity, which had been widely popularized, allowed the integration of diverse grievances and groups into a collective actor. On this point it is worth quoting at length the report of the Cillie Commission, the official body which spent several years in an extensive, country-wide investigation of the disturbances, and which was certainly no sympathizer with the anti-regime opposition:

"The idea of solidarity was propagated by means of pamphlets, speeches, and conversations; it gripped the imagination of the masses, and was reaffirmed in placards and slogans used in the riots. Probably because this feeling of unity was evident in the riots throughout the country, a well-informed black witness told the Commission that, through the disturbances, the Black Consciousness Movement had spread throughout the Transvaal, Natal, Transkei, and the Cape and had swallowed up various other black organizations.

"The feeling of solidarity ... was seldom the only reason for a demonstration, but there were seldom demonstrations without solidarity being one of the reasons. It helped to make local grievances important enough for a demonstration. It was a means of securing concerted action for strikes, the release of detainees, the struggle against the homelands policy, Bantu Education, and Afrikaans. ... This powerful factor was also used to bring about virtual unanimity in the black man's struggle for liberation."⁴⁸

The theme of black solidarity could be seen in many of the placards carried by protesters; a few examples of the many which could be cited would include a sign in Daveyton (Benoni) a few days after the uprising began that read, "In solidarity reject Afrikaans," another in the Eastern Transvaal which said, "By solidarity we shall overcome. Let's all say, away with Bantustans, and two in Cape Town: "Black

approach was that it enabled the boycotters to achieve rapid and widespread support for their protests." Colored Education Struggles in South Africa, op. cit., p.142.

⁴⁸ Cillie Commission Report, p.506.

Consciousness means solidarity,” and “As Black as tomorrow.”⁴⁹ However, the most universal emblems of the revolt were the slogan of “Black Power,” heard on the lips of crowds around the country and brandished to threaten those who did not follow the movement, and the black power salute, given at protests and demanded of other blacks by youthful activists. What Maria Tholo, a woman from Gugulethu, Cape Town, noted soon after the unrest started there could have been said of townships throughout the country during the revolt: “Black Power is like a password now.”⁵⁰

If organization helped launch and sustain the movement and grievances and discourse to animate it, the movement actually took form on the basis of the spontaneous mobilization of informal social networks of solidarity within communities, as families, schoolmates, and friends and neighbors rallied to the call once those close to them became involved. The process of micro-mobilization around primary social ties and shared values has been termed one of “spontaneous co-operation” in other contexts.⁵¹

The first and most powerful tie was that of family: as Brickhill and Brooks succinctly put it, “To kill children is to declare war on their parents.” Police action against the students mobilized their parents and families on their behalf – and among black South Africans,

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.506, 307.

⁵⁰ Hermer, ed., *The Diary of Maria Tholo*, *op. cit.*, p.13. A useful if somewhat tendentious discussion of the various implications of Black Power for the mass movement can be found in the *Cillie Commission Report*, p.507ff. Among the points made is the observation that, “Regardless of the ideological difference that there may have been to the BPC and some of the witnesses who appeared before the Commission between Black Power and Black Consciousness, there was no difference whatever between these two concepts to most of the young rioters. To them, it was one concept. To them Black Power meant the solidarity of all blacks who are conscious of their blackness. ... Black Power was the authority of all blacks acting in concert. Black Power inspired and fired them, and they inspired and fired others with Black Power” (pp.509-510).

⁵¹ See Karl-Dieter Opp and Christiane Gern, “Dissident Groups, Personal Networks, and Spontaneous Cooperation: The East German Revolution of 1989,” *American Sociological Review*, vol.58 (1993), p.659. A similar approach was taken by Roger V. Gould, “Multiple Networks and Mobilization in the Paris Commune, 1871,” *American Sociological Review*, vol.56 (1991), p.716.

where close-knit extended families running in the dozens are the rule, the multiplier effect thus unleashed worked on a vast scale.⁵² Ties among fellow students also spread the contagion: the detention of former students helped spread the boycott to one school, while undecided pupils joined in after watching police action against boycotting pupils at another.⁵³ But beyond this there was the spontaneous sympathy and help provided by friends, neighbors, and unknowns from the same township one to another as the uprising progressed. As Hirson observed, "It is only when a community closes ranks and is prepared to assist, as Soweto inhabitants assisted, that a revolt can be extended over a protracted period. It is only when householders are prepared to hide people on the run, and incur all the risks involved in defying the police, that a leadership can maintain itself."⁵⁴ Each cycle of protest and repression consequently increased those affected by – and sympathetic to – the unrest.⁵⁵ Thus, the imposition of costs through repression, far from killing off the movement as would be expected from a theory based solely on rational choice, tended to spread support for it further.

Backing in the townships for actions by the pupils also reflected choices based upon an unstable mix of agreement, guilt, and fear. Parents and workers expressed support for the issues that the students were raising, along with hope for their success.⁵⁶

⁵² Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., pp.93 (Soweto), 112 (Cape Town). See also Sechaba, 2nd quarter 1977, p.31.

⁵³ The Argus, September 4, 1976; Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash, op. cit., p.227.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.197.

⁵⁵ Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., p.3. Numerous examples of this can be found in Hermer, The Diary of Maria Tholo, op. cit., passim.

⁵⁶ Surveys among Sowetans at large prior to the uprisings also revealed substantial dissatisfaction with Bantu education, particularly among parents of schoolchildren and those with more than primary school, among whom large majorities were unhappy with the system. Quotso 73, op.cit. p.16, Quotso 75

They also voiced guilt at their own failure to resist more strongly in the past and awe at the power the students had mobilized. But they expressed fear of the youth as well as resentment of the violence and intimidation which students could unleash against those who crossed them.⁵⁷ All these feelings could exist within one person, as the diary Mario Tholo kept during the unrest indicated:

“It’s difficult to describe or understand the kind of excitement everyone is feeling. There is danger all around but you still want action all the time. I think that in Belfast they must be feeling the same thing. ... It’s as if people are looking forward to results and if it’s quiet there can’t be any results so they don’t want things to stop”.

“Whatever one’s opinions, we have all developed a tremendous respect for the youth. Within a day they showed such power, and without weapons. They call us cowards, only concerned for our own positions and unable to say ‘no’ to whites.”
“One is quite scared to open one’s mouth to a youth in the townships. You just have to accept what they are doing.”⁵⁸

This ambivalence made public opinion regarding the students’ campaigns volatile and uncertain, and forced the students to cultivate it on pain of the collapse of the movement.⁵⁹

Among blacks in other parts of the country, solidarity with Soweto was a major factor in touching off protest, as images of the struggle there resonated with blacks who shared a common identity and concerns. Soweto became a mobilization space outside its borders because it had become a symbol of black resistance against oppression, “drenched in signifiers and metaphors,” a space which had been “sacralized, endowed

(Johannesburg, Markinor: 1975). Mafuna’s focus groups during the uprising found that these feelings had, if anything, intensified during this period. A Black Viewpoint of the South African Way of Life, op. cit., p.89ff.

⁵⁷ These factors are discussed in Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., pp.104-105, and Kane-Berman, Soweto, op. cit., pp.110-111.

⁵⁸ Hermer, ed., The Diary of Maria Tholo, op. cit., pp.52, 56, 43.

⁵⁹ This is explored in more depth in Section IV of this chapter.

with meanings.”⁶⁰ The analysis of the Cillie Commission on the disturbances in centers outside Johannesburg is instructive:

“During the weeks and months [after June 16], there was hardly a demonstration at a school, college, or university, in which the main reason, or one of the reasons, for the demonstration was not solidarity with Soweto. ...At first, the sense of involvement manifested itself as sympathy; the demonstrators made it clear that they sympathized with Soweto and its people. But the feeling of sympathy soon developed into a sense of oneness and of solidarity with Soweto. This solidarity was really an identification with everything Soweto symbolized. This was Black Solidarity.”⁶¹

The themes of solidarity with Soweto, and black solidarity more generally, were prominent in the leaflets distributed before unrest in many parts of the country. In Cape Town, UWC students distributed 25,000 copies of a leaflet entitled “UWC-Soweto” which declared, “When the call sounds, no matter from which part of our country, for black people to stand up and be counted, it must be answered in a loud and clear manner. If our children, if our brothers, if our sisters are being killed, we are being killed.”⁶² In Madikoti, near Pietersburg in the Northern Transvaal, the leaflets were even more explicit. “The massacre in Soweto is not a matter that affects Soweto alone but the black nation as a whole. ... Are we here in Madikoti not black enough to join in the struggle?”⁶³ In Mdantsane, students carried placards that said “Soweto Blood” and “Release the detained Soweto students.”⁶⁴ As the unrest touched a school at Somerset West, a Western Cape town, students began by shouting “Soweto, Soweto!”, then

⁶⁰ Apter and Saich, Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic (Cambridge, Harvard University Press: 1994), p.314, 6.

⁶¹ Cillie Commission Report, pp.504-505.

⁶² Louis Lourens, Cillie Commission Testimony, p.2417.

⁶³ Theunis Horne, Cillie Commission Testimony, p.1414.

“Gugulethu, Gugulethu,” where unrest had broken out days before, followed by Black Power salutes.⁶⁵ Once protest was underway, of course, the same factors which reinforced the movement in Soweto – organization, shared grievances, BC discourse, communal identity, and personal choice – also worked in the same fashion elsewhere.

To sum up, the character of the mass movement in South Africa’s black townships – and the prominent role within it played by BC organization and identity – largely explains both why Soweto became a mobilization space and in which other regions its symbolism resonated.. Almost every place where there was effective BC school pupil organization saw some sort of flare-up of unrest. Conversely, in the principal region where those organizations remained weak – Natal – there were only sporadic incidents of unrest. In the areas where these organizations were strongest and best succeeded in linking up with a substantial, organized civil society, namely Johannesburg and Cape Town, their reach became much greater and their mobilizing capacity far larger. Elsewhere, either because students were too few, or because they did not rally the township elites to their side, protests had much less tendency to involve adults or to endure over time. Common grievances and identification with Black Consciousness appear to have provided the common denominators which helped mobilize both organized civil society and informal social networks, which provided the movement with its social foundations outside the school. These were phenomena identified with the cities, and in particular those of the Transvaal and Western and Eastern Cape, which are the areas where unrest spread outside the schools. Once more,

⁶⁴ Molyneux Mvalo, Cillie Commission Testimony, p.4533.

⁶⁵ The Argus, August 19, 1976.

in the province where BC had made the fewest popular inroads, Natal, and among the adult populations of the rural sections of the homelands, where the hegemony of the homeland leaders remained largely intact, even the incidents which did occur failed to find a popular resonance. Finally, Soweto itself became the symbol of the uprising, a metaphor for black suffering and resistance, domestically and internationally. Thus, the presence of BC pupils organizations, as well as local elite and public sympathy with Black Consciousness, appear to have been the key factors which turned Soweto into a mobilization space both within and beyond its borders.

III. IDENTITY FORMATION AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION: THE ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSFORMATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTIONS

The politicization of identity and elite networking which the Black Consciousness Movement had achieved proved to be the keys to unlocking the institutional resources of black civil society in support of the Soweto revolt. From the outset a substantial part of their membership identified with the BCM and many of their leaders were connected with it or under pressure from it, but the factor which did the most to get them involved was the impact of the revolt on their constituents and personnel. As the numbers affected by the repression and disruption provoked by the uprisings grew steadily, the solidarities of neighborhood, parish, school, and community drew the institutions embodying them – and their leaders – ever-deeper into the fray. Their support, though significant in material

terms and known within their communities, was publicly somewhat veiled, reflecting the demands of caution, temperament, and institutional decorum. But the mobilization of the substantial resources at the command of these bodies – particularly the discursive institutions of the press, religion, and education– enabled the uprising to have a greater impact and longer life than any previous wave of protest among black South Africans. In turn, the engagement of substantial numbers of their leaders and members in active support for the uprising dramatically advanced the transformation of these structures from muted voices of mild protest to the institutional homes of an alternative legitimacy. The process created permanent free spaces within the institutions of black civil society, which would help shelter the opposition during repression after the uprising and offer an institutional base of material support which would give it unprecedented vigor in the struggles to come.

The combination of a politicized collective identity and institutional networks and loyalties lay at the root of the institutional engagement of black civil society. By the eve of the uprising, many of the most prominent figures in the black press, church, educational institutions, and other community groups were sympathetic to BC, often due to formal or informal ties with movement organizations. Others, though less personally identified with it, echoed parts of its discourse and followed its lead, whether from guilt or shame, or out of a need to compete with it among their constituents. While the views of these elites helped orient their institutions, as the conflict exploded and continued, the very connectedness to the community of these institutions ensured that they would be drawn in ever-deeper on the side of the students. When the townships were sealed off to white reporters, their black colleagues achieved new prominence as the sole conduit for

news of the uprising.⁶⁶ As members of congregations were killed or detained by the authorities, and much larger numbers forced to respond to the demands and costs of the struggle, they looked to their ministers, imams, and priests for guidance and support.⁶⁷ Black students, teachers, and lecturers could not remain impassive as their peers faced bullets and tear gas, and the demands of black solidarity meant that the institutional resources they controlled would be committed on their behalf.⁶⁸ In turn, this growing involvement attracted increasing repression against black journalists, clergy, intellectuals, other organizational leaders (such as those of the BPA), and student leaders; hundreds were detained, others banned or forced to flee.⁶⁹ However, rather than shunning and isolated those singled out – as had often been the case in the atomized atmosphere which prevailed just a few years before – in the prevailing context of collective identification, the social bonds of camaraderie among their members and the institutional logic of self defense led the institutions to help struggle to free detainees and lend further support to opposition causes.⁷⁰ Thus, the engagement of the institutions of black civil society behind the Soweto uprising was driven by a dialectical process of identification, in which

⁶⁶ Gerhart and Karis, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, op. cit, p.322.

⁶⁷ “What happened then was that the churches had to follow their members if they wanted to remain relevant. Their members were in the streets.” Interview, Wolfram Kistner, Johannesburg, August 4, 1992. Much the same happened in mosques in the Cape. Interview, Farid Sayyed, Cape Town, June 5, 1991.

⁶⁸ Issuing a statement to the press, the Students Representatives Council at Hewat Teacher Training College in Cape town stated, “The purpose of [our] demonstration is to display solidarity with our fellow oppressed in this country.” Cillie Commission Report, p.307.

⁶⁹ At least a dozen of the country’s most prominent black journalists were detained during 1977, Race Relations Survey, 1977, p.147. Even a number of high-profile church leaders identified with BC – such as the colored Congregationalist Minister and Labor Party leader Alan Hendrickse (Cape Herald, September 21, 1976), and, briefly, Lutheran Bishop and BPA chair Manas Buthelezi, were held.

⁷⁰ Thus, the English newspapers and churches were outspoken in their calls for the release of the detained journalists and clergy. Buthelezi was in fact promptly released after an international outcry raised by his church.

collective identity fed involvement, leading to repression, which intensified involvement. Although these institutional interventions were often somewhat ambivalent, and cloaked in the language of institutional roles rather than proclaimed as revolutionary opposition, they supplied the protest movement with material and political resources essential for its growth and survival.

One of the most important resources the institutions offered the SSRC and other activists was means of communications with the black public at large and other students in particular. The BC-influenced press – particularly The World in Johannesburg and the Cape Herald and Mulsim News in Cape Town – were used by the students to voice their demands, express their views, and publish calls to action. Prior to the June 16 demonstration, activists had tipped trusted black journalists about their plans. In the weeks after, they issued press statements, provided copies of pamphlets for publication, and gave interviews to sympathetic reporters.⁷¹ They also relied on the press to convey news of their activities and protest around the country – electrifying activists and sympathizers in other centers.⁷² The impact of these reports was reflected in soaring newspaper circulations and in a sharply improved image of black journalists in the community at large.⁷³ They were also important sources for foreign press coverage,

⁷¹ Kane-Berman, Soweto, op. cit., p.134, Cillie Commission Report, p.633; Interviews, Phil Mthimkulu, Johannesburg, October 18, 1991, Rashid Seria, Cape Town, June 8, 1991, Sayyed.

⁷² M.M. Mvalo, a black Ciskei government official from Mdantsane, reported that prior to the outbreak of unrest there, "the students were very much interested in reading papers in a way I have never seen before. They were very much interested in buying a paper as you will find out when you go to the shops who sell papers, the papers are finished. I suppose they were interested in reading what was going on in other parts in connection with this type of unrest in the country. ... They read, definitely they were encouraged by that." Cillie Commission Testimony, p.4533. Other examples were also mentioned by the Cillie Commission in its report, see p.630.

⁷³ The circulation of The World soared from 131,000 in early 1976 to a peak of 178,000, Kane-Berman, Soweto, op. cit., p.9. The popularity of its riot coverage was also evident in focus group discussions among

which helped focus world attention on South Africa and make international opposition to the regime an increasing constraint on its behavior. In addition to the press, schools and churches were also important means of communication. Churches became places where mass meetings could be held to connect with the public or mourn losses, while services provided opportunities to publicize demands and plans for mass action.⁷⁴ School facilities offered opportunities for pupils to stay in touch with their leaders in large meetings – as occurred in Soweto, Cape Town, and other centers.⁷⁵ Sympathetic clergy and teachers could facilitate discreet contacts between SSRC emissaries and local activists.⁷⁶ Support from such institutions was also important for the large-scale production and distribution of leaflets, which were, as we have seen, one of the major links between activists and public.⁷⁷ Thus, the black institutions provided resources which helped the uprising's leaders reach the rest of the community which the regime

Sowetans during the uprising, who said that it proved that the paper had abandoned its old "puppet" image. Mafuna, A Black Viewpoint of the South African Way of Life, op. cit., p.60.

⁷⁴ One such case, mentioned in the last section, was the June 1977 commemorative meeting in Soweto's Regina Mundi cathedral. An example of such a meeting in Cape Town is described in Hermer, ed., The Diary of Maria Tholo, op. cit., p.85, and in the Northern Transvaal in Interview, Mathata Tsedu, Johannesburg, October 16, 1992, while the use of church pulpits to publicize strikes is mentioned in Port Elizabeth by the local Security Police chief, Col. Goosen, Eastern Province Herald, January 24, 1977.

⁷⁵ Mass meetings at schools in Soweto and Cape Town were described in the two preceding sections; similar events in East London are mentioned by Mvalo in his above-cited Cillie Commission Testimony, p.4534.

⁷⁶ Such an encounter in the Eastern Transvaal township of Belfast is described by I.W. Ackerman, Cillie Commission Testimony, p.1726.

⁷⁷ For example, the production and distribution throughout the Cape Peninsula of 25,000 copies of the "UWC-Soweto" leaflet, which helped touch off the Cape unrest, was undertaken by UWC students using university facilities. Cillie Commission Report, p.263. In Johannesburg, the SSRC requested help in printing pamphlets from SRC members at the white University of the Witwatersrand, an indication of the re-establishment of bonds of trust and co-operation with left-leaning white student activists. Interview No.1, Glenn Moss, Johannesburg, July 23, 1992.

could not control or cut off, even by surrounding the townships, because they were indigenous to the community.

Beyond offering a mouthpiece to activists, the leaders and institutions of black civil society were important because of the prestige and authority their involvement lent to the students' cause. Their widely publicized denunciations of the regime, attacks on police conduct, and demands for change – public proclamations of the “hidden transcript” – were observed by police and township officials to have helped raise expectations and willingness to participate in protest among township residents. A senior Security Policeman commented, “The flood of publicity which the unrest in Soweto and elsewhere enjoyed and statements made by certain black public figures on the theme that the children had arisen in resistance against the oppression of the black man created a general mood of unrest and in many cases let the impression take root that the slightest grievance ... was reason for arson and violence.”⁷⁸ Editorials in The World, expressing sympathy for the students or calling for majority rule, so worried the authorities that they issued a series of warnings and threats to the paper well before it was closed.⁷⁹ Expressions of support and solidarity from sections of the black clergy, prominently including the SACC, NGSK, NGKA, and Catholic priests, among others, helped legitimize the students' cause, as did the solidarity of some teachers and principals.⁸⁰ They also acted

⁷⁸ Lt. Col. J.V. van der Merwe, Cillie Commission Testimony, pp.2136-7 (my translation from the Afrikaans). Similar comments were made by a township official from the Eastern Transvaal: “Politicians are busy making public declarations which appear in the press and are read by the black man and certain things included in those reports awaken expectations in the Bantu that he will now attain certain advantages. Then when he fails to receive them, it is, as we see it, definitely a reason for the uprisings which have occurred.” I. W. Ackerman, Cillie Commission Testimony, p.1729.

⁷⁹ Race Relations Survey, 1977, p.179.

⁸⁰ Report of the Commission of Inquiry into South African Council of Churches (Pretoria, Government Printer: 1983), (hereafter cited as Steyn Commission Report), p.91, Kane-Berman, Soweto, op. cit., pp.123, 125.

as a constraint on the regime: reports by the Minister's Fraternal of Langa, Nyanga, and Gugulethu in Cape Town on police misconduct, including incitement of migrant workers to attack student activists, and by the Christian Institute on the use of torture against political detainees, received considerable attention in the country and abroad despite their prompt banning.⁸¹ (At the same time, the involvement of more established elements in the community also acted as a check on the students at times, conveying the concerns and hesitations of community members back to them, and helping to keep them from getting too far in front of their constituents.)⁸² Thus, the role which the communications institutions of civil society played during the uprising was a major factor in the moral authority which the students were able to command within, and outside, their communities.

Finally, the institutions of civil society – particularly the churches – were vital conduits for financial support for the multitude of actors involved in the uprising. The most important of these was the SACC. It created a special fund for financial assistance the day the uprisings began, the Asingeni fund (the name, meaning “we will not go in,” being itself a gesture of support with the boycotting pupils), as well as expanding its existing Dependents' Conference to aid those touched by the struggle. The resources involved, mostly from overseas, were substantial: R1.2-million was raised within a year for Asingeni, while the budget of the Dependents' Conference increased almost seven-fold, from R61,000 in 1975 to R410,000 in 1977.⁸³ The sources of funds included foreign

⁸¹ Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, *op. cit.*, p.111.

⁸² The influence of The World in this regard is mentioned in Kane-Berman, Soweto, *op. cit.*, pp.137-138.

⁸³ Race Relations Survey, 1977, p.40, Steyn Commission Report, p.47. The sources of funds included foreign churches, the World Council of Churches, European (especially Scandinavian) development

churches, the World Council of Churches, European (especially Scandinavian) development organizations, and the International Defense and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, the exiled continuation of the Defense and Aid Fund, banned in 1964, which had been set up to assist political prisoners at the time of the 1950s ANC Treason Trial. A hostile but extensively-researched report by a government commission of inquiry concluded:

“By using the fund the SACC threw its weight fully behind the blacks who became involved in the riots. It provided financial and moral support for black school teachers who went on strike; it financed the legal defense of blacks who were charged with various offenses connected with the riots, such as public violence, the possession of explosives, attempted arson, housebreaking, malicious injury to property, stone-throwing, and so on; it made grants to pay for funeral expenses; it paid maintenance to families where the breadwinner was injured, killed, or detained; it provided food, clothing, and other care where it was needed; and in numerous other ways it gave succor to blacks in Soweto and elsewhere where rioting took place.”⁸⁴

The flow of largesse inspired by the uprisings also touched other institutions. The Zimele Trust, the organization created by Biko to aid political prisoners, received R94,000 from Amnesty International and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. In the last year of its life the budget of Black Community Programs reached R500,000 and its payroll over 50, with funds from overseas topped by donations from South African corporations starting to hedge their bets.⁸⁵ Thus, the organizational infrastructure of the BCM and its ties to civil society meant that in a period of social mobilization, activists

organizations, and the International Defense and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, the exiled continuation of the Defense and Aid Fund, banned in 1964, which had been set up to assist political prisoners at the time of the 1950s ANC Treason Trial.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.92-93.

⁸⁵ Sam Nolutshungu, *Changing South Africa: Political Considerations* (Manchester, Manchester University Press: 1983), p.203. Disquiet was expressed by some in the ANC at these developments, fearing that BCP could begin to become a rival pole of attraction operating within the country. Interview, Ben Khoapa, Alice, December 6, 1991.

received a substantial infusion of financial support despite the government's efforts to isolate and crush them.

If the trial by fire experienced during the 1976-77 revolt further politicized all the black social institutions affected, the changes were particularly evident among black journalists. Surveillance, beatings, arrest, and detention at the hands of the police (for up to two years) taught even reporters who considered themselves mere observers that they were indeed part of the story. Their militancy was increased by the suffering and trauma inflicted on those close to them and on their communities as a whole during the uprising. Among working journalists, this led to strong pressure for greater commitment to the struggle against apartheid and the BCM, expressed as expressed as a challenge to the traditional professional concept of objectivity: "Are you a journalist first, or are you black first?"⁸⁶ The BC activists were not principally advocating the distortion or suppression of news, but rather questioned the priorities of coverage, and the slant and wording of stories and headlines. In particular, they argued that in South Africa's peculiar authoritarian context, the mechanical application of the traditional canons of objectivity by the liberal English press gave the views of government officials or government-connected black figures greater space than that given opposition figures expressing more popular views. The question was long discussed in UBJ circles. In late 1976, BPC officials met informally with the UBJ leadership at Dr. Ntatho Motlana's home in Soweto to discuss the journalists' concern that a declaration opposing the homelands policy was "too political" for the organization. The discussion reached a consensus that "black journalists were important to

⁸⁶ Graham Addison, "The Union of Black Journalists: A Brief Survey," Unpublished paper, Grahamstown, Rhodes University, n.d., p.1.

the BCM and had to take on a responsible political role."⁸⁷ The issue was finally debated in the open at a UBJ seminar in Soweto in June 1977. There, Mike Norton and Revelation Ntola of a new SACC weekly, The Voice, argued, "To ask the Black journalist to enslave himself to unemotional nonpartisan objectivity when it is impossible to be unemotional while faced with black suffering and when he is, indeed, partisan to the black cause ... is asking him to deny himself." For the other side, Thami Mazwai of The World replied that the problems facing black journalists in South Africa were not unique, and that objectivity was the "very life blood" of the profession – but his was ever more of a minority view within black journalistic circles.⁸⁸ The question of political engagement also surfaced in connection with UBJ officers supporting policy decisions of other BC organizations. Such discussions, along with events in the country and outside, undoubtedly had a radicalizing effect on black journalists. When Whitehead surveyed 28 black Johannesburg journalists in 1977, she found that they were "highly politicized," and two-thirds said their political beliefs affected their reporting.⁸⁹ As the mood in the newsroom changed, job satisfaction also rose sharply: 25 of the 28 reporters surveyed by Whitehead said their newspaper performed its role at least adequately, and 13 felt it performed well (while just 3 out of 25 had given the same response five years before.)⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Llewellyn Raubenheimer, A Study of Black Journalists and Black Media Workers in Union Organization – 1971 to 1981, B.A. Honors thesis, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1982, p.9.

⁸⁸ UBJ, "Report on Seminar organized by S.TvL Region in June 1977," Typed Minutes, pp.4,5, Karis-Gerhart Archive; William A. Hatchen, "Black Journalists under Apartheid," Index on Censorship, vol. 8, no. 3 (1979).

⁸⁹ Marion Whitehead, The Black Gatekeepers, B.A. Honors thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1978, p.47, and Fred St. Leger, "Attitudes of Black and White Journalists in South Africa," Communications in Africa, vol.1, p.173.

⁹⁰ Whitehead, The Black Gatekeepers, op. cit., p.53.

The greater militancy which the events of 1976-77 inspired in the black press were felt at the level of the institution as well as that of individual reporters. Despite the repeated warnings received from the white authorities, The World persisted in its defiant editorial attitude and coverage until its banning by the government as part of the October 19, 1977 crackdown on the BCM. Percy Qoboza and his news editor, Aggrey Klaaste, were among the black leaders detained then and held at Modder B prison; the experience itself and the discussions among the detained activists further radicalized them. A week after the ban, the paper's owner, the Argus Group, reopened World under another title, Post Transvaal, with the same staff, including Qoboza and Klaaste after their release in 1978.⁹¹ (Although controlled by conservative white business interests, Argus was compelled by its own interests to defend its institutional independence from the state, maintain the English-speaking white liberal stance of support for press freedom, and re-establish a profitable and fast-growing franchise among black readers.) The new paper soon found its voice once more as a tough and militant opponent of the government – and the same was true, within a couple of years, for the rest of the black press. The successor organization to the banned UBJ among black journalists the Writers' Association of South Africa (WASA), was also increasingly militant, though touched by the radicalism and Marxist influence growing in black political circles. Though led by an articulate young journalist from a prominent ANC family – Zwelakhe Sisulu, son of ANC executive member Walter Sisulu, jailed with Mandela – its Johannesburg leadership, close to the core which would form the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO) after the October 19 crackdown, hewed strictly to the blacks-only BC tradition and voiced hostility to the ANC. But while the influence of the

⁹¹ Race Relations Survey, 1977, pp.179-180.

ANC and the left grew by the early 1980s as younger reporters, journalists from other regions, and interaction with the radical white journalists trickling into the commercial press after 1976 all began to re-orient black journalists' organizational loyalties, these shifts did not dull their hostility to the regime.⁹²

In the churches, Soweto helped to intensify the ferment already underway and to speed the advance of black leadership. In 1977, Sam Buti of the NGKA, a prominent exponent of Black Theology, was elected President of the SACC, and in 1978 John Rees was followed as General Secretary, the SACC's chief executive, by Bishop Desmond Tutu.⁹³ Change also accelerated in the individual churches: while the Catholics had no black Bishops in 1971, they had five by 1980. The Anglicans, Lutherans, and other denominations followed suit, promoting blacks to some of the highest offices of the church. The churches also took bolder political stances. For example, at its 1978 synod, the colored NGSK called for the repeal of the Group Areas Act, demanded that white ministers in its ranks leave the Broederbond, and rejected the government's new constitutional proposals for separate parliaments for colored and Indian South Africans. The Catholic church tried to match its anti-apartheid pronouncements with deeds as well, moving to integrate all church institutions, appoint black priests to white parishes, establish pay parity between black and white in its employ, and backing programs to help organize workers and raise public consciousness about apartheid.⁹⁴ All in all, the post-

⁹² Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 5, op. cit, pp.322-323. I personally observed the militancy and gradual re-orientation of black journalists, and the arrival of young, radical white journalists, while working as a journalist in Johannesburg from 1980 to 1983.

⁹³ *Race Relations Survey, 1977*, p.40.

⁹⁴ Marjorie Hope and James Young, *The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books: 1981), pp.93, 154-55, 183.

Soweto era saw the churches become more rather than less fervently committed to a change of regime, despite the banning in October 1977 of the chief catalyst of non-conformity in previous years, the Christian Institute, (a number of whose personnel were absorbed into the churches or SACC).

Undoubtedly the most controversial change in the church world after Soweto was the position assumed by the SACC as the most vocal critic of the regime operating legally within the country and the largest internal source of material support for opposition activity. The provision of assistance to victims of the uprising and organizations involved in it was followed by a growing commitment to assist social movement organizations struggling against the regime in succeeding years, reflecting a logic of institutional commitment reinforced by the installation of a more militant black leadership. Tutu himself described the process in one of the reports of the Asingeni Fund: "Our mandate tacitly involved assisting the victims of the apartheid system and to empower the powerless in their liberation struggle against the totally unjust and immoral system prevalent in our country. We are now making this tacit commitment more explicit in the assistance that we have been called upon more and more to provide."⁹⁵ By the late 1970s the SACC was coming to support increasingly vigorous strategies of organized economic and pressure against the regime. The 1976 SACC conference – on the theme of "Liberation" – voted to conduct a study of foreign investment in South Africa, whose results, presented to the 1978 conclave, led to a declaration that it should continue only under stringent conditions, including the recognition of black trade unions and an end to migrant labor. In October 1979, Tutu called for a boycott of South African

⁹⁵ Quoted in Steyn Commission Report, p.42.

coal exports – a dramatic shift from the SACC’s liberal pro-investment stance of a decade earlier.⁹⁶ In the same year, the SACC conference, on “The Church and the Alternative Society,” voted to support civil disobedience campaigns urged by Manas Buthelezi and a young NGSK theologian, Allan Boesak, and called on member churches to withdraw from co-operating with the state in the application of apartheid laws.⁹⁷ Equally significant, the SACC – particularly through the Asingeni fund – provided financial assistance to the rapidly-growing social movement organizations which sprouted as extra-parliamentary political space opened up in the wake of Soweto, as well as the organizational infrastructure on they relied on and the campaigns they conducted. Recipients included emergent black trade unions and community organizations, the Crossroads squatters, a group defending blacks living illegally in the white urban areas (Actstop), other supporting conscientious objectors, campaigns against bus fare increases and forced removals in black areas, and various publications by blacks.⁹⁸ (A similar, if considerably smaller role, was played by the South African Catholic Bishops Conference, and its social development arm, Diakonia, created in 1976.⁹⁹) Thus, in the wake of Soweto and the BCM, black control of the paramount institution of black civil society – the churches – increased and helped make them into a leading source of discursive and practical opposition to the regime in the years ahead.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp.119, 201, Hope and Young, The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation, op. cit., p.93.

⁹⁷ Steyn Commission Report, p.114, Hope and Young, The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation, op. cit., p.93.

⁹⁸ Steyn Commission Report, pp.43-44.

⁹⁹ Black Review 1975, p.116, and Hope and Young, The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation, op. cit., p.154-155.

The politicization of black universities and student organizations was also advanced by the Soweto uprising and its aftermath. After June 16, 1976, all the black universities were touched by unrest for the first time since 1972: the University of the North, Fort Hare, Zululand, and the University of the Western Cape all experienced prolonged boycotts, while the students at Durban-Westville came out on a one-week sympathy strike. Many teachers' training colleges were also involved in protests.¹⁰⁰ The black campuses proved equally volatile in September 1977, when a mix of internal conflicts between students and administrators and rage at the death of Stephen Biko led to more walk-outs at Fort Hare, Turfloop, and UWC.¹⁰¹ In the years to come, the black universities would be perched on a hair-trigger, exploding each time a wave of tension struck. A major factor in the intense politicization of the campuses was the continuing radicalization of the black student movement, as its re-orientation towards Marxism and the ANC accelerated in the wake of Soweto. Already apparent prior to 1976, these tendencies were much in evidence in SASO's final conference prior to its banning in 1977.¹⁰² From 1978 on, as black student organization was reconstituted, it went even further on these lines, establishing a tentative rapprochement with the white student radicals leading NUSAS, themselves increasingly aligned with the ANC.¹⁰³ In the wake of Soweto, black student political organizations continued to jealously guard their

¹⁰⁰ Race Relations Survey, 1976.

¹⁰¹ Race Relations Survey, 1977, pp.528-532.

¹⁰² Race Relations Survey, 1977, pp.31-32.

¹⁰³ Interview, Alan Hirsch, Cape Town, December 1991. For more detail on the realignment in the student movement in the early 1980s. See Craig Charney, "Thinking of Revolution: South Africa's New Intelligentsia," Monthly Review, vol. 38 (1986). A contrary tendency was evident among some Muslim students in the Cape, whose radicalization led them to become increasingly aligned with PAC-oriented groups. Interview, Sayyed.

identity and autonomy, but were increasingly oriented towards working with others, including whites, to support the growth of worker and community organizations favorable to the ANC, no longer fancying themselves the vanguard of the liberation struggle as in the era when Black Consciousness was the driving force in black politics.

The linkage of institutional support in civil society to a protest movement via shared discourse and identity was thus both an important cause and effect of the longevity of the uprisings which shook South Africa in 1976-77. The contrast was clear to the situation after Sharpeville, when the institutions which proved so important in sixteen years later did not even exist in the same form. But the mere existence of the institutions of urban civil society, if a necessary condition, was insufficient in itself to lend their power to the opposition movement. They were only available to the movement because of the struggles which had been waged to co-opt them and make them part of the broader community of discourse created by the BCM. Once in this position, they were increasingly drawn into the struggle through the involvement of their own constituents and personnel in the conflict and ensuing repression. Because they participated the collective identity they had helped to create, the black press, church, and universities helped the student activists to reach a mass public, bolstered the authority of these little-known youth, and directed substantial resources to support their activities. In turn, their engagement further transformed these organizations, so that the institutions of black civil society were willing and able to become ramparts of the struggle against apartheid in the decisive years of the 1980s.

IV. THE ANATOMY OF A SOCIAL EXPLOSION: PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND PUBLIC VIOLENCE

The massive popular mobilizations which occurred during the Soweto uprising were, more than anything else, the products of public discourse – reinforced by public violence. “The power of the students within the community, “Kane-Berman observed at the time, derived from “their persuasive powers, backed by their ability to enforce compliance if necessary. Their writ was virtually law in the series of campaigns they organized in the second half of 1976, among them four strikes, the crusade against shebeens, the Christmas shopping boycott, and the ban on festive and sporting activities.”¹⁰⁴ The explosion of oppositional discourse, characteristic of the explosive instances of revolt which Scott called “saturnalias of power” and Zolberg “moments of madness,” centered on the public proclamations of the “hidden transcript” of urban blacks.¹⁰⁵ But as presented by the movement, it was more than a laundry list of grievances: their discourse deliberately linked the personal stories and tragedies of individuals (the short story) to community conflicts (the intermediate story) and the larger narrative of national liberation (the long story).¹⁰⁶ The public violence associated with the movement was limited in scope, largely symbolic and intended to underscore these stories – though no less deadly for that. Together with the discourse, however, it formed part of public performances which proclaimed and sacralized the existence of the

¹⁰⁴ Kane-Berman, Soweto, op. cit., p.110

¹⁰⁵ James Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1990), chapter 8; Aristide Zolberg, “Moments of Madness,” Politics and Society, vol. 2 (1972).

¹⁰⁶ Apter and Saich, Revolutionary Discourse in Mao’s Republic, op. cit.

mobilized community, distinguished insiders from outsiders, and, at the margins, raised the costs of defying the students. The discourse itself was one of a double movement of revolt: of youth against the elders and patrimonial system of authority, as well as that of the collective opposition of urban black communities against white minority rule. At times they reinforced each other, lending an extraordinary potency and unanimity to collective sentiment; at others they led to tension and even conflict between militant youth and their parents or patrimonially-organized migrants workers. Nonetheless, the movement's words and deeds ultimately proved the catalyst for the displacement of the old community political elite with a new one, bringing together professionals from the BC-influenced organs of civil society, leaders of the youth revolt itself, and some elements who had broken away from the older elite. To illustrate the role of public discourse and public violence in the social explosion which took place in Soweto, this section will explore the major popular mobilizations which reached beyond the student milieu: the general strikes, political funerals, the Christmas campaigns, and the campaign against the Urban Bantu Council.

The early months of the uprising were marked by the most intense violence, as the declarations and demonstrations of the students were forcefully underlined by riots and public violence, repressed at a heavy cost in lives. The targets of the rioting and arson were the symbols of state and white power: Administration Board facilities, government-owned beer halls and liquor stores, the UBC chambers, trucks owned by white businesses, the houses and business of blacks seen as government collaborators and informers, and, in two cases, whites themselves. The lines were blurred somewhat by the participation of *tsotsis* (gangsters), particularly in the looting of liquor outlets and

hijacked trucks, to the point that the SSRC sought to bring the young delinquents under control. Even as they build a network of connections among schools, the SSRC also struggled to keep up with the tide of student militancy in the early weeks. As they discovered that their initial return-to-school-call in July was out of touch with feeling among the pupils, the youthful activists became aware that they were riding a tiger, even as continuing confrontations, large and small, continued.

By August 1976, the school pupils, flush with their early victories, but conscious of their heavy cost, were moving beyond the school-related issues which were the uprising's initial flashpoint to open confrontation with the regime and its black collaborators. The government's retreat on the Afrikaans issue in July, the reappointment of dismissed school board members, and hints of change on other issues such as home ownership for blacks, made the students feel aware of their power.¹⁰⁷ Yet there were also indications that public support for them was starting to waver, for these limited gains had been secured at very high cost in lives, injuries, detentions, and property.¹⁰⁸ The students decided – encouraged, as we have seen, by ANC and BC activists – to move directly onto the political terrain, publicly challenging the regime through a general strike. “We had realized that we had gone as far as we could [in student politics],” SSRC leader Tsietsi Mashini said, “and it is now important that we strike at the industrial structure of South Africa.”¹⁰⁹ In the heady atmosphere of those early weeks of the revolt, when the students and blacks in general were amazed by the power they had unleashed, nothing seemed impossible if they could win the backing of the community. One student

¹⁰⁷ Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., p.105.

¹⁰⁸ Weekend World, July 31, 1977.

expressed the prevailing view when he declared, "If we can get the parents on our side, we can call out a strike; if we call out a strike the economy will collapse; if the economy collapses we will have black rule in 1977."¹¹⁰ The challenge was launched publicly on August 1, at a mass meeting called by the UBC, which left Jabulani Amphitheater largely empty with a sparse crowd estimated at 1,500 – 3,000, including a large component of hostile students. Seated near the stage, they jeered the official speakers, including UBC chair T.J. Mahkaya and former World editor M.T. Moerane, who appealed for moderation. Students who spoke afterwards said they were moving beyond the Afrikaans issue to try to eliminate Bantu Education, job discrimination, and the whole system of racial oppression and inequality. One of them was Mashinini, who stepped forward as the students' spokesman and publicly announced the existence of the SSRC.¹¹¹

The students' challenge took the form of a series of general strikes in August and September, mobilized through large-scale campaigns of leafleting and personal contact around the identity-based rhetoric of Black Consciousness and black familyhood. A hasty leaflet campaign was conducted prior to the first stay-away, launched mid-week on Wednesday, August 4, only a few days after the SSRC publicly surfaced.¹¹² A larger effort was conducted over the weekend prior to the next stay-away, from Monday, August 23 to Wednesday, August 25, when SSRC and ANC leaflets with the strike call were pushed under doors and students canvassed door-to-door in support of the stay-

¹⁰⁹ "Soweto Students Representatives Council," Social Review, 1978.

¹¹⁰ Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., p.198.

¹¹¹ This account draws on three sources: a report in Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol. 5, op.cit., pp.575-578 and West Rand Administration Board Police notes "Jabulani Amphitheater Meeting Report," the Karis-Gerhart Archive, and the above-cited article in Social Review (cited in note 109).

¹¹² Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., p.202.

away.¹¹³ The largest communications effort was undertaken the weekend before the most successful stay-away, the three-day strike which began Monday September 12, when a huge leaflet campaign in three languages (English, Zulu, and Sotho) was conducted by the SSRC in Soweto, supplemented by independent efforts by activists in other townships such as Kathlehong on the East Rand. Meetings were also held in schools to publicize the strike, then pupils went home and asked – or ordered – their parents to join in.¹¹⁴ This was a process of mobilization from the bottom up, from the individual black family to the black community as a whole. The discourse of the August 23 leaflets stressed family solidarity first of all: “Parent workers, you should take note of the fact that, if you go to work, you will be inviting Vorster to slaughter us your children as he has done already.”¹¹⁵ BC imagery of black defiance and sacrifice is used to urge parents to be proud, rather than fearful, about their children’s actions:

“Parents, you should rejoice for having given birth to this type of a child. ... A child who prefers to die from a bullet rather than to allow a poisonous education which relegates him and his parents to a position of perpetual subordination. Aren’t you proud of the soldiers of liberation you have given birth to? If you are proud, support them! Do not go to work on Monday!”

Citing the victories already gained, the leaflet calls for a strike in favor of r “the scrapping of Bandu Education, the release of prisoners detained during the demos, and the overthrow of oppression.” It concludes with a reference to highly publicized

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.213, Kane-Berman, *Soweto, op. cit.*, p.113.

¹¹⁴ Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit.*, p.213, Kane-Berman, *Soweto, op. cit.*, pp.110, 114.

¹¹⁵ “Azikwhelwa on Monday,” in Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge, vol. 5, op.cit.*, pp.581-582. “Azikwhelwa” (“We shall not ride”) was a slogan taken from the ANC bus boycotts of the 1950s. Karis and Gerhart and Brickhill and Brooks identify this leaflet as prior to the September 13 strike, but Kane-Berman states that it came out before the August 23 stay-away. Internal evidence – the absence of reference to migrant workers and the Mzimhlope hostel incidents of August 24, which mark SSRC leaflets known to date from September – suggests it is indeed from the August 23 strike.

incidents where of violent police intervention in black labor disputes at Carletonville and Croesus mines and the Heinemann Electric factory. BC appeals to black pride and family sensibilities were equally evident in a Katlehong leaflet from the September 13 strike, written by pupils, duplicated by office workers under their bosses' noses, and distributed in thousands.

"The time of *ja-bass* ["yes, boss"] is past, along with all those who tolerated it. We must be seen as people who can think and do things for themselves. There is only one thing to do. Let us not go to work for a few days. The school children ask you to listen to their words."¹¹⁶

The leaflets are not without threats – the SSRC tract finishes, in its only passage not in English, "*Kufayayo Bazale Yinile*" (Zulu for, "He who goes, dies,") and the Kathelong leaflet ends, "If you go to work your houses will be burnt" – but these phrases, chilling through they are, are more throw-aways than central to the discourse. The central thrust of the discourse mobilizing the stay-aways was an inversion of the regime's patrimonial discourse made possible by BC: instead of the family becoming a unit of the tribe or clientele, led by an elder or boss, the family was now part of local urban community, and broader imagined community of the nation, led by the youth.

The first stay-away was also enforced with "rough coercion," but as the students realized the need to persuade the community to back them, the use of force dropped off in the succeeding strikes. Prior to the August 4 stay-away, the students paralyzed the main means of transport to Johannesburg – rail, busses, and cars, and the SSRC decided that if parents insisted on going to work, the students should stop them by means of force.¹¹⁷ A

¹¹⁶ Cited in Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p.226.

¹¹⁷ Murphy Morobe, *Cillie Commission Testimony*, pp.4926–4927.

signal box on one of the two rail lines running through the township was sabotaged at 4 am, while trains on the other were stoned (and one set alight), provoking the suspension of service within Soweto by 8:40 am. Before then, groups of students picketed at the train stations, some blocking access or stoning commuters, other arguing with them in favor of the strike. Barricades were thrown across roads, cars, busses, and taxis stopped, and drivers argued with and/or threatened. So many busses were stoned or hijacked that bus service within the township was also halted.¹¹⁸ During the stay-away, crowds also set alight the houses of three black policemen and stoned the home of UBC Chair Makhaya (which had previously been firebombed twice during the revolt).¹¹⁹ Less coercion was reported in the August 23 stay-away. There were few roadblocks, though busses and taxis were not running, and at some stations strike-breaking commuters reportedly boarded trains freely, although police reported repeated stoning of trains and returning commuters as well as groups of students, some armed with sticks, trying to drive workers away from the stations.¹²⁰ The third general strike, beginning September 13, where by far the largest effort was made to communicate with the population, was also marked by a near-absence of coercion. Though busses were again withdrawn as a preventive measure and taxis halted operations, trains ran normally, unmolested but empty. The absence of

¹¹⁸ ibid., pp.207, 358 (note 21), Kane-Berman, Soweto, op. cit., p.112, and Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, op. cit., p.331.

¹¹⁹ Glenn Moss, Crisis and Conflict: Soweto 1976-1977, MA Thesis, Wits University, Johannesburg, 1982, p.46.

¹²⁰ Kane-Berman, Soweto, op. cit., p.113, Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., p.214, and Moss, Crisis and Conflict, op. cit., pp.67-68.

pickets at the train stations, barricades, and the other forms of intimidation evident in the previous stay-aways was the subject of much press comment.¹²¹

The question then becomes how the elements of public discourse and public violence worked together in the mobilization of the stay-aways. The initial reaction of the township populace seems to the students' call appears to have involved a mixture of respect and fear.¹²² The coercion the students applied was both a demonstration of their power and of the pretension of what Kane-Berman called "the student government" to incarnate an alternative, popular sovereignty. It seems clear, however, that as the students sought increasingly to reach out to the public, Sowetans were increasingly won over by their BC rhetoric of family and community, making coercion steadily less necessary for the mobilizations. Indeed, it is striking that over the three stay-aways, participation steadily rose – from around 50% August 4, to 70% August 23, and 75-80% September 13 – despite the steady decline in coercion.¹²³ Similarly, the stay-aways developed staying power: while participation in the first dropped sharply on the second

¹²¹ Kane-Berman, *Soweto*, op. cit, p.114, Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, op. cit., p.229-230.

¹²² The reaction of Maria Tholo and her neighbors in Cape Town to the September strike call there – the first for them “you just sort of hear that everyone is going to stay home” – was probably similar to the initial response of Soweto residents. “We were first informed about it from pamphlets which were in all the post boxes last week. ... There had been rumors before but this was the first definite thing. ... No one knew who sent out the notices or who intended to enforce the stay-away, but we were going to listen just the same. It was like people driven by a force that they don't understand, but afraid enough to stay put and not venture too far from home.” Hermer, ed., *The Diary of Maria Tholo*, op. cit., p.58.

¹²³ Nor can this be explained by the argument that the memory of coercion from the first strike was sufficient to carry over to the next two occasions, as the example of Alexandra township, north of Johannesburg, demonstrates. Alexandra could not be sealed off by the students, because – unlike Soweto, eight miles from town and a complex then served by only three main roads – it was surrounded by white suburbs to which there were numerous access points and so close to the industrial areas where most of its residents worked that they usually commuted on foot. There was little participation there in the first stay-away despite a cursory leafleting campaign by students. In contrast, Alexandra residents there lent strong support to the third stay-away, after the intensive efforts of students to communicate about their purposes. Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, op. cit., pp.208, 229.

day, when exhausted students relaxed their coercive efforts, it remained strong all three days of the September strike, even though almost no intimidation was occurring.¹²⁴ The failure of the November 1 strike call illustrates the inverse case: poor communication and muddled goals led to a popular unwillingness to follow the students' lead. At that time, school meetings and leafleting were limited by the exam boycott then underway, the tone of the leaflet issued peremptory, with little argumentation, and the call for five days of sacrifice from a population exhausted by three costly strikes, as employers threatened strikers with loss of pay or jobs, was a sign that the SSRC, drunk with the success of its previous campaigns, was losing touch with the township mood.¹²⁵ (In contrast, the well-publicized and far more modest call for a one-day strike to commemorate the first anniversary of the uprising on June 16, 1977 received a strong response.)¹²⁶ Thus, the general strikes involved something more than a process of individual calculation of costs and gains: rather their success depended on a discursive process involving a myriad of responses as grassroots networks wove themselves together into a "collective individual" (in Apter's apt phrase) through their identification with the advocates of the mobilization.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ ibid., pp.212, 230.

¹²⁵ Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash, op. cit., p.260, Kane-Berman, Soweto, op. cit., p.114-118, Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., p.238.

¹²⁶ idem.

¹²⁷ The process was described well by Brickhill and Brooks, who provide the most thorough analysis of the stay-aways. "The decision whether or not to support a generalized strike calls at one level a personal one, taken tens of thousands of times by individual workers weighting the many factors which affect the outcome. But at another level, such decisions are collective, taken in the course of innumerable discussions at the workplace, on the trains and buses, in hostels, canteens, and bars ... Thus by an apparently spontaneous process, very widespread, subtle, and impenetrable to the outside observer, a class can be said to act or decline to act, in concert" Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., p.237.

Yet the mobilization of the general strikes involved conflict as well as consensus: the first stay-away (August 4-6) provoked a deadly counter-mobilization of conservative elements – councilors, police, and hostel dwellers – associated with the patrimonial order targeted by the uprising. On August 6 and August 8, meetings were called involving UBC chair Makhaya, whose house had been attacked, other UBC members and their associates, and black police. At these meetings strong hostility was expressed to the students and the BPA, and plans were discussed to encourage hostel dwellers to attack students enforcing strikes in the future. The policemen at the meetings assured those present that they need not fear prosecution, and envoys were sent to Inhlanzane and Dube hostels, Inkhata's Soweto strongholds, to inform them of the plan¹²⁸ Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Inkatha's leader (Makhaya and several colleagues were members of the organization) echoed their call for vigilante groups to protect property during the unrest.¹²⁹ By the eve of the second stay-away, Security Police chief Mike Geldenhuys hinted darkly at a "backlash" to come from "law-abiding elements in the townships." Even as the students circulated their leaflets in favor of the strike, well-typed leaflets in Zulu and Tswana, signed "City Workers" and apparently circulated by the authorities, warned, "We are sick and tired of this nonsense and will defend ourselves. Let us take our Kieries [knobkieries – a walking stick with a knob at the top, also used as a club] and sticks and fight anybody who stops us."¹³⁰ Once more, the discourse of traditionalism was used to knit together conservative clientelist urban elites (councillors, police) and

¹²⁸ Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, op. cit., pp.214-215.

¹²⁹ Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, op.cit., p.244.

¹³⁰ Cited in Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, op. cit., p.213.

patrimonially-organized rural people.¹³¹ The combination was a volatile one, because the hostel dwellers, whose often-tense relationship with the townspeople had frequently flared into violence (see Chapter Two, p.102), felt they had genuine grievances with the students responsible for the strikes and protests. The lowest-paid workers in the township, they had not been informed or consulted about them by students – who regarded them with contempt and whom they regarded as young upstarts – even though those who worked had born the brunt of coercion against strike-breakers and those who did not suffered the most from lost pay.¹³²

The result, during the second stay-away, was an explosion of violence, as hostel dwellers clashed with Soweto residents, leaving 70 dead and scores of houses burned. The center of the conflict was Mzimhlope hostel, Soweto's largest. The atmosphere there had turned incendiary at the start of the strike August 23, as a resident was killed returning from work and two others thrown from a train; and two students picketing at Mzimhlope railway station were killed in apparent revenge attack.¹³³ The next day, a fire was set at the hostel, apparently in retaliation for the students' killing according to official sources (though pro-student sources suggest the police started it.) Whatever the truth, after the fire a crowd of 1,500 Zulu workers surged outside the hostel, armed with knobkerries and spears, where they were addressed by a white policeman through an

¹³¹ Both the alignment and the forms of violence to come foreshadowed lines of conflict which would become frequent in the townships a decade later. See Nicholas Haysom, Mabangalala: The Rise of Right-Wing Vigilantes in South Africa (Johannesburg, Center for Applied Legal Studies: 1986, and Craig Charney, "Vigilantes, Clientelism, and the South African State," Transformation, no.16, 1991.

¹³² Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., p.219, Kane-Berman, Soweto, op. cit., p.172, and Moss, Crisis and Conflict, op. cit., pp.98-99. Hostel dwellers were also angry because the students had burned many of the township's beer halls – important centers for their social lives, since many were migrant workers and did not have close relatives nearby at whose homes they could relax.

¹³³ Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., pp.215-217.

interpreter. Under pretext of protecting strike-breaking hostel-dwellers returning from the railroad station, they moved out – and rampaged through the surrounding township, assaulting and killing residents, raping and looting, and burning houses. (Some shouted, “Where is Black Power? We are Inkatha kaZulu!”) This took place in front of armed police who did not intervene; some even called out to residents that they were tasting Black Power for themselves. Over the next several days, three black journalists saw police address crowds of Zulu with bullhorns, giving them instructions on where they could and could not attack.¹³⁴ Other evidence of police collusion included eyewitness accounts of police vehicles accompanying Zulu crowds on the attack or even dropping off attackers, policemen firing at local youth defending their neighborhoods against invading crowds, and even black policemen in civilian clothes joining in crowd attacks (their identity given away by their tell-tale red rubber police boots).

In these circumstances, the challenge to the students was to restore peace, rebuild community unity, and to establish communications with the hostel residents. Even as the violence simmered, residents met with hostel delegates as early as August 26 to begin to seek a solution, and continued in the following weeks.¹³⁵ Despite their ingrained hostility to working with leaders “within the system,” the students also worked with their older allies in the BPA and SASO to reach out to Gatsha Buthelezi, who was concerned that the situation had gotten out of hand. Addressing the hostel residents August 27, and a press conference August 28, he urged peace while charging that the police had incited

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.215; Moss, *Crisis and Conflict*, *op. cit.*, pp.8, 40.

¹³⁵ Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p.220. A police account of a meeting between hostel residents and township dwellers on September 12, just before the third stay-away, mentions other such meetings on September 9 and 10 as well. West Rand Administration Board police notes, “The Dube Hall’s Meeting Report 14 September 1976,” Karis-Gerhart archive.

and abetted the violence.¹³⁶ In the run-up to the third general strike, the students held a series of meetings to make their case to the hostel dwellers. A leaflet distributed September 7 to promote peace attempted to incorporate hostel dwellers into the BC-defined urban black identity equating family and community, Consciousness, rather than leaving them outside it in the patrimonial order :

“REMEMBER YOU ARE ALL BLACKS. Whether you are Zulu, Mosotho, Mopedi, Xhosa, Shangaan, Motswana, Venda, etc, YOU ARE ONE; sons and daughters of the BLACK CRADLE. YOU SHALL NOT KILL YOUR BLACK BROTHERS, FATHER, MOTHER, SON OR DAUGHTER: sopt fighting among yourselves DO NOT ALLOW YOURSELVES TO BE DIVIDED.”¹³⁷

The campaign worked, and the hostel dwellers were won over: not only did they participate in the third stay-away in large numbers, some even beat up strike-breakers themselves.¹³⁸ But the cost of the rift had been high, and the students' image took a knock in the eyes of the community.¹³⁹

As the grim toll exacted by repression and conflict during the uprising mounted, political funerals, a tradition which had re-emerged in the years before the uprising, took on a new frequency and importance. From the late 1960s on, the funerals of political figures had been the principal public gathering places associated with the banned nationalist movements, and among the few outlets for mass political gatherings of any sort. Large crowds gathered for the funeral of PAC activist Abdullah Haroon in Cape Town in 1969, that of squatter leader and UBC member Sofazonke Mpanza in Soweto in

¹³⁶ Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., p.220.

¹³⁷ Soweto Students Representatives Council, “To All Residents of Soweto, Hostels, Reef, and Pretoria,” in Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, op. cit., p.579.

¹³⁸ Glaser, Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, op.cit., p.331, Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, op. cit., p.178.

¹³⁹ Weekend World, August 7, 1977.

1970, in Natal for the unveiling of ANC leader Albert Luthuli's tombstone in 1972, and in East London for funerals organized by the Mdantsane Burial Association, a group of ANC and PAC members.¹⁴⁰ By the mid-1970s, the BCM was also organizing funerals and memorial meetings – for Mthuli ka Shezi, the BPC activist and dramatist killed in Germiston, for SASO leader O.R. Tiro, to whose Botstana funeral busses were run from Johannesburg, and for Soweto high school students accidentally killed by a landmine visiting Mozambique in 1975, organized by SASM activists.¹⁴¹ Soon after June 16, when the authorities banned a planned joint funeral for unrest victims organized by the BPA, a mass “symbolic funeral” was held for Hector Peterson alone – the first of many which would follow. In the repressive environment prevailing, Brickhill and Brooks note, “The funerals were in effect major political demonstrations organized in a form which circumvented the ban on public meetings, united students and parents in mass action, drew attention to police terrorism, and enshrined in the public mind the names of the young martyrs being buried.”¹⁴²

In the months after the stayaways, mass funerals of those killed by police action bound private grief to the community's hope for change, redefining mourning within the new discourse linking black families to the black community while inverting traditional roles. The feeling was widespread that deaths in the unrest concerned the entire

¹⁴⁰ The Haroon funeral is discussed in Chapter Four above, that of Mpanza in Chapter Three, and Luthuli's unveiling in Chapter Five. Sources on the MBA are Interviews, Tom Chalmani, East London, May 25, 1992, and Themba Sobandla, East London, May 26, 1992.

¹⁴¹ Interview, Daniel Montsitsi, Johannesburg, August 5, 1992.

¹⁴² Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, op. cit., p.145. Much the same process occurred in Cape Town. “Some [Muslim students] were detained, a few killed. With the Muslim tradition of funerals soon after, they would be announced in the mosques. With the tradition of carrying the body, instead of a hearse, a funeral procession would become a political procession. There could be chanting, and cops. When people saw the cops it made them angry and politicized them.” Interview, Sayyed.

community, not just their immediate families. "It could have been anyone's child," replied the father of a 20-year-old shot by police when consoled by Harriet Ngubane¹⁴³ In September 1976, the SSRC called on all students to attend the funerals of pupils who had died in detention or been shot by police. The largest were held in October, when crowds of 5,000 to 15,000 students and unrelated adults appeared, enveloping the family and friends of the deceased in the embrace of the activist community. Funerals were "no longer seen only as rites of passage in which the departed were entering the other world, but also as gatherings at which there could be an affirmation of the demand for a new South Africa."¹⁴⁴ Dirges gave way to freedom songs and clenched-fist salutes, ministers' condolences to exhortations to keep up the fight and remember the dead. They grew more militant as time passed: by mid-1977 youth were frequently leading the salutes and chants at the graveside, as priests, parents, and friends followed their lead.¹⁴⁵ The presence of clergy helped sanctify the event, while their active participation helped politicize many of the priests, ministers, and imams. The funerals bonded the participants in a powerful mix of emotions: sorrow, hope, and anger (expressed, in some instances, in attacks by students on official buildings nearby). Attendance at funerals by children had been rare before the uprising, and vigorous participation by them was an inversion of the usual order. Yet the same was true of the funerals themselves: parents were mourning their children, instead of the reverse. "This reversal of roles in funerals," noted Hirson, "was more than an adjustment, radical though that was, in traditional practice. It was also

¹⁴³ Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, op. cit., p.208.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.207.

¹⁴⁵ *idem.*, and *Weekend World*, August 7, 1977.

a reversal in social status and corresponded to the reversal that had taken place in political practice.”¹⁴⁶

The period from mid-October through December 1976 was also marked by puritanical campaigns by the youthful activists against alcohol consumption and Christmas celebrations. The call to close shebeens through the year-end, as well as to skip Christmas festivities (gifts, cards, and parties) and boycott white-owned shops, was issued by in an SSRC leaflet of October 16 that shaped the life of Soweto for the next ten weeks. From the outset, the students had been hostile to liquor; they saw it as their parents’ means of escape from oppression, a drain on their wallets, and the source of violence and crime. “Less liquor, more education” was a popular slogan in the early days of the uprising, and in just the first week 19 of the 21 government-owned liquor stores in Soweto were burnt.¹⁴⁷ The October SSRC statement connected the campaign against shebeens and Christmas celebration to a period of mourning for the students killed in the uprisings, placing them within the discourse of black solidarity identifying the black family with the black community which the students had articulated.

“We appeal to you to align yourselves with the students for your own liberation. Be involved and be united with us as it is your own son and daughter that we bury every weekend ... Soweto and all black townships are now going into a period of mourning for the dead ... Our call is: all things that we enjoy must be suspended for the sake of our kids who died from police bullets.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash, op. cit., p.207.

¹⁴⁷ See Sechaba, Second Quarter 1977, p.57, and Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., pp.138, 144, and 147 (November 4 leaflet).

¹⁴⁸ “To all fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters,” in Karis and Gerhart, eds., From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, op. cit., pp.582-585.

The SSRC decreed that all Soweto shebeens had to sell off their stock by November 1, and in late October hundreds of students visited shebeens to “request” their closure through December. These requests were backed forcefully: a day after the October 16 appeal, a crowd of students sacked a beerhall, and three shebeens which ignored the closure order were bombed by the SSRC “Suicide Squad.”¹⁴⁹ Most of rest complied. The Christmas trade boycott also hit home, denting the trade of shops catering to Africans near the main Johannesburg railway station by 25% to 50%, while township traders did a roaring business. Here, too, moral suasion was reinforced by threats (“your sons and daughters and all black leaders shall be on the watch-out for sell-outs and traitors,” warned the October 16 leaflet) and force (commuters returning to the township often had to run a gauntlet of activists searching for contraband goods). But there were positive results as well: the combination of the SSRC’s campaign against liquor and its attempt to suppress *tsotsis* meant that the Christmastime crime figures for Soweto in 1976 were the lowest recorded in many years.¹⁵⁰

However, the Christmas campaigns – the shebeen closure and consumer boycott – also generated considerable tension between the youthful activists and Soweto’s older generation. A Sowetan who styled himself “Living in Fear” when he wrote to The World expressed their views:

“This is an appeal to the SSRC to stop making life more difficult for their fellow-men by their impossible requests, or ‘demands’ as they call them. The SSRC seems to delight in making one impossible demand after another. They force them down people’s throats.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Kane-Berman, Soweto, op. cit., pp.117-118, Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., pp.145, 160, and Moss, Political Trials in South Africa, op. cit., p.226.

¹⁵⁰ Weekend World, August 7, 1977.

¹⁵¹ Cited in Kane-Berman, Soweto, op. cit., p.111.

Assessing the Christmastime campaigns, Weekend World reported that the mourning plea had been widely accepted in spirit, particularly by the many Sowetans who had been close to victims of the uprising, but less widely in practice. Many were unhappy at the absence of the festivities, celebrations, and parties which normally marked the Christmas season. The “buy black” campaign also touched a nerve, particularly among poorer residents, who did not have cars for sneaking in goods bought in town and were forced to accept the high prices and very limited selections of the black-owned township shops.¹⁵²

The existence of generational tension within the black community reflected the hybrid character of the revolt; it was a youth rebellion as well as a political uprising. Just as the apartheid system of indirect rule conflated private, parental control with public power within the patrimonial system, in rejecting the legitimating discourse of that order that system young people revolted against the dominant groups within it— their own parents and elders as well as the bosses operating the subordinate township institutions. This was evident in the comments of journalists in contact with the students at the time. “There is a wide generation gap in Soweto,” Kane-Berman wrote. One of his colleagues added, “Many parents claim that since the first outbreak of serious rioting in Soweto. ... their children, particularly the teenagers, have cast off their traditional African respect for the father of the family.”¹⁵³ In part, it was a struggle for autonomy and status within the family and community: far better educated than its parents, the new generation had a claim to position within a modern social order denied them both by the African tradition of deference to elders and the neo-traditionalism of the apartheid regime. The pupils’

¹⁵² Weekend World, August 7, 1977.

¹⁵³ Cited in Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., p.104.

rejection of their elders' authority was reinforced by outrage at the older generation's lack of militancy and many compromises, as well as contempt for their powerlessness after witnessing, often first-hand, their humiliation at the hands of "the system."¹⁵⁴ The attitudes of these young people towards their elders were at times vitriolic, as in this speech made by an activist to parents packing a township church meeting:

"I want to say something to our parents. I must tell you the reasons we did not want to involve you. Firstly, all of you want to be leaders. You like to be Mrs. So-and-so, Chairman of this or Head of that. We don't have leaders. Secondly you are liars. You rather say something is fine than open your mouths to complain. Thirdly, you are cowards."

The other students cheered, while one of the parents commented with amazement. "Now, for us Africans that was really something new. To hear back-talk from a child and then to be told you are a coward. Whew!"¹⁵⁵ These generational differences in position and outlook were one of the reasons why public support for the SSRC fluctuated sharply during the uprising, with peaks in the period shortly after June 16 and after the first stay-away, and fall-offs in July and late 1976.

The fluidity and volatility in the relationship between the student leadership and the public was also, in part, inherent in the nature of the students' claim for the legitimacy of their power – which was based on the discursive representation of the community.¹⁵⁶ Obviously, under an authoritarian regime such as the apartheid regime in South Africa,

¹⁵⁴ Frankel, "The Dynamics of a Political Renaissance," *op. cit.*, p.119; much the same is noted among colored youth in Cape Town by Bond, *Colored Education Struggles in South Africa, op. cit.*, p.155-156.

¹⁵⁵ Hermer, ed. *The Diary of Maria Tholo, op. cit.*, p.85. Although this scene took place in Cape Town, it was representative enough of attitudes expressed by Soweto students as well.

¹⁵⁶ The most important of these accounts is the extensive four-part retrospective "Amandla! The Story of the Soweto Students Representatives Council," written by black journalists at *Weekend World*, July 31, 1977, August 7, 1977, August 14, 1977, and August 21, 1977, with a similar version in Hermer, ed., *The Diary of Maria Tholo, op. cit.* The point is also made in Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit.*, Chapters Four and Eight.

official institutions do not allow the emergence a political leadership of elected representatives, which constitutes the claim to legitimacy of political elites in a democracy. Consequently, although they were fighting for the creation of a democratic regime based on majority rule, the students claimed the right to speak and act on behalf of Sowetans on the grounds that their discourse represented the true feelings, beliefs, and interests of the black community. Indeed, accounts from within the townships suggest that support for the students' actions depended above all on how well the students read and led the popular mood. This accounts for the effervescence so evident in the accounts: with the wrong words such a "saturnalia of power" can end as abruptly as it began. While discursive representatives in the form of spokesman can emerge in this situation, their position is inherently fragile, because it is not elected or institutionalized. For the students this was doubly the case, for their leadership also could not be legitimized within the canons of the African tradition which they challenged. In the long run, however, one of their movement's most important contributions to political change in South Africa lay in catalyzing the emergence of a new, popularly-based political elite, whose claim to represent the community was based on the firmer ground of their standing in the institutions of civil society.

Within days of the outbreak of unrest on June 16, 1976 the white authorities sought once more to use the old township elites as intermediaries. In an effort to discover how to stop the riots, a meeting was hastily convened on June 19 in Pretoria between the Soweto UBC and other "responsible" elements – conservative businessmen, clergy, and educators – and Bantu Education Minister M.C. Botha and his aides. The meeting seems to have veered between obsequiousness (they came "caps in hand, pleading for mercy.")

declared one Soweto councilor”) and anger (accusations included “spilling the blood of black kids,” recalled another.)¹⁵⁷ It was followed by a highly publicized meeting June 29 between the Soweto council and officials of the West Rand Administration Board, which discussed various black grievances (low wages, lack of trade unions, poor transport, housing, and schools, and the lack of political representation) based upon a memo prepared by M.T Moerane.¹⁵⁸ These were the first of a series of highly-publicized meetings between regime officials and members of the conservative elite, stage-managed so that minor concessions – such as dropping the Afrikaans requirement, or granting leasehold tenure to let urban blacks could secure home mortgages (though still denying them outright land ownership) – could be presented as the result of “tough negotiations” with these community leaders. But these were no longer the 1930s, or even the 1950s; by the mid-1970s the state-dependent elite had lost the power to smother protest in the community, and even the attempt to use it to do so only deepened its isolation. As Brickhill and Brooks noted, “To talk to Ministers and others responsible for the policies which caused the crisis and for the brutalities which ensued, to agree to mendacious communiqués of the sort issued to the press after these meetings, to do all this without any popular mandate – in short to collaborate with the enemy at the height of the war was to court unpopularity and to put paid to any genuine prospect of exercising a moderating influence in the townships.”¹⁵⁹ Indeed, it deepened the fissures within the old elite itself. By September, some moderates on the UBC more attuned to township sentiment – such

¹⁵⁷ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol. 5, op. cit., p.232, and Interview No.2, Leonard Mosala, Johannesburg, November 2, 1992.

¹⁵⁸ Minutes of the meeting and Moerane’s memo can be found in Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol. 5, op. cit., pp.653-657.

¹⁵⁹ Brickhill and Brooks, Whirlwind Before the Storm, op. cit., p.277.

as Leonard Mosala and his Soweto People's Party – were too frustrated to continue the farce. “We didn't get results, so the SPP quit the UBC,” Mosala recalled.¹⁶⁰

The students' hostility to the UBC, which had simmered from the start of the uprising, burst into the open in the conflict over rent increases in April 1977. As we have seen, the UBC's chambers were among the targets of rioters from the first day of the protests; its leaders were publicly humiliated by the students August 1 and plotted revenge in the violent attacks a few weeks later. With the townships' populations exhausted by the sacrifices of months of strikes and boycotts, and the student leadership in disarray due to the arrest or flight of key activists leaders and divisions over taking the make-up exams offered in March, the first months of 1977 found the prestige of the SSRC at its nadir.¹⁶¹ But the announcement in April by the white-controlled West Rand Administration Board (WRAB), which ran the township, of rent increases of 80% - 100%, and the discovery that the UBC had acquiesced, allowed the students to mount a spectacular comeback. A public meeting was called by the SSRC for April 23, where a resolution was passed calling for a refusal to pay the increase and the suspension of the UBC. Leaflets were issued which linked the pressure the increases would put on black students' families – while white education remained free – to the failure of the UBC to represent both student and community interests. A call was issued for the UBC's resignation.¹⁶² Four days later, thousands of students and other Sowetans staged a

¹⁶⁰ Interview No.2, Mosala.

¹⁶¹ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, op. cit., p.176, Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash, op. cit., p.268.

¹⁶² “This recent proposal of a rent increase upon our parents without consultation ... indicates clearly lack of co-ordination and communication within the government system. ... As students we pledge solidarity with our parents. The rent issue affects us too as students. Our poor parents are supposed to finance our

march against the increases, which ended in the stoning of the UBC chambers, the burning of beerhalls, and shootings by the police. A chastened WRAB quickly rescinded the increases, making the SSRC's new leader Daniel Montsitsi – as Weekend World put it – the “darling of Soweto.”¹⁶³ During May, the student leaders met with the remaining UBC members, urging them to quit (police said several were threatened if they did not, and the memory of the attacks on councilors' and policemen's houses the year before was still fresh.)¹⁶⁴ On June 2, David Thebehali, the councilor who had succeeded Makhaya as UBC chair (and, years before, flirted with the BCM), announced after a meeting with the students that he and the remaining council members had all resigned. The following day, the SSRC called on Sowetans to form a representative body to replace the UBC.¹⁶⁵

The emergence of the Committee of Ten, following the collapse of the UBC, marked the rise of a new political elite— a coalition of leaders from civil society, the Black Consciousness Movement, and members of the old elite who had broken with it – which in succeeding years would gain political leadership in Soweto and in black communities around the country. The body was to some extent a successor to the BPA, some of whose leaders were also involved, but while the BPA had been an informal

education, cope with inflation, soaring price of bread, meat, etc., mounting bus and train fares, unemployment, job reservation, and meager salaries. Yet white education is free, compulsory, and universal. ... The UBC was supposed to be the voice of the Black Soweto community. A responsible body which has the interests and aspirations of the voiceless mass .. at heart. It has failed thus far. Instead they had become active messenger boys of the WRAB.” SSRC, “Boycott of Rent Increases,” Leaflet, May 2, 1977, in Karis-Gerhart Archive.

¹⁶³ Unlike the strikes and boycotts, which involved substantial sacrifices and few evident gains, the rents protest had produced clear results at relatively little cost, *ibid.*, p.271, Weekend World, August 14, 1977, Kane-Berman, Soweto, op. cit., 127-128. In June, when Police Minister Kruger called for the SSRC to be “stamped out”, an informal “snap poll” by The World found that 32 out of 33 Sowetans interviewed disagreed. *ibid.*, p.132.

¹⁶⁴ Race Relations Survey, 1977, p.402, and Kane-Berman, Soweto, op. cit., p.207.

¹⁶⁵ Race Relations Survey, 1977, p.404, Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash, op. cit., p.272.

group which emerged in an emergency, aimed at meeting the immediate demands of the uprising; the Committee of Ten was a more formally-constituted body which aimed to speak for the political aspirations of Sowetans. The committee was chosen June 27 at a meeting of leading community figures hostile to the regime, including members of the civic, church, civic, business, educational, and journalistic elites, convened by Percy Qoboza at the offices of The World. "Everybody who was anybody came to the meeting," recalled Nthato Motlana, the prominent doctor, BPA leader, and one-time ANC Youth Leaguer, who was elected chair of the new leadership body.¹⁶⁶ Other members included influential leaders of civil society organizations touched by the BCM (Lekgau Mathabathe, the principal and teachers' leader prominent in the BPA, Ellen Khuzwayo, a leading social worker in the YWCA), figures associated with the BCM (Tom Manthata, an SACC official, ex-teacher close to SASM, and BPC member, Thandisizwe Mazibuko, BPC Secretary General, and "Castro" Mayathula, a Christian Institute official, independent church minister, and BPC founder president), as well as others once associated with the old councilor-business nexus (Leonard Mosala, perhaps the only UBC member respected by the students, Vela Kraai, head of the Soweto traders association, Douglas Lolwane of the National African Chamber of Commerce, and businessman T. Ramakgopa).¹⁶⁷ It was "the most broadly-based body to emerge from the township in years," commented Kane-Berman, and Qoboza himself declared, "For the first time, blacks in south Africa have taken the initiative in establishing their brand of

¹⁶⁶ Interview, Nthato Motlana, Johannesburg, July 25, 1992.

¹⁶⁷ Race Relations Survey 1977, p.403, Kane-Berman, Soweto, op. cit, p.209.

leadership outside the institutions of government.”¹⁶⁸ Within three weeks, the committee, aided by white lawyers and experts at Wits University, had produced a blueprint for an autonomous Soweto, governed by a popularly-elected council, with taxing, spending, and borrowing powers and an ambitious development agenda. They did not claim to be the leaders of Soweto themselves, but rather the interlocutors with whom the white government (not WRAB) could discuss the creation of a different kind of local dispensation, one based on democratic legitimacy rather than patrimonial power.

Perhaps for that reason, the government’s initial reaction to the emergence of the Ten was an implacable hostility, which failed to destroy but did deeply alienate them, followed by embarrassing but equally unsuccessful attempts to win them over on the cheap. After the municipal blueprint was put forward, two meetings planned by the Committee to present it to the Soweto public and seek a mandate were banned. At the same time, Mosala says, despite their efforts to win a hearing from the authorities, there was “no contact with government – doors were closed. No informal contacts, no soundings.”¹⁶⁹ Instead, government announced that it was negotiating with another group, an anonymous body called the Committee of Thirteen (“we went them one better,” a WRAB official gibed) – until the disclosure in August that the Committee of Thirteen did not exist.¹⁷⁰ (Ironically, while the government found them too radical to touch, the students, though they co-operated with the Committee of Ten, regarded them with some suspicion as too middle-class.) When the October 19, 1977 crackdown took place, eight of the members of the Committee were detained along with scores of other black political

¹⁶⁸ Idem.

¹⁶⁹ Interview No.2, Mosala.

leaders at Modder Bee prison. The Ten smuggled messages out of prison to reassure the community that they were holding fast against the government's new plan to create Community Councils, a re-named UBC with little more power. As it began to dawn on the regime that if there was anyone to negotiate with, it was the people they had locked up, surreal scenes followed. Justice Minister Kruger visited Motlana in jail and asked him to participate in the Community Council; Motlana demurred, but invited the Minister to discuss matters over tea at his house in Soweto. Kruger declined. When Motlana and Mosala were released a few days later, they were driven not to their homes, but to a reception with WRAB officials and pro-government Afrikaans journalists, in an effort to give the impression that they were collaborating. "We rejected the welcome." Mosala commented dryly. "They hadn't seen us off on the day of our detention."¹⁷¹ Indeed, people like Mosala and Motlana were professionals, indifferent to the state patronage which had made the older elite, and the bearers of a different discourse and claim to power, one based on black pride and democratic legitimacy. They were among the first to show the white regime that it faced a new black leadership, deeply rooted in a politicized civil society, which it could neither easily crush or co-opt.

In sum: the discursive character of the uprising and the expressive nature of most of the violence involved shaped both the strengths and weaknesses of the social mobilization which shook Soweto, and South Africa, in 1976-77. The process of mobilization around Black Consciousness discourse was the foundation of the movement's legitimacy and power, for it echoed ideas at mass level while re-working

¹⁷⁰ Kane-Berman, *Soweto, op. cit.*, p.211.

¹⁷¹ Interview No.2, Mosala.

elements of patrimonial discourse into a popular-democratic alternative linking the black family and community. This discourse was part of the movement's vibrancy, for it made the movement difficult to suppress through the arrests of leaders as long as those who remained could still get out the word. The riots and attacks it helped to inspire were unpredictable and difficult to defend against. Yet the legitimacy the discourse afforded was also fragile: in the absence of institutionalized representation or mandates it depended on the student leaders' ability to keep in step with the thinking of the grassroots and their physical ability to communicate with them.¹⁷² (When intense police pressure forced the SSRC to re-organize as a semi-clandestine group led by a secret committee of six after the arrest of Montsitsi in August 1977, it was effectively finished even before its formal suppression two months later.) Moreover, the ideology of BC itself was incomplete; it lacked tactical guidelines for struggle, and its moral absolutism – while useful for mobilization – once more made maneuver more difficult, as students found it difficult to agree on tactical retreats, such as ending boycotts, or to consider compromises.¹⁷³ The expressive eruption of violence in the movement also was little disciplined by tactics: the very unpredictability which made it difficult to prevent also meant that control over the selection of targets and timing of attacks was limited, effective resistance to security forces for more than a few hours impossible. Co-ordination of action between centers, whether violent or non-violent, was also difficult, so that police could be rushed from one township to another to maintain control and the

¹⁷² The constant ups and downs recorded in the account of the SSRC in Weekend World, July 31, 1977, August 7, 1977, August 14, 1977, and August 21, 1977, is clear evidence of this.

¹⁷³ Frankel, "The Dynamics of a Political Renaissance," op. cit., p.175.

effects of strikes diluted when different townships serving Johannesburg stayed away on different days.¹⁷⁴

Nonetheless, what the pupils, their parents, and their neighbors in Soweto and elsewhere achieved with their words and deeds during the revolt of 1976-77 was a watershed, the first step in South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy. The emergence of an opposition discourse that not only defied the legitimacy of the regime but enabled mass action against its operation represented the creation of political opportunity from below. The government's belated efforts to court black opinion and enact minor reforms from the late 1970s on testified to its dawning awareness that South African politics would henceforth be dominated by the competition between the increasingly stale patrimonial discourse of the regime and its allies and the popular-democratic discourse evolving from that articulated by the BCM.¹⁷⁵ The movement's enforcement of the discourse, while largely symbolic, was also testimony to its revolutionary aspiration to embody an alternative sovereignty, a quest for dual power at the local level which would recur to greater effect in the 1980s and early 1990s. In those years, Soweto and other black communities would be led by a new political elite, including professionals from civil society, former BC activists, and individuals from the old elite, staunchly opposed to the regime and broadly backed by the grassroots and the institutions of the township. In each of these respects – forcing the government onto the defensive against democratic claims to legitimacy, using symbolic violence to enforce those claims, or creating an enduring alternative leadership which could not be co-opted,

¹⁷⁴ Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p.154, Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, *op. cit.*, pp.257-258.

the workings and consequences of the Soweto revolt were different and further-reaching than those of Sharpeville in 1960. Together, these developments meant that black politics in post-Soweto South Africa had moved from the struggle for a voice to the struggle for the vote – or in the language of academic analysis of democratic transitions, from the phase of liberalization to the phase of democratization. Indeed, the change was perhaps best described by the Soweto students themselves, who told their parents in a leaflet issued in 1976, “Do not shiver and think that we have wasted a year. This year will go down in history as the beginning of the end of the oppressive system at work in South Africa.”¹⁷⁶

V. **“SOWETO AS IT WAS IS NO MORE”: MOBILIZATION, COLLECTIVE IDENTITY, AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF POLITICAL CULTURE**

Four days after the Soweto uprising began, BPC President Hlaku Kenneth Rachidi declared, “Soweto as it was is no more.” “Indeed,” noted Philip Frankel, soon afterwards, “it would not be an exaggeration to state that the SSRC has brought about some major changes in Soweto’s political culture.”¹⁷⁷ Just as the movement which emerged in Soweto had parallels elsewhere, the changes in consciousness and culture that took place in Soweto during the revolt had an echo in other urban black communities as

¹⁷⁵ On the significance of discursive competition and its recognition in the process of development of democracy, see Chapter One, particularly the reference to the ideas of Francois Furet.

¹⁷⁶ Cited in Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p.227.

¹⁷⁷ Frankel, “The Dynamics of a Political Renaissance,” *op. cit.*, p.171.

well. There was a new outspokenness as the grievances once hidden went public on millions of tongues, finding a voice in the language of Black Consciousness, particularly among the young. Along with this went an intoxicating sense of community and social solidarity, as formerly atomized circles of kin, neighbors, and friends merged into a collective actor that transcended spatial, ethnic, or racial lines. The movement was also marked at the base by strong support for democratic values, despite the violence and coercion which were among its methods. This stronger conception of democratic citizenship, one of the enduring consequences of the revolt, was associated with the final collapse of the legitimacy of collaborative politics among the urban black public. Another legacy of the movement was an increased willingness to participate in political activity and protest. Finally, there was a noticeable increase in support for organizations with activist or militant orientations, and for confrontational methods of change, including violence.

We can follow these changes in the political culture thanks to a number of studies of black public opinion conducted during the uprising or in its aftermath. The most useful – and remarkable – are the reports of three research projects conducted in the difficult circumstances of the 1976-77 uprisings. Eric Mafuna, a black South African researcher, conducted a focus group study among Africans in Soweto and Johannesburg in late 1976 and early 1977 for the South African branch of the J. Walter Thompson ad agency.¹⁷⁸ Theodor Hanf and Lawrence Schlemmer ran focus groups and a sample survey among African residents of Soweto, Pretoria, and Durban in April and May

¹⁷⁸ Mafuna, *A Black Viewpoint of the South African Way of Life*, *op. cit.*, p.2. The project consisted of 14 group discussions, seven with men and seven with women, of varying age and education levels, most with

1977.¹⁷⁹ The Institute of Black Research, directed by Fatima Meer, also conducted a survey of residents of Durban of all races on the Soweto unrest during 1977.¹⁸⁰ A number of other studies soon afterwards also offered evidence of the changes in outlook which had taken place. These included further work by Schlemmer among Johannesburg Africans, a large focus group study by the University of Cape Town Business School on African and colored attitudes in the major urban centers, Groenewald's follow-up study on post-Soweto attitudes among colored people in Cape Town, the South African segment of an international Gallup Poll on social values, and two surveys conducted by the author for The Star of Johannesburg, one among Sowetans, the other among black residents of Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Town.¹⁸¹ Although it is not as

Soweto residents and some with hostel residents and black domestic servants living on the roofs of Johannesburg apartment houses.

¹⁷⁹ Theodor Hanf, Heribert Weiland, and Gerda Vierdag, in collaboration with Lawrence Schlemmer, Rainer Hampel, and Burkhard Krupp, South Africa. The Prospects of Peaceful Change: An Empirical Enquiry Into The Possibility Of Democratic Conflict Regulation (London, Rex Collings: 1981), pp.68-69. Five focus groups were conducted among Africans of varying occupational and educational levels in Johannesburg and Durban. The survey had a sample of 1020 African men (600 in Soweto, 210 each in Durban and Pretoria), with an oversample of upper and upper-middle income groups (weighted down to their correct proportions in the overall results). Interviewing was conducted by a commercial market research agency, IMSA.

¹⁸⁰ Institute of Black Research, "Soweto: A People's Response," (Durban, 1977). The sample consisted of 80 Africans, 120 whites, and unknown numbers of coloreds and Indians. The sampling techniques used appear to have produced a sample which was substantially younger and better educated than the general population and no weighting was used to correct this, so attitudes are probably somewhat more militant than among Durbanites at large.

¹⁸¹ Schlemmer's further work is discussed in "Postscript, August 1980: The Prospects of Peaceful Change Revisited," in Hanf et. al., South Africa. The Prospects of Peaceful Change. op. cit., pp.432-444, and in Lawrence Schlemmer, Buthelezi Commission - Report on the Attitude Surveys: Popular Responses to Current Policies and Alternatives in the Region of KwaZulu and Natal (Durban, January 1982), (hereafter cited as Buthelezi Commission Report). The UCT project, conducted in the second half of 1979, included 17 focus groups among Africans of varying ages and social backgrounds in greater Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Cape Town, and Port Elizabeth, and four groups of colored people under 40 in the Western Cape. It was written up in two documents, Summary Report on 17 Focus Group Discussions: Black Sociological Study in Urban Centers of South Africa (Johannesburg, Bates Wells Rostron: 1979), and Report on 4 Focus Group Discussions: Colored Sociological Study in Cape Town (Johannesburg, Bates Wells Rostron: 1979). Groenewald's follow-up survey involved a random, representative sample of 449 coloreds in Cape Town, in 1983, asked the same questions as in his survey of coloreds just prior to the outbreak of unrest there in 1976. Johan Groenewald, Reaksies op Minderheidsgroepstatus by Kleurlinge (Ph.D. thesis,

comprehensive as the survey research which would be conducted among black South Africans from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, as the struggle to advance the transition to democracy gathered force, a careful reading of this work, supplemented by other publications and the comments of participants and observers of the movement itself, will let us glimpse the reconstruction of black political culture in the wake of the Soweto uprising and the BCM.

The new willingness among blacks to speak out about their grievances and political attitudes produced by the revolt was striking. Among the first to note it were the survey researchers. Hanf and Schlemmer had attempted to conduct their survey in early 1976, but were forced to abandon it then because of fear among interviewers and respondents.¹⁸² The situation a year later was quite different, as they reported:

“We succeeded with a fresh attempt in April and May of 1977. Surprisingly, the events in Soweto had produced a climate more conducive to opinion surveys among urban blacks. Although the interviewers occasionally met with the same distrust as before, most respondents articulated frank and outspoken opinions. Seventy-seven percent of respondents expressed their satisfaction at being able to take an open stand on issues of vital interest to themselves. As the result makes quite clear, urban blacks have overcome their fear of expressing their views on political matters.”¹⁸³

Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, 1987). The South African results from Gallup's World Social Values Survey are reported in The Markinor South African Social Value Study (Johannesburg, Markinor, March 1982). Finally, my surveys on black political attitudes appeared in The Star in November 1980 and October 1981. The former was a poll of a quota sample of 300 Sowetans concerning attitudes to the Community Council and Committee of Ten, with fieldwork by the Market Research Department of The Star. The latter was a broad survey of political attitudes in August 1981, with quota samples of 396 Africans in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, 199 colored people in Cape Town, and 101 Indians in Durban, with fieldwork conducted by the market research departments of The Star in Johannesburg and The Argus in Cape Town and by IMSA in Durban. Special thanks are due Jocelyn Kuper, then director of Star Market Research, for her willingness to undertake the research, persevere through difficulties, and supply unpublished tabulations of results.

¹⁸² Interviewers became nervous because of the radical views expressed by some respondents, as in the Mayer study (Soweto People and Their Social Universes) which was forced to halt interviews at this time for the same reason, while other respondents were still reluctant to express their views.

¹⁸³ Hanf et. al., South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., pp.67-68.

This outspokenness was evident in the clear support respondents gave to the Soweto movement: some 59% said the demonstrations in Soweto had been a good thing, while 39% said no good would come from them. The principal reason for supporting them was expressive (40% said the protests could bring their grievances to light), while a smaller group saw them as part of a broader struggle which would force change.¹⁸⁴ These findings regarding popular support voiced for the protests were paralleled by Mafuna's. He wrote, "The current uprising seems to have captured the minds of most blacks. In it they seem to perceive a genuine commitment and willingness by black people towards actions that will lead to significant reduction in [the] insecurity and discomfort that have always tended to haunt the lives of blacks."¹⁸⁵ Indeed, the African participants in the focus groups in those studies did not pull their punches:

"We have been provoked, insulted, humiliated, and cheated for a long time. Now we're beginning to say 'enough is enough,' and they will better listen, because I see a lot of determination in the faces of these young people. They really mean business now."

"We want to live like them [the whites]. We are fed up with being beggars."

"They must give us our share of the wealth if they want peace."

"We want representatives in Parliament, and we want the same living standards as the whites."¹⁸⁶

Parallel changes were happening among colored people in Cape Town: the general mood there during the uprising was described as euphoric, and people vied to express their

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p.321-322. Particularly striking is the social consensus established around the uprising in Soweto itself, where the survey found cross-class support for the demonstrations (78% of those with Standard 8 or more schooling, 62% of those with less). In Durban and Pretoria, in contrast, where the conflict had been less intense and conservative, homeland-oriented politics was stronger, majorities of the better educated group backed the protests, but they received minority support from those with less than Standard 8.

¹⁸⁵ Mafuna, *A Black Viewpoint of the South African Way of Life*, *op. cit.*, p.32.

¹⁸⁶ *idem.* (first quote), Hanf et. al., *South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change*, *op. cit.*, p.331, 337 (last three).

hostility to the system. "The slightest suggestion that is anti-status quo is accepted with alacrity," a colored university student remarked. Many who had remained on the margins were swept up. To cite just one example: Lydia Johnson, Miss Africa South (the black Miss South Africa) for 1976, had dodged political questions at the Miss Universe contest in London months before the uprising; after it began, the colored beauty was arrested in the street for incitement to join demonstrations.¹⁸⁷

The militancy and outspokenness bred by the uprising was strongest of all among the youth, who were forged into an autonomous political force for the first time in the crucible of Soweto. Hanf et. al. reported that "a whole generation has undergone an inordinately strong politicization. Even if many youths were not very motivated politically at the time of the first demonstrations, confrontations with the police and experience of solidarity has strongly shaped their political consciousness." Not surprisingly, the group which they found most strongly supported the Soweto protests was students (71% were in favor), and this held in all three cities they polled.¹⁸⁸ The emergence of young people as a force on their own, and the actions and language in which they expressed their politics, strongly reflected the influence of BC and its re-working of the everyday experience of urban blacks. In the interview with which this section opened, Kenneth Rachidi of the BPC further remarked:

"The authorities, the parents, and the teachers are going to be faced with a new child. The kids have learned a whole political lesson during the past week. ... they are rejecting the imposition of the whole white establishment and system plus the norms and values of whites. ... [This is] Black Consciousness in the kids.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with fourth year colored student living in Wynberg, Oral Evidence, UCT History Workshop, 1976, in Karis-Gerhart Archive, p.19.

¹⁸⁸ Hanf et. al., South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., pp.275, 321.

It is gut reaction, not lofty philosophy, and it reflects and articulates the feelings of the people."¹⁸⁹

The echoes of Black Consciousness discourse come through clearly in the comments of young focus group participants during the uprising on Bantu Education or on feelings of black inferiority which inhibited political participation among their elders.¹⁹⁰

The outpouring of anger which began in 1976-77 was accompanied by feelings of pride, empowerment, and solidarity in black communities, often expressed in the language of Black Consciousness. Pride in blackness, and in the equal human worth of blacks, came out clearly in focus group comments redolent of BC discourse ("black awareness has been coming [since] a long way ago because we have been getting tired of being second to whites," "I am aware of my blackness and I'm proud of it.")¹⁹¹ The paralyzing sense of inferiority which had plagued blacks just a few years earlier had been shucked off: 71% of urban African men felt that blacks were as or more intelligent as whites, and 94% felt they had "the right to the same as whites have," Hanf found.¹⁹² Even popular culture was affected: after the uprising, the words of old folksongs changed to reflect the pride in blackness and the loss of cultural shame.¹⁹³ This pride, in turn, was linked to a new-found sense of power. Hanf found that 58% of the African men surveyed

¹⁸⁹ Quoted in Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash, op. cit., p.191.

¹⁹⁰ See Mafuna, A Black Viewpoint of the South African Way of Life, op. cit., pp.89, 10.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p.14, and Summary Report on 17 Focus Group Discussions, op. cit. p.78.

¹⁹² Hanf et. al., South Africa. The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., pp.336, 331.

¹⁹³ Thus, in a Sotho childbirth song, the last line was changed from "*legoneng ngwana otshwanang le le kalidi*" ("Come out to see a child who is like a colored") to "*leboneng ngwana otshwanang le mo Afrika*" ("a child who looks like an African.") In "Shosholozza," the migrant workers' anthem adopted as a freedom song, the last line was altered from "*stimela sivele Rhodesia*" ("the train is from Rhodesia") to "*stimela sivele eAzania*" ("the train is from Azania" – the BCM name for a black-ruled South Africa.) Helen Lunn, Antecedents of the Music and Popular Culture of the African Post-1976 Generation, MA Thesis, Wits University, Johannesburg, 1986, pp.234-235.

in 1977 did not express agreement with the claim that African collective efforts “will not succeed against the power of the whites” – and the proportions taking that position were significantly higher among Sowetans, permanent urbanites, and the better-educated – precisely the groups most deeply touched by the uprisings. Some 84% said that solidarity among black workers would strengthen their position against employers, a clear indication of the perceived power of collective action, and strong interest was expressed in trade unions in his and other studies.¹⁹⁴ Soon belief in solidarity had gone so far, Schlemmer reported, that 76% of Africans in greater Johannesburg, 69% of those in urban Natal, and even 54% of those in rural Natal agreed that black, colored, and Indian should stand together and become one black people compared with the whites. He commented: “Although the interest in black solidarity is high, it is now no longer an interest mainly sustained by an ideology among the better-educated and more politicized black South Africans. ... [T]he results indicate that the black solidarity ethic has been manifestly successful inasmuch as the large proportions of rank-and-file black South Africans have adopted the spirit of at least some nominal unity of purpose among black and brown people in opposition to whites.”¹⁹⁵

But solidarity was not all; as the mutual acceptance preached by the BCM was accelerated by the uprising, the different shades of black began to blur into an emergent South African national identity. Research among Africans during and after the upheaval

¹⁹⁴ Hanf et. al., South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., pp.331-2, Summary Report on 17 Focus Group Discussions, op. cit., p.121.

¹⁹⁵ Buthelezi Commission Report, pp.27-28, reporting 1981 research results. Our findings in the August 1981 Star survey were similar: Africans said that colored people should be called black by a margin of 53% to 29%, including majorities in all three cities polled; the same was said of Indians by a majority in Cape Town (67% to 17%) and a plurality in Durban (45% to 40%), although Sowetans largely disagreed (64% to 26%).

revealed attitudes towards members of other tribal groups which contrasted sharply with the ethno-centrism prevalent a decade before. Focus group participants declared:

“Our people don’t want to have anything to do with ethnic groups anymore.”

“When people from different groups get married, it’s no different from mixing tea and sugar – it tastes good.”

“I would rather class myself as a Black man than as Zulu, Sotho, or so on – it is more important.”

“I’m a Sotho married to a Swazi woman. My kids have asked me what they are, whether Sotho or Swazi, and I’ve told them they are blacks. I don’t want any apartheid in my house.”¹⁹⁶

In a similar vein, in 1977 Hanf found that 95% of African men in the cities he surveyed had no objection to a neighbor who belonged to another tribal group, and only 19% preferred to be people who spoke their own language (generally more conservative, rurally-oriented people).¹⁹⁷ Although the differences had narrowed in the years immediately before, impelled both by social change and BC politics, the revolt accelerated the process considerably, as people from different circles, neighborhoods, or racial groups touched by the struggle met, spoke, and bonded. Maria Tholo described the process in Cape Town in her diary of the uprising:

“One thing I’ve noticed and enjoyed is that since the riots even people who were not on speaking terms have unexpectedly found themselves talking. It must be because of the many shocks and frustrations. We especially noticed it with the coloreds ... Before the riots the coloreds used to keep us away from them. But now, even if you don’t know a person, he behaves warmly towards you. It’s as if you are fellow sufferers. The fact is we are all under one blanket. We are all non-white.”¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Hanf et. al., South Africa. The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., p.339 (first two quotes), Summary Report on 17 Focus Group Discussions, op. cit., p.78 (last two).

¹⁹⁷ Hanf et. al., South Africa. The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., p.340.

¹⁹⁸ Hermer, ed., The Diary of Maria Tholo, op. cit., pp.54-55. The changes in attitudes between Africans and coloreds during the uprising were particularly marked and noted on both sides. During the events, an African schoolteacher in Nyanga township, Cape Town, commented, “One feature is so significant apart from anything else. The colored people have expressed our solidarity with us.” Oral Evidence, UCT History Workshop, 1976, Karis-Gerhart Archive. Similarly, one of Hanf’s Johannesburg focus group members remarked, “We like the coloreds who join us in the struggles; especially those in Cape town, who

With the general acceptance of the common black identity propounded by the BCM, indeed the very idea that South Africa was a black country, the black identity increasingly merged into a new national, South African identity in the post-Soweto era. Thus, the extensive 1979 UCT focus group study, conducted in African townships around the country, reported, "Almost every single respondent identified himself as a member of one major group – variously called blacks, Africans, black Africans, or black South Africans – which encompassed all the traditional tribal or ethnic groupings."¹⁹⁹ Indeed, the national component stood out boldly in participants' comments in both Hanf's and the UCT study:

"We want to be called South Africans, not Bantu."

"I want to belong to South Africa and not to a bantustan."

"I want to emphasize my belonging to South Africa. There are people who think we are just objects here. Hence I say South African and in capitals and underlined, 'BLACK'. "²⁰⁰

Change was even more striking among the colored group: Groenewald found that the proportion who identified themselves as "colored" had dropped from 81% in 1976 to 34% by 1983, while those who identified themselves as South Africans increased from

tried to do something, like us." Coloreds were equally struck by the change, as a middle-aged colored man in Hanover Park, Cape Town, noted. "This ... is the first time that the coloreds have become aware of the fact that they are part of the oppressed people. And another thing that has enlightened us was that the student youth had to take the lead in making the older people realize that the day of being shackled, of being slaves, of being oppressed has gone." Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, op. cit., pp.132-133. The changes appear to have endured: Groenewald found that the proportion of colored people in Cape Town who felt they should only support their own group's leaders fell from 58% in 1976 to 28% in 1983. Groenewald, *Reaksies op Minderheidsgroepstatus*, op. cit., p.318.

¹⁹⁹ Summary Report on 17 Focus Group Discussions, op. cit., pp.78.

²⁰⁰ Hanf et. al., South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., p.337 (first quote), Summary Report on 17 Focus Group Discussions, op. cit., pp.78, 81 (last two).

0.4% to 49% over the same period.²⁰¹ Although this emergent national identity would overlay rather than erase older loyalties – as events in the 1980s and 1990s would repeatedly demonstrate – it also provided black South Africans with an extremely important and powerful sense that “the people” was becoming a reality, despite the dividing lines drawn among them by history and reinforced by apartheid.

This emergent national-popular discourse, centered around the black majority and the quest for majority rule, was also strongly associated with support for democratic values, including political equality, governmental accountability, and political tolerance. A single country with universal franchise was supported by 83% of Hanf’s respondents, while a qualified franchise was supported by only 21%. Hanf’s findings were clear: the “vast majority of urban blacks” wanted “one south Africa for blacks and whites with equal political rights for all.” Support for this position wavered little by class, a sign of the convergence among classes that had taken place since 1960, when Kuper found that middle-class Durban Africans favored a qualified franchise (Chapter Two, p.110)²⁰² African focus group participants were equally eloquent on the importance of democracy, equality, and accountability.

“If we have equality before the law, all the other things will follow, because we will be involved in the decision-making, in deciding the future of our country.”

“People who can’t read or write should also be allowed to vote. They have their natural abilities, they have the power of reason that they were born with. It isn’t their fault that they didn’t go to school. Everyone should be able to vote.”

²⁰¹ Groenewald, Reaksies op Minderheidsgroepstatus, op. cit., pp.240-241. Summing up his findings, he wrote, “The data provide further support for the interpretation that the colored increasingly reject the application of a ‘group identity’ model to their situation” (p.318, my translation). In the same light, the 1982 World Social Values survey found that a plurality of all three black groups cited South African as the group to which they belonged to first. The Markinor South African Social Value Study, op. cit., p.1.

²⁰² Hanf et. al., South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit, pp.346-347. Indeed, the clear support for universal franchise by 1977 put 80% of the African population in the category which Brett had labeled youthful “extremists” in his study fourteen years earlier.

“We don’t want any political leaders like Idi Amin. Amin appointed himself leader; we want to elect our leaders.”

“If a leader we have elected does something we don’t want, then we’ll elect a different one.”²⁰³

Survey results proved that these views were hardly unusual. A government with an opposition party that criticized it was preferred to a one-party state without a divisive opposition (the usual rationale given at the time for the elimination of other parties) by a margin of 72 to 25% in the Hanf study, while a government which listens to critics was preferred to one which suppressed them in the name of unity by an even more lop-sided 80% to 18%.²⁰⁴ Large majorities of Africans (two-thirds or more) also favored giving the colored, Indian, and even the white minority the right to vote.²⁰⁵ Hanf et. al. concluded that at least two-thirds of urban blacks had broadly democratic values, and this may have been an under-estimate due to methodological factors.²⁰⁶ Significantly, those inclined to democratic values included the educated, the anti-homeland-oriented, and those who did not feel powerless – precisely the groups most in tune to the discourse of BC – while such values were weakest among those who were poorly educated.

²⁰³ Summary Report on 17 Focus Group Discussions, op. cit. p.159 (first quote), Hanf et. al., South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., p.326 (others).

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p.327.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., pp.329-330.

²⁰⁶ Hanf et. al., South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., pp.326-327. His findings were more equivocal on this point than they might have been because of the vague wording of one of the questions in the battery used on democratic values. Respondents were told to think of independent states such as Tanzania, Zambia, and Botswana, then asked, “Which do you think is best for such an African country, one political party only with one single plan for the country’s future, or more than one party each with its own plan for the country’s future.” Some 49% chose the first option, 46% the second – a result apparently inconsistent with the finding on the acceptance of political opposition cited in the text. Hanf notes this may have been due to the fact that Tanzania and Zambia were then one-party states, and that the prompt before the question may thus have influenced responses. The question itself is also unclear, and respondents may have thought that they were being offered a choice between a one-party government and an incoherent multi-party coalition government, rather than a choice between a single-party regime and a multi-party democracy.

homeland-oriented, and felt powerless.²⁰⁷ Thus, the township struggles of 1976-1977 helped further an important shift in the political culture away from the political intolerance and anti-democratic values associated with the univocal discourses of traditionalism and patrimonialism predominant in the overlapping circles of regime and opposition in the pre-1960 era.

Even as support for democratic values increased, in the wake of the uprising there was a further drainage of support for official representative institutions and the elites associated with these clientelist bodies among blacks in Soweto and other major cities. While it seems hard to believe that turnout in Soweto could have run below the 14% recorded in the 1974 UBC poll, when elections were held for the government's new-look Soweto Council in February 1978, only two of the 30 seats were contested, drawing a 5% poll, with no candidates at all in 19 wards.. Special elections held to fill the vacant seats two months later drew a 6% turnout, with fewer than 100 votes recorded in nine. They did succeed, however, in returning to office many of the familiar faces of the old collaborationist elite, including former chair David Thebehali, who resumed his post, and his predecessor T.J. Makhaya.²⁰⁸ But this group confronted an extraordinary level of popular rejection. A mid-1979 poll by Schlemmer found that on average, Sowetans gave Thebehali a very low favorability score of 3.5 on a 0-to-10 scale, while Committee of Ten Chair Motlana received a strongly favorable average score of 8.3 out of 10 in the

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.327.

²⁰⁸ Brickhill and Brooks, *Whirlwind Before the Storm*, *op. cit.*, p.286, and Kane-Berman, *Soweto*, *op. cit.*, p.213.

same study.²⁰⁹ In the Star survey conducted by this author a year later, Thebehali's job performance was rated favorably by 7%, unfavorably by 73%, and Motlana trounced him in a hypothetical election matchup, 73% to 7%.²¹⁰ The authorities had somewhat greater success in normalizing the situation elsewhere; by the end of 1978, 92 councils had been elected on an average poll of 30%, comparable to those of the UBC era, but these were chiefly in smaller towns little touched by the flames of 1976.²¹¹ In most of the main urban centers – such as Port Elizabeth, to be examined in the next section – the degree of politicization and rejection of government-created bodies prevailing was comparable to Soweto.

Indeed, the post-Soweto period was marked by the emergence of an open crisis of legitimacy for the regime, as the central institutions of political authority were overtly rejected by urban blacks. In the World Social Values Survey, the country's Parliament received a vote of no-confidence from blacks by stunning margins: 75% to 23% among urban Africans, 72% to 28% among coloreds, and 62% to 37% among Indians.²¹² This was a far cry from the authority-respecting, law-abiding attitudes prevalent among blacks prior to 1960 (see Chapter Two, p.97). Africans speaking about the political situation in focus groups around the country in 1979 were equally scathing about their political situation:

²⁰⁹ Lawrence Schlemmer, "Political Alternatives for the Ciskei: Political Attitudes and Values among Xhosa-Speaking Africans of Ciskeian Origin or Residence," in George Quail, Report of the Ciskei Commission (Pretoria, Conference Associates: 1980) (hereafter cited as Quail Commission Report), p.228.

²¹⁰ The Star, November 1980.

²¹¹ Kane-Berman, Soweto, *op. cit.*, p.211.

²¹² The Markinor South African Social Value Study, *op. cit.*, p.47.

“As long as there is no black in parliament, I don’t think our views are ever taken into account.”

“I’m not aware of where our views should be taken for them to be taken into account. We are not represented in parliament so what do you expect?”

“The people who stand for us are the people chosen by our white bosses. So they can’t give our true colors – whatever they say, they say to satisfy our white bosses, not us.”²¹³

Comments by coloreds on the CPRC in the UCT groups held at the same time were just as harsh: “a farce,” “a waste of time,” “dummies,” “no results.” Once more, BC rhetoric echoed through their comments:

“They agree with apartheid, that is why they agreed to this separate government.”

“They are accepting that they are lower than the so-called whites.”

“A puppet on a string.”²¹⁴

In the same vein, Groenewald found that support for the use of existing political institutions had fallen from 37% just before the 1976 unrest to 25% in its wake.²¹⁵ The leaders of all the colored parties associated with the CPRC – Labor as well as the Federals – were rejected in the UCT groups.²¹⁶ Hostility to the regime was so strong in the African groups in the same research that the investigators commented, “Most respondents appeared to judge the sincerity of Black leaders on the basis of their opposition to the government.”²¹⁷

²¹³ Summary Report on 17 Focus Group Discussions, op. cit., pp.155-156.

²¹⁴ Report on 4 Focus Group Discussions, op. cit., p.61.

²¹⁵ Groenewald, Reaksies op Minderheidsgroepstatus, op. cit., p.318. Equally significant, he reported that in 1976 colored people who supported change in South Africa were no more likely than those who did not to reject use of the existing institutions. In 1983, on the contrary, support for change was strongly correlated with rejection of government-created bodies – clear evidence of growing polarization and politicization (p.324).

²¹⁶ Report on 4 Focus Group Discussions, op. cit., p.71. Groenewald reported similar findings: non-response to a question on support for the colored parties increased from 67% in 1976 to 82% in 1983, a 15-point rise. Reaksies op Minderheidsgroepstatus, op. cit p.314.

²¹⁷ Summary Report on 17 Focus Group Discussions, op. cit., p.161.

The declining legitimacy of the regime and the increasing politicization of its subjects accelerated the shift in political loyalties among urban Africans away from the conservative homeland elites and toward leaders associated with opposition to apartheid, initially benefiting both Mangosuthu Buthelezi and more militant organizations, notably the ANC. The weakness of the pro-independence bantustan elites after the uprising among urban blacks – apart from Buthelezi – showed starkly in Hanf's 1977 results.²¹⁸ When Africans in the three cities polled were asked which black South African leader they most admired, all but one of the other homeland leaders drew less than 20% even among their own ethnic groups (and the exception, Lebowa's Cedric Phatudi, shared Buthelezi's opposition to independence). Particularly striking was the poor showing of Bophutatswana's Mangope, mentioned by only 8% of the Tswana despite the homeland's proximity to the Johannesburg-Pretoria area and their heavy presence in those cities. In Soweto, the largest part of the population – 45% – named leaders of militant anti-regime organizations (with ANC leaders cited by 26%, PAC leaders by 11%, and BC leaders by 8%)²¹⁹ The militant leaders appealed to Africans across the ethnic spectrum, but they were strongest among those who identified with the city, who were not conservative, cautious, or feeling powerless on political issues, and who supported the Soweto protests and militant action – in short, the audience of the BCM. But the 8% score of BC leaders, whose limited support came almost exclusively from people under 30, underlines the fact that despite its wide acceptance, the black identity propagated by the BCM was not a

²¹⁸ Hanf et. al., South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., pp.353-356 for the findings in this paragraph.

²¹⁹ These figures were almost surely under-estimates, since the first two organizations were illegal and the third under intense police pressure at the time of the study, and true figures for support would have been somewhat higher.

form of party identification. The Black Consciousness Movement was a social movement – which made it both much more, and much less, than a political party.²²⁰ Buthelezi, for his part, was the preferred leader of 33% in Soweto (roughly half Zulu and half from other groups), while his massive 78% of mentions in Durban swamped all other comers.²²¹ His popularity was largely personal, and reflected the appeal of his outspoken anti-apartheid stance (comments from Hanf’s focus group members reflected this: “Buthelezi is against the bantustans, so he is the right man for us,” “He doesn’t care which ethnic group a black man belongs to”) rather than the strength of his Inkatha movement.²²² He drew a more rurally- and tribally-oriented following, and one more religious and politically cautious, than the ANC, PAC, and BC leaders – but one quite diverse ideologically (including militants and moderates, people who felt powerless and others who did not, and supporters and opponents of the Soweto protests). They all were held together by his careful straddling of such divisive issues, a posture which would

²²⁰ As Hanf et. al. commented, “The Black Consciousness Movement, not yet prohibited at the time of this study, is less a single organization than an *etat d’esprit* (“state of mind”) of one generation – its constituent associations amounted to little more than a loose if intensively functioning communications network.” South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., p.351. While its linkage to influential organizations in civil society gave it a leverage far beyond its numbers, this also meant that the great majority of those who identified with the movement did not have a personal connection to its own constituent bodies.

²²¹ Mark Orkin has pointed out that these figures are probably somewhat exaggerated, due to methodological aspects of the questionnaire likely to increase mentions of Buthelezi. Thus Question 66, “Thinking of African leaders here in South Africa, whom do you admire most? Whom else?” was immediately preceded by Question 65, “There is an organization in the African areas called Inkatha. Do you know about it? IF YES: What can such an organization do for Africans like you in the future.” Moreover, if no homeland leader was mentioned in the two responses allowed to Question 66, the interviewer was specifically instructed to ask, “Is there a homeland leader whom you consider a true political leader?” See Hanf et. al., South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., p. 471. A balanced questionnaire would have placed all black political organizations on an equal footing, either by omitting Question 65 and the prompt after Question 66, or else put in similar items regarding the more militant groups. However, despite there is little doubt that in 1977, Buthelezi still would have topped a more accurate poll, if by a smaller margin.

²²² Ibid., p.353 (focus group quotes). Hanf et. al. reported that while Buthelezi was named by 44% of blacks in the three cities, Inkatha was viewed favorably by only 22% (p.360).

prove impossible to maintain as rising mass militancy and political polarization forced him to define himself more clearly.

In addition to sharpening anti-regime militancy, the uprising and its discourse also helped blacks overcome fear of political involvement and increased their willingness to engage in collective action. Despite the tremendous cost in lives, injuries, and lost wages, the demonstrations were regarded with pride as an opportunity for the expression of grievances despite the lack of major results, and they generated hope and sustained faith that a change of regime would eventually occur. The comments of focus group members reflect this:

“Now the whites and the whole world know that we are unhappy in this country.”

“It is now our time to show the makers of these laws that we are tired.”

“As the unwanted citizens of South Africa we can do nothing else.

Demonstrations are the only answer.”

“Change must come, not immediately, but this can’t last. It is going to have to come and it will come.”²²³

In these popular responses, the discursive aspects— self-esteem for the capacity of self-expression and faith in black solidarity – predominate over those associated with rational choice (indeed, the positive perceptions of the struggle and the absence of references to protest costs or concrete expectations of short-term gain are noteworthy). Rather, the events of 1976-77 reinforced the claim, propagated by the BCM, that blacks themselves were capable of collective action that would shake the regime.²²⁴ Issues of cost lost

²²³ ibid., p.320 (first and third quotes), Mafuna, A Black Viewpoint of the South African Way of Life, op. cit., p.11 (second), Report on 4 Focus Group Discussions, op. cit., p.70 (last).

²²⁴ This optimism is reflected in many comments. One of Hanf’s African student focus group members indicated that they costs of the struggle did not faze them. “What gives us home is precisely that the Boers [Afrikaners] resort to violence. That shows that they have lost their nerve. We will cause them to lost other things, too, and then we will attain what we want.” South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., p.273. Speaking of colored people in Cape Town, a former activist there remarked, “1976 politicized people across the spectrum. There was a lot of fear of the cops because of the shootings – but

relevance against the desire to attain dignity and equality.²²⁵ The resulting change in atmosphere was striking: the fact that by 1977 nearly half of Hanf's sample in Johannesburg would profess allegiance to banned or soon-to-be-banned organizations to a total stranger (the black interviewer) was itself strong evidence of the reduction of political fear so prevalent just a few years earlier (see Chapter Three, p.205). As political militancy, voice, and activity increased in the aftermath of Soweto, fear declined further. While Hanf found that in 1977, a sizable minority (34%) of Africans polled did not feel they had to be politically cautious, the proportion who held that view had increased to roughly half by 1981 (54% around Johannesburg, 47% in Natal).²²⁶ Similarly, while Groenewald found that colored people hostile to the regime tended to be politically inactive prior to the 1976 uprising, by 1983 they tended to form the more politically active group.²²⁷ The resulting potential for collective action was revealed by the World Social Values Survey in 1982, which found that 30% - 50% of Africans and coloreds were ready to join boycotts, demonstrate, or sign petitions, and that somewhat smaller numbers would strike.²²⁸ Shared words thus prefigured common deeds: the uprising of

there was a certain sense of the capacity to do what had not been possible in the earlier period." Interview, Trevor Manuel, Johannesburg, August 11, 1992.

²²⁵ As one African focus group participant put it: The government is giving us half a loaf. I'd rather have no bread and I want to see a change in my lifetime, not when I'm dead." Summary Report on 17 Focus Group Discussions, op. cit., p.156.

²²⁶ Hanf, et. al., South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., p.320, Buthelezi Commission Report, p.28.

²²⁷ Groenewald, Reaksies op Minderheidsgroepstatus, op. cit., pp.322, 336.

²²⁸ The Markinor South African Social Value Study, op. cit., p.3. Willingness to participate was higher among men, the educated, and the young. An even greater propensity to collective action was found by Schlemmer in Natal in 1981: 69% of residents indicated they would join a stay-away and 64% a shops boycott if urged to do so by a respected African leader. Buthelezi Commission Report, p.35.

1976-77 was the crucible which forged what had been communities of discourse into potential large-scale collective actors, creating political opportunity from below.

The politicization generated by the uprising was so powerful, in fact, that its ultimate consequence was the acceptance of the necessity of violence against the regime by large segments of the black population. As their newly-voiced demands and expectations confronted the immovable white regime, anger and impatience flared among blacks. Based on his focus groups during the uprising, Mafuna warned that blacks were approaching “the end of the line regarding the granting of civil and political rights by the ruling elite,” and the views of respondents in his and other studies bore this out.²²⁹ Hanf found that the proportion of Africans around Johannesburg who said they were “angry and impatient” about the social order was 39% in 1977 and rose to 44% in 1979; the corresponding figures for Durban Africans were 44% in 1977 and 55% in 1979. Groenewald noted the same trend among colored people: the proportion seeking “quick, drastic change” rose from 20% just before the uprising to 38% in 1983.²³⁰ A second factor was the demonstration effect of successful guerrilla warfare in neighboring countries – above all the Frelimo takeover in Mozambique. Hanf found that only 18% of those he polled thought that white South Africans could have defeated Frelimo²³¹ The result was widespread acceptance that violence was inevitable, if blacks were to be free.

²²⁹ Mafuna, A Black Viewpoint of the South African Way of Life, op. cit., p.46.

²³⁰ Hanf. et. al., South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., p.442, Groenewald, Reaksies op Minderheidsgroepstatus, op. cit., p.314.

²³¹ The more common sentiment, expressed by a focus group participant, was, “I like Frelimo. They chased out the Portuguese and now rule the country. I think they’re just like us; once they were oppressed and now they can fight for our freedom. We too must fight for our freedom.” Hanf. et. al., South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., p.324.

“The Boers [Afrikaners] no longer believe in peace so we must fight for our freedom.”

“Only violence can change South Africa. We are fighting for the country which the whites stole from us.”

“This country is slowly moving to real conflict. We’re soon approaching real war, because these Afrikaners do not want to give us the little important things in life.”

“Our views are only taken into account when they are accompanied by violent action. We have seen a case in point, when ministers were falling over backwards simply because a few stones were thrown.”²³²

Schlemmer reported that in 1981, if no change occurred in South Africa within a decade, revolution, war, or violent upheaval was spontaneously predicted by an astounding 99% of African respondents in Johannesburg and Natal.²³³

In the aftermath of the uprising, a sizable minority of blacks held that violent action was necessary. In the IBR Durban poll of 1977, 11% of Africans and 14% of coloreds said that only violence could end apartheid; a projective question about white-ruled Rhodesia in the Hanf study that year yielded 28% of respondents who said fighting was the only way for Africans to improve their situation. By the 1981 Schlemmer study, some 32% of Africans around Johannesburg and 21% of those in Natal said that “only bloodshed” could change South Africa.²³⁴ Sentiment in favor of violence was particularly strong among young people, particularly schooled youth who had been involved in the uprising.²³⁵ Many of the estimated 4,000 young people who went into

²³² Ibid., p.320 (first two quotes), Mafuna, A Black Viewpoint of the South African Way of Life, op. cit., p.46 (third), Summary Report on 17 Focus Group Discussions, op. cit., p.156 (last).

²³³ Buthelezi Commission Report, op. cit., p.32.

²³⁴ Institute of Black Research, “Soweto: A People’s Response,” op.cit., p.19, Hanf, et. al., South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., p.325, Buthelezi Commission Report, op. cit., p.30.

²³⁵ In 1977, a SASM leader commented, “the youth of South Africa are fed up with the status quo. It is clear that the youth is ready for action now. We no longer believe in talking and talking. We believe in positive action. Things like armed struggle. Students were attacking the police even without arms. It shows the youth are quite ready for the big thing. Also the youth have gained a rich experience of struggle.

exile in the revolt found their way to the guerrilla training camps of the nationalist movements (with 80% going to the ANC).²³⁶ Many more of those who stayed behind were ready to become the shock troops of insurrection in the future. A much larger proportion of the black population was, after the uprising, ready to be supportive of violent action. In the IBR poll, 44% of Africans and 27% of coloreds said that violence against apartheid would be legitimate in certain circumstances; five years later the World Social Values Survey reported that 47% of Africans and 41% of coloreds felt that "terrorism might be justified in certain circumstances."²³⁷ Even more striking was Schlemmer's 1981 finding among Africans polled around Natal said that if the ANC sent someone to their area secretly who asked for help, 48% said that most or many people would help them.²³⁸ Thus, after Soweto, a vast number of people were ready to support violent action, forming the sea in which guerrilla "fish" could swim or the mass base for large-scale insurrectionary activity. This readiness to make the supreme sacrifice is not one which can be easily explained as a matter of rational calculation about gains and costs. Who were those ready to support violent resistance? Hanf et. al reported that they were likely to be people who did not feel powerless, who were politically committed, who supported the Soweto uprising, and who believed in democratic values.²³⁹ In short,

This provides fertile ground for the armed struggle and other types of positive action against the racist regime." Tebello Motapanyane, "How June 16 Demo Was Planned," Sechaba, 2nd quarter 1977, p.59.

²³⁶ Frankel, "The Dynamics of a Political Renaissance," op. cit., p.172, Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, op.cit.

²³⁷ Institute of Black Research, "Soweto: A People's Response," op.cit., p.19, The Markinor South African Social Value Study, op. cit., p.43.

²³⁸ Buthelezi Commission Report, op. cit., p.36.

²³⁹ "Those who feel less helpless are both more democratic and more ready to fight for political rights. Democrats welcome the Soweto uprisings and tend to be less cautious in political matters. Above all, they are clearly committed to political struggle.... In other words: the more democratic a black South African is,

the people whose imaginations and values had been shaped by the Black Consciousness Movement were also those who had become ready for violent confrontation with the authorities.

Thus, it is evident that, through the national revolt which the Black Consciousness Movement unleashed and helped lead, a profound and enduring change was worked in the political culture of urban black South Africans. Once the habit of silence of broken, the roar of discontent from the townships could no longer be silenced, and indeed grew louder with time. Moreover, during two years of conflict, the connections and shared experience of struggle among neighbors and communities fostered by the upheaval helped build solidarity between them. It also promoted the growth of a politicized collective consciousness which fused the three black groups, increasingly, into a common national identity. The rise of this notion of South Africa as a black majority-country, with majority rule, went together with the spread of democratic values in general among blacks. At the same time, in the country's principal cities, the uprising drained away most of the remaining legitimacy of the collaborationist bantustan and township elites, swinging the pendulum decisively towards the opponents of the apartheid regime. It also left a legacy of political opportunity re-created: much of the fear which had paralyzed township protest was gone, and their residents were ready to engage in collective action of a size and scope unprecedented in South Africa. Finally, after the uprising, there was a readiness to engage in or support violent resistance to the regime among a large part of the black community. In all these respects, which contrasted dramatically with the pre-1960 political culture of black South Africa, it was clear that the BCM's mission of

the stronger his demands for political rights and the readier he is to adopt non-peaceful means to attain them." Hanf. et. al., South Africa, The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., p.330.

“conscientization” largely had been completed. Although the movement’s principal organs had been suppressed in the process, it had transformed the political environment, creating a possibility for open, mass political organization and protest on a scale never before seen in the country. This change, which advanced South Africa’s regime transition from the struggle for liberalization to the phase of democratization, was the most enduring legacy of the Black Consciousness Movement. The final section of this chapter will explore its first manifestations, which emerged in Port Elizabeth, and demonstrated the new scope and character of the political activism that would develop in South Africa’s townships in the 1980s to challenge – and ultimately defeat – the apartheid regime.

VI. “PARADISE IS CLOSING DOWN”: THE LEGACY OF THE BCM AND THE RISE OF EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS IN PORT ELIZABETH

The aftermath of the Soweto uprising was marked by new political possibilities, strategies, and alignments, which represented the beginning of a new stage of South Africa’s regime transition: organized mass extra-parliamentary struggle for democracy. Through their large-scale collective action in 1976-77, South Africa’s urban blacks had widened the bounds of the public sphere and demonstrated a new protest repertoire, which opened the possibility of new types of national organization autonomous of the patronage politics of the old black elites. This posed evident threats to the Pretoria

regime, which responded, after internal wrangling, with a reform program of economic liberalization and the reinforcement of racially and ethnically-based political institutions. Squeezed in the rapidly narrowing space these polarizing developments left between regime and opposition, Gatsha Buthelezi and his Inkatha movement, though continuing to reject homeland independence, increasingly aligned themselves with the white authorities, at a high price in black support. The ANC, on the other hand, re-thought its strategy and came to emphasize internal mass mobilization, while reaping prestige among blacks from the “armed propaganda” of its developing guerrilla actions. As these developments occurred, debates among the networks of activists within the country – most from the BCM, some from the older movements or ex-members of the official elite – moved in a similar direction, generating growing interest in community organization and the ANC. The first place where the fruits of these changes emerged was in Port Elizabeth, where the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organization (PEBCO) became a prototype for the mass-membership community organizations which would become a driving force in black political struggles of the 1980s. Although the path from Soweto in 1976 to Port Elizabeth in 1979 marks the end of the period in which Black Consciousness was the principal movement in black politics in South Africa, the politics of this period were essentially about what would become of the opportunities, elites, institutions, and mass consciousness formed or touched by the events of 1976-77. In this sense, most of the individuals and factors that played essential roles in the development of extra-parliamentary politics in these years and after are part of the legacy of the Black Consciousness Movement.

The Soweto uprising expanded the limits of political discourse for black South Africans and affirmed the emergence of a new collective action repertoire in the townships, developments which permitted the growth of mass extra-parliamentary organizations directly challenging the patrimonial power base of the regime in black communities. After an intense outpouring of voice over a two year period, it was impossible to return to the comparative quiet which had prevailed before or to undo the mass politicization which had occurred. Bold declarations by leaders and rank-and-file – demands for majority rule, support for economic sanctions, and the like – which might have provoked detention, a banning order, or at least a visit from the police before 1976 were now commonplace. The authorities could not police statements as before: they could not lock up all those who spoke out because they simply could not lock up most of the black community.²⁴⁰ In fact, the hands of the police were more than full dealing with overtly subversive acts, as ANC underground and guerrilla activity burgeoned, leaving them even less time to worry about words. Although bans remained serious nuisances for publications and individuals, in the post-Soweto era it was possible to advocate radical change publicly, and even to debate revolutionary strategy (if, often, using coded language). Indeed, although the BC organizations themselves had been proscribed, and many individual leaders or followers killed, jailed, banned, or exiled, the networks of activists to which they belonged and the new township elites leading them largely continued to function after the October 19 crackdown. The sheer scale of political activity which had developed meant that even the loss of a few thousand participants, though a serious blow, was not fatal; within a few years new activists and organizations

²⁴⁰ I made this point in more detail in an anonymous article, "The Steyn Report," in Work in Progress, 1982.

had replace those which had disappeared. Most important of all, the discursive institutions in civil society which provided the foundation for mobilization remained intact and politically oriented. The regime could ban a student organization or a newspaper for blacks, but in an urban, industrial society it could not close all black schools and universities, or ban all black newspapers, churches, theaters, and trade unions. Although their voices were lowered in the immediate aftermath of October 19, by 1979-80 organized black civil society was as outspoken as before (and even better resourced, thanks to an inflow of funds from foreign churches, governments, and firms concerned to demonstrate opposition to apartheid). The persistence and growth of the elites, networks, and institutions which provided direction and sustenance for political activity, along with the reinforcement of national identity among urban blacks which the uprising had produced, meant that the new collective action repertoire – national and autonomous, instead of parochial and patronized – would become the dominant mode of collective action among the regime’s opponents.²⁴¹ In turn, the permanence of the social and institutional foundations for national-level collective action not under the control of regime elites, together with the ability to express overt opposition to the regime, meant that “the extra-parliamentary political sphere was re-constituted,” as Harold Wolpe put it.²⁴²

While blacks were in a position of new strength, the Soweto revolt left the government under severe pressure on the political, military, economic, and international

²⁴¹ The appearance among urban black south Africans of what Tilly calls the new collective action repertoire under the impulsion of the Black Consciousness Movement is discussed in Chapter Six, p.522.

²⁴² Harold Wolpe, “Strategic Issues in the Struggle for National Liberation in South Africa,” *Review*, vol.8 (1984), p.239.

fronts. After the uprising, the realization dawned among whites that, after decades of pampering and privilege, “paradise is closing down,” as the title of a play by Pieter-Dirk Uys about the riot in Adderley Street put it. While government had shaken the scarecrow of the communist menace for decades, for the first time since the early 1960s, there was a real threat of revolution. Moreover, since the thin blue line of police had barely held during the revolt, despite military reinforcement at key points, the regime was forced to extend the draft for all white men from one year to two and to launch a huge and expensive military build-up. Massive capital flight occurred after Soweto, as after Sharpeville, plunging the South African economy into its deepest postwar recession, adding to the worries of whites and business and starting an upwards spiral of black unemployment that would continue for two decades. The revolt also intensified international condemnation of apartheid, further sharpened by world-wide publicity around Biko’s death; the result was a mandatory UN arms embargo in 1977, restricting the regime’s access to modern weapons. The specter of international isolation and economic sanctions, feared, then forgotten after Sharpeville, loomed more heavily than ever. The result was an intense power struggle within the ruling party and the white establishment between the *verligte* faction, supported by the military and business-oriented reformers, and the *verkrampes*, associated with the police, intelligence establishment, and hard-line interest groups fearful of black competition (white workers, farmers, and small Afrikaner business). It was won by the Defense Minister, P.W. Botha, who became Prime Minister in 1978 proclaiming that South Africa must “adapt or die.”²⁴³

²⁴³ The post-Soweto environment and white political struggles are discussed in Robert M. Price, The Apartheid State in Crisis: Political Transformation in South Africa (New York, Oxford University Press:

On the defensive, Botha elaborated a program of reforms based on economic liberalization and the political co-option of black allies, yet his bid to shore up the legitimacy of the regime without democratizing it inadvertently broadened the opportunities for opposition. On the economic front, the aim was to modernize economic structures and improve labor mobility, while turning urban Africans into a labor aristocracy interested in keeping rural blacks in the homelands to reduce competition for jobs. Within days of the first Soweto stayaway, a commission of inquiry into labor relations had been appointed; the 1979 report of the Wiehahn commission called for legal recognition of trade unions for blacks – if organized on racial lines, and only for Africans with permanent urban residence rights. Similarly, the 1979 Riekert commission report proposed letting African permanent urban residents move freely between jobs and cities, while increasing barriers against unauthorized urbanization. The political program involved a more generous dose of the old patronage politics, in new institutions calibrated to protect white control. Under the so-called “new dispensation,” coloreds and Indians were offered their own houses of a segregated, tri-cameral, parliament, but one rigged so that their two houses could never outvote the third, white house. Urban Africans’ townships were declared “local authorities” and they were promised a national council to discuss constitutional reform. But the black local authorities had no tax bases or financial aid, but were required to be self-financing and the African majority still had no voice in parliament. Most important of all, the “grand apartheid” policy of declaring the homelands “independent” and stripping their “citizens”

1991), ch.2, Dan O’Meara, Forth Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994 (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1996), chs. 9-12, and Craig Charney, “The National Party, 1982-85: A Class Alliance in Crisis,” in Wilmot James, ed., The State of Apartheid (Boulder, Lynne Rienner: 1987), pp.5-36.

of South African citizenship continued: the “republics” of Transkei in 1976 and Bophutatswana in 1977 were followed by Venda in 1979 and the Ciskei in 1981. (Pieter Dirk-Uys remarked that Botha had been misunderstood: he meant to “adapt or dye” apartheid, not to change it.) Yet the Achilles heel of the new dispensation was that its efforts to re-establish the regime’s legitimacy depended on voluntary black participation – which gave blacks a de facto veto over its implementation and restrained the application of compulsion against the black opposition. The emergent black trade unions could not be forced to seek official recognition. They refused to register until government agreed to let them represent all black workers, irrespective of race or migrant status, potentially making them a big source of organized power. Similarly, participation in elections for the tri-cameral parliament or the black local authorities could not be coerced – nor could mass campaigns to boycott those elections be suppressed altogether without turning them into farces. The grand apartheid design was doomed by the refusal of the most populous black homeland, Buthelezi’s KwaZulu, to accept “independence,” ensuring that South Africa would retain a black majority even if all the others took “independence,” and Buthelezi’s rejection of the proposed black council sank it as well.²⁴⁴

As the most prominent black moderate leader, Buthelezi was caught between the contradictory demands of the regime and the opposition. Although his continued

²⁴⁴ On Botha’s reforms and their contradictions, see Price, The Apartheid State in Crisis, *op. cit.*, ch.4, Wilmot James and Andre du Pisanie, “End of a ‘New Deal’: Contradictions of Constitutional Reform,” Stanley Greenberg, “Resistance and Hegemony in South Africa,” and Simon Bekker and Richard Humphries, “State Control over African Labor,” in James, The State of Apartheid, *op. cit.*, chs. 3, 4, and 5. “Focus on Wiehahn” and “Focus on Riekert,” special issues of the South African Labor Bulletin in 1979, Martin Murray, South Africa, Time of Agony, Time of Destiny: The Upsurge of Popular Protest (London, Verso: 1987), chs. 2 and 3, and Craig Charney, “The Politics of Changing Partners: Co-Option and Control in the New South African Constitution,” Review of African Political Economy, No.29 (1984).

rejection of “independence” underlined that he, unlike homeland conservatives such as Sebe or Matanzima, aspired to power at the national, not tribal, level, he moved increasingly to the right in the ever more polarized political environment, at great cost in terms of black public opinion. In a meeting one month before the October 19 crackdown, Justice Minister Kruger warned him that the two things government would not tolerate from Inkatha were mass mobilization and permitting ANC guerrilla incursions through KwaZulu.²⁴⁵ These, of course, were precisely what the ANC sought. At the height of his national popularity, finally forced to choose sides, Buthelezi moved towards that of the regime – ostensibly to protect his movement from banning, but in all likelihood in the hopes of offering the white Establishment a moderate alternative to the ANC when the time came to consider sharing power.²⁴⁶ But the move soon backfired, seriously damaging Buthelezi’s relations with more militant black leaders as well as his support among the black public. The first rupture came within the ranks of Inkatha itself. In August 1978, Reggie Hadebe, Ziba Jiyane, and Sishi Chonco, the three top leaders of the Inkatha Youth Brigade, which had played an important role in keeping Natal quiet in 1976, were expelled from the movement after they had urged Buthelezi to use Inkatha to make good on his long-standing threats of mass mobilization. Two months later, he expelled the movement’s secretary-general, Sibusiso Bhengu, for his links with Inkatha youth and the BCM. These were real losses, which cut Inkatha off from more militant black groupings: Hadebe, for instance, moved into ANC circles and helped form the student movement which boycotted Durban schools in 1980, while Bhengu, a senior

²⁴⁵ Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol.5, *op. cit.*, p.685.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.267-268.

black educator, also became an ANC man, rector of Fort Hare, and minister of education in the first majority-rule government in 1994.²⁴⁷ In 1979 came conflict with the ANC, when Buthelezi and an Inkatha delegation met ANC President Oliver Tambo and others from his movement for a highly-publicized London meeting but reached no agreements. The open split occurred in mid-1980, after Inkatha vigilantes beat up children boycotting school in Durban, when Tambo and other ANC officials publicly denounced their former ally.²⁴⁸ As black opinion moved against the regime, Buthelezi's movement towards it also cost him dearly among blacks in general. Between 1977 and 1979, the proportion of Africans who considered Buthelezi the best African leader fell from 78% to 45% in Durban, and from 33% to 19% in Johannesburg, where his support among non-Zulu had shrivelled. While he still enjoyed substantial popularity among Zulu in Johannesburg and urban Natal, and overwhelming support in rural KwaZulu, by 1980 Buthelezi essentially had reduced himself to a regional leader. He was no longer a serious contender for a national following among black South Africans, despite his pretensions to the contrary, and those of domestic and foreign supporters anxious for an alternative to the ANC.²⁴⁹

The ANC – for its part – also recognized that the Soweto uprising had fundamentally changed the political environment, responding with a new strategy that gave primacy to political mobilization and incorporating the internal activists, elites, and

²⁴⁷ Gerhard Mare and Georgina Hamilton, An Appetite for Power: Buthelezi's Inkatha and the Politics of 'Loyal Resistance' (Johannesburg, Ravan Press: 1987), p.183; Interview, Ziba Jiyane, New Haven, August 20, 1989.

²⁴⁸ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, op. cit., pp.270-274, Mare and Hamilton, An Appetite for Power, op. cit., pp.144-145.

²⁴⁹ The survey results cited are from Hanf et. al., South Africa: The Prospects for Peaceful Change, op. cit., pp.355, 433. Further data suggesting the same conclusion can be found in The Star's August 1981 Black Politics Poll and in the Buthelezi Commission Report, based on surveys conducted the same year.

institutions associated with the BCM.²⁵⁰ The organization had enjoyed a resurgence from 1971 to 1976, as it rebuilt a skeletal underground oriented towards guerrilla recruitment. Both external ANC figures in the frontline states – notably Thabo Mbeki and Stan Mabizela in Swaziland – and internal ANC leaders – such as Joe Gqabi in Johannesburg, Griffiths Mxenge in Durban, and Joe Mati in East London, had taken a keen interest in the emergent BCM and cultivated contacts with the younger activists. But there was no organizational relationship, and only in Johannesburg were personal ties strong enough to give the ANC activists some influence over student activists. In the wake of Soweto, a new approach was needed. The uprising had cast serious doubt on the assumption underlying the “people’s war” strategy – that large-scale political mobilization was impossible under South African conditions – while showing that the focus of its internal organization on military recruitment had left it ill-equipped to support the uprising. Between 1976 and 1978, the establishment of support bases in neighboring countries had allowed ANC guerrillas to mount an average of one to two strikes a month inside South Africa, some highly publicized and stirring to the black public, but, lacking internal bases, all were brief, hit-and-run missions.²⁵¹ Moreover, without deep community roots to protect them, the ANC’s internal structures had been exposed and seriously damaged

²⁵⁰ The discussion here focuses on the ANC and ignores the PAC because the latter was beset by severe difficulties in the years immediately after Soweto. Its fragile internal organization, weaker than the ANC even in the underground revival prior to 1976, was depleted by the conviction of Zeph Mothopeng and other top leaders in the Bethal trial. Its external organization, desperately short of resources, failed to attract most of the students who left the country after 1976 or to hold or deploy those who stayed with the movement, and fell into a series of debilitating and often violent conflicts. Together, these developments meant that the PAC had little impact on internal political activity in South Africa from the time of Soweto to its unbanning in 1990. For more information, see Moss, *Political Trials in South Africa*, *op. cit.*, on the Bethal trial, Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945*, *op. cit.*, pp.315-316, and Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol.5, *op. cit.*, pp.286-295.

²⁵¹ Howard Barrell, “The Turn to the Masses: the African National Congress’ Strategic Review of 1978-79,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.18 (1991), pp.72-76.

in a series of major trials from 1975 to 1979.²⁵² The foundations remained, however, as did a growing number of sympathizers emerging from the ranks of the BCM, particularly among the younger activists emerging from SASM and SASO, notably in Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Soweto, and on the East Rand.²⁵³ (Biko's final trip, to Cape Town in August 1977, was, in fact, an unsuccessful bid to smooth the quarrel between these emergent radicals and his own BPC-oriented wing of the movement over; on his way back to King William's Town he was arrested and subsequently beaten to death by the Security Police).²⁵⁴ After the explosion of Soweto, as thousands of young BC activists

²⁵² The trials included the NAYO trial, discussed in Chapter Five, the Pretoria 12 "main machinery" trial, in which the accused included senior figures who had advised Soweto students such as Joe Gqabi, the Sexwale trial, which netted not just Sexwale himself but ANC and student activists around Johannesburg and in the Northern Transvaal, the SSRC trial, in which some of the student leaders recruited by the ANC were in the dock, and smaller trials in Pietermaritzburg, Durban, Port Elizabeth, and Cape Town. For details see Moss, Political Trials in South Africa, *op. cit.* and Race Relations Surveys for 1975 through 1979.

²⁵³ Interviews, Issel, Monde Mditshwa No.3, Johannesburg, May 5, 1992. Issel noted that BPC, particularly in Johannesburg, where black journalists dominated, and in King William's Town, home of Biko and his circle, remained hostile to both developments. Biko's continuing hostility to the ANC is also evident in remarks he made about the organization to two American consular officers in January 1977, calling it a "leftist, organization, "Moscow-oriented," composed of "older people," which had an "unhelpful impact" by recruiting people inside the country, then abandoning them when arrested. He also claimed that it was recruiting only 100 potential guerrillas per year (at a time when more than that number of BC activists was fleeing to the ANC training camps every month). His views were common among anti-ANC individuals within the BCM. American Embassy Cape Town to Department of State, Airgram A-05, February 1, 1977. State Department Archives.

²⁵⁴ Interview, Issel. In 1975-77, Biko and some of his King colleagues promoted the idea of a united front among the ANC, PAC, and BPC, on the lines of the short-lived unity agreement then in vogue among the two major nationalist movements in Rhodesia. These included discussions with PAC leader Robert Sobukwe, Neville Alexander, the respected leader of a Unity Movement breakaway group in Cape Town, and Natal ANC leaders Griffiths Mxenge and Harry Gwala. An attempt was also made to bring Biko together with ANC President Oliver Tambo in Botswana in 1976. On this much there is agreement from several sources, including Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, *op. cit.*, pp.149-150, 312-313, Lindy Wilson, "Steve Biko: A Life," in N. Barney Pityana et. al., Bounds of Possibility: The Legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness (Cape Town, David Philip: 1991), pp.53-54, and Interviews, Stanley Mabizela, Johannesburg, August 13, 1992, Welile Nhlapo, Johannesburg, July 21, 1992, Horst Kleinschmidt, Johannesburg, November 2, 1992, and Silumko "Socks" Socupa, East London, December 5, 1992. Apparently Biko's aim was to realign both of the external movements alongside the BPC, with himself as the internal leader. The claim has been made that this program had been accepted by all concerned and was aborted only by Biko's untimely death, but the sources for this are non-ANC (Peter Jones, the BPC man arrested with Biko, and Alexander, in Anthony Marx, Lessons of Struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960-1990 (New York, Oxford University Press: 1992), pp.82-84, and Biko's SASO colleague Harry Nengwekhulu, cited in Nolutshungu, Changing South Africa, *op.cit.*, p.182.) It is

poured into the ANC's training camps, schools, and other facilities, thinking began to change. A few voices – led by Mac Maharaj, released from Robben Island in 1976 and appointed head of the movement's Internal Reconstruction and Development Department in 1978, arguing that Soweto showed the need for rebuilding ANC organization within the country with the aim of popular mobilization rather than a narrow focus on military recruitment. His views received decisive support later that year when a delegation of top leaders – including Tambo and Joe Slovo, a key leader of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the ANC's military wing, and the SACP – toured newly reunified Vietnam, where their hosts emphasized the central role mass mobilization had played in their own successful struggle.²⁵⁵ Afterwards, even as the movement's leadership continued its strategic review, the new approach began to be put into practice. In early 1979, Gqabi, exiled in Botswana after his acquittal in the “main machinery” trial, was working with former SSRC members in the ANC underground to provide funds and support for the establishment of a new, ANC-aligned mass-membership student organization, the

evident why the BPC – without external connections for resources and arms – and weak, poorly organized groups such as the PAC and Trotskyite splinters would be interested in such an arrangement, but it is difficult to see why the ANC – which by 1975 had already outpaced the PAC in internal reconstruction – would have subordinated itself to Biko and the BPC. Indeed, internally, it appears there was substantial resistance to the unity drive by ANC supporters, particularly the growing legion within SASO, SASM, and BPC, who saw Biko's position as pro-capitalist, which was reflected in the economic policy debate at the 1975 BPC congress (Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, op. cit.*, pp.150-151, Marx, *Lessons of Struggle, op. cit.*, pp.55-56). While the external ANC leadership would certainly have been interested in meeting Biko – both to attempt to establish a working relationship and to avert attempts to make the BCM in exile into a “third force” – the ANC made it clear that regarded itself as a united front already; only individuals could join it, and not groups *en bloc*. This was very different from what Biko was seeking and unlikely to have been acceptable to him. Nolutshungu, *Changing South Africa, op. cit.*, p.182, Interview, Kleinschmidt. Thus, even had Biko lived, his unity initiative was unlikely to have proven more enduring than the brief attempt at it among the Rhodesian movements. As Nolutshungu observed, “The divisions between ANC and PAC were much deeper and more unbridgeable than [the SASO militants] had foreseen; the various ideas they had devised for working with the two organizations were never really acceptable to either” (Nolutshungu, *Changing South Africa, op. cit.*, p.182). Much the same was noted by Joseph Mati, Interview No.2, East London, December 9, 1992.

²⁵⁵ Barrell, “The Turn to the Masses,” *op. cit.*, pp.78-83, and Barrell, *MK: The ANC's Armed Struggle* (New York : Penguin Books: 1990), pp.37-41.

Congress of South African Students (COSAS).²⁵⁶ By the year's end, the organization's National Executive Committee had endorsed a new strategic document setting out four main goals: mass mobilization, the broadest possible national organizational front or alliance for liberation, drawing activists who had emerged from popular struggles into the underground, and focusing military activity on "armed propaganda" to promote political mobilization and organization.²⁵⁷ The highest priority was given to building the organizational front, through support for or the creation of civic organizations, trade unions, and youth and women's groups.²⁵⁸ The new strategy of organization, mobilization, and spectacular armed propaganda strikes, combined with Buthelezi's fading star, soon paid dividends: surveys from 1979 to 1981 showed ANC leaders overtaking Buthelezi in popularity among blacks in Johannesburg and catching up in Durban.²⁵⁹

During the post-Soweto period, activists within the country – largely drawn from the BCM, but others drawn in from civil society and the old elite – also were engaged in

²⁵⁶ Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, op. cit., p.326.

²⁵⁷ "Report of the Politico-Military Strategy Commission (the 'Green Book') to the ANC National Executive Committee, August 1979," in Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, op. cit., p.722.

²⁵⁸ Barrell, "The Turn to the Masses," op. cit., p.87.

²⁵⁹ In Soweto, a 1979 survey found that 19% each named Buthelezi and Mandela's wife Winnie as the best African leader. No doubt Nelson Mandela himself would have polled higher, but it seems reasonable to assume that his support would have been fairly close to Buthelezi's at this stage. Hanf et. al., South Africa: The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., pp.433. Survey data from 1981, two years after the ANC's new strategy went into force, leave little doubt on its effectiveness in the eyes of black public opinion. The Buthelezi Commission Report (p.77), indicated that Nelson Mandela led Buthelezi in favorability among Africans in greater Johannesburg 42% to 17%, while the Star Black Politics poll gave Mandela an even wider lead, 76% to 28%. In urban Natal the two polls had similar results for ANC support – Schlemmer's Buthelezi Commission polls, taken across metropolitan Natal, put Mandela's support 26%, while my Star findings for Durban alone had Mandela at 28%. Both thus pointed to a big growth in ANC support there since 1977, when the survey reported in Hanf. et. al. had ANC leaders named by only 8% of Durban Africans. South Africa: The Prospects of Peaceful Change, op. cit., p.355.

a strategic reassessment. For many, it began in conditions of enforced leisure: the October 19 detentions brought together under fairly lenient conditions the leading activists from around the country in several centers – Modder Bee Prison east of Johannesburg, Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth Prisons in the Eastern Cape, and other jails in other regions – and gave them time and opportunity to review the political situation. “The first day we got there, those things started. There were debates,” recalled Motlana of Soweto’s Committee of Ten.²⁶⁰ They swirled through activist circles outside as well, rejoined by detainees as they trickled out of jail, and echoed through the universities and new publications snatched up by activists.²⁶¹ The activists were proud of what had been accomplished under the banner of Black Consciousness, but also critical of the ideology in several respects.²⁶² The conflicts of the 1970s had left them conscious of divisions in the black community – they had confronted black police, homeland leaders, councilors, and many others in the state-linked middle class and black conservative camps – and they also had discovered committed white radicals, in the universities, schools, press, and church. This led them to reconsider some of BC’s dogmas, particularly its embrace of all blacks and rejection of alliances with all whites, although they continued to insist on autonomous organization for black interests.

²⁶⁰ Interview, Motlana; similar remarks about Grahamstown were made by Lulama Bangani, Interview, Port Elizabeth, May 19, 1992, and Port Elizabeth by Monde Mditshwa, Interview No.1, Johannesburg, November 7, 1991. See also Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol.5, *op. cit.*, pp.313-316, 326-335.

²⁶¹ The most important of these publications, founded in the mid- to late-1970s, were *Social Review* in Cape Town, *Work in Progress* in Johannesburg, and *South African Labor Bulletin*, then in Durban.

²⁶² Interviews, Hirsch, Motlana, provided information on this process, as did informal conversations in the early 1980s with Firoz Cachalia and David Johnson, then leaders of the Black Student Society at Wits University in Johannesburg. Some of this material was previously published in Craig Charney, “Thinking of Revolution: South Africa’s New Intelligentsia,” *op. cit.*

Reflecting on their experience also led to the conclusion that a call from an elite was insufficient to bring down the regime and left them sensitive to the criticism that their organizations had been largely composed of the middle class. Eloquent spokesmen were very well, but political power depended on demonstrations of support through mandates or collective action – which required effective mass organization. By 1979, the discussion came to focus on establishing grassroots organizations, locally oriented to concrete gains, rather than consciousness-raising, as the reading of Saul Alinsky, the veteran community organizer, began to overtake that of Paolo Freire.²⁶³ Although the internal debate took place simultaneously with the ANC's strategic review, and both discussions received some input from the other, each was an independent process. (The ANC enjoyed significant support among internal activists – particularly the younger ones – and its growing prestige made it increasingly attractive to many others, but at this stage it still did not enjoy the dominant position among activists which it would obtain by the mid-1980s.) Rather, the movement towards community organization represented a consensus towards which debates in circles around the country converged, moving in parallel with – but not subordinate to – the discussions in the ANC.²⁶⁴ Above all, activists felt, it responded to the popular consciousness and political opportunities which existed in the wake of Soweto. As Motlana put it, "The mood was there, the time was right, people had been waiting for this kind of thing to organize themselves."²⁶⁵ Soon the activists were turning from word to deed: less than two years after the leading BC

²⁶³ Karis and Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol.5, *op. cit.*, p.342, Interview, Manuel. Alinsky's best-known works were his *Reveille for Radicals* (1946) and *Rules for Radicals* (1970).

²⁶⁴ This is also confirmed by Barrell, "The Turn to the Masses," *op. cit.*

²⁶⁵ Interview, Motlana.

groups were banned, in Port Elizabeth the new community organizing strategy which emerged from the opposition's strategic debates began to become reality.

The Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organization (PEBCO), the movement which enjoyed an rapid take-off and a meteoric descent in the city's townships during late 1979 and early 1980, was the first example of the new mass politics whose possibility had been opened by Soweto. It was born October 10, 1979 in a decision to consolidate several residents associations from the city's African townships into a single body under the charismatic young leader of one of the groups, Thozamile Botha.²⁶⁶ PEBCO was immediately engaged in a two-front battle: a subsistence struggle against rent increases, water metering and charges, and forced removals, as well as a political struggle against the white Administration Board which had imposed them and the local black council which had acquiesced.²⁶⁷ Its growth was explosive: 2,000 people signed up as members when it was formally launched October 30, another 1,000 joined by January, and up to 10,000 regularly attended its bi-weekly mass meetings. The new movement quickly demonstrated its power. On the day of its launch, Botha was dismissed from his job at Ford South Africa for his involvement in the group; some 700 of his workmates (80% of them PEBCO members) struck the next day, staying out six days until he was reinstated. After building a base in the African townships, the new movement also reached out to a broader audience, trying to incorporate the colored and Indian townships of the city, though with only a degree of success. The effort reflected PEBCO's ambitions beyond

²⁶⁶ The historical account of PEBCO which follows is drawn, except where otherwise specified, from Carole Cooper, PEBCO: A Black Mass Movement (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations: 1981).

²⁶⁷ For a resume of PEBCO's demands, see Thozamile Botha, "Why We Went on Strike," in Karis and Gerhart, From Protest to Challenge, vol.5, *op. cit.*, pp.764-765.

its immediate struggles: to seek equal rights for all residents and a single municipality for all parts of Port Elizabeth. To this end, it used the threat of a stay-away to force a government minister to cancel a planned tour of the city's townships intended to promote its "new dispensation." The movement also became an outlet for the dissatisfaction of workers in the auto industry, the principal employer, both with their firms and with a recently-organized union they regarded as out of touch; in late November its leaders helped coordinate a second strike at Ford which lasted six weeks and won gains.²⁶⁸ As the first major manifestation of mass activity since Soweto, PEBCO quickly drew national and international attention; leaders from elsewhere, including Motlana, were in touch to discuss creating such bodies in their cities, and the domestic and foreign press covered its activity widely. Nor, in these circumstances, could PEBCO fail to draw the attention of the authorities; January 10, just one day after the Ford strike ended, Botha and other executive members (including KWARU stalwart Dan Qeqe) were detained. All were banned on their release; the destitute Botha was reduced to hawking fruit on the roadside before slipping out of the country to join the ANC. PEBCO fell into months of internal disputes, then several years of dormancy, before reviving from 1983 on, as a new generation of activists focused on more intensive, street-by-street organization, took over.²⁶⁹

To understand the rise of PEBCO, one must begin with the history of black politics in Port Elizabeth from 1976 to 1979, which turned around the struggle between the old, conservative councilor-rugby elite and followers of the new one which had

²⁶⁸ An account of the strike can be found in Glenn Adler, "The Factory Belongs to All Who Work in It": Race, Class, and Collective Action in the South African Motor Industry, 1967-1986, Ph.D. Thesis, New York, Columbia University, 1994, p.344ff.

emerged around KWARU (the anti-apartheid rugby league) and the BCM. A month of school boycotts, demonstrations, and riots which broke out in August 1976 was cut short by the arrest of most of the city's student leaders at a meeting in September. But a year later, Biko's death was followed by a renewed boycott (organized by a city-wide SRC, as in Soweto) and even more intense rioting; after the October 19 crackdown came waves of protest, mass funerals, and stoning. (The Eastern Cape was the region where Biko's King Williams Town circle was most closely tied to local pupil activists, and his death and funeral – which attracted a crowd of 10,000 – jolted Port Elizabeth into prolonged action; at year-end police reported that it was the only center in the country where stone-throwing continued.²⁷⁰) The targets of angry crowds included government buildings, and the shops, homes, and property of the conservative elite – members of the Advisory Board, the official rugby board, and Sebe's CNIP, principals of Bantu Education schools – usually the same individuals.²⁷¹ Even the white authorities acknowledged that the rioters had the “passive sympathy” of the population, who regarded the AB members with “disfavor”; the AB collapsed in the wake of the riots and the blow to its legitimacy

²⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p.334.

²⁷⁰ Interview No.4, Monde Mditshwa, Johannesburg, June 1992; Eastern Province Herald, December 29, 1977.

²⁷¹ The most notorious case was that of Pat Cossie, principal of one of the townships' biggest high schools and president of the official rugby board, who was surely horrified to hear his pupils singing a song they had made up which went, “*uCossie akazone angene eAzania kuba iyimpimpi*” (“Cossie will never see Azania because he is an informer.”) His house was stoned several times, his car burned out, and there were several attempts on his life, leading him to flee Port Elizabeth. In contrast, a Mr. Dwesi, also a prominent member of the conservative elite, weathered the storm without damage – apparently because community members remembered his early associations with the ANC. Michael de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction: A Study of Conciliator Behavior in a Black South African Township, Ph.D. thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1979, p.225. For other cases similar to Cossie's, see Eastern Province Herald, August 21, 1976, October 12, 1977, October 13, 1977 and October 14, 1977.

was so severe that no one ran for election to the board in 1977.²⁷² In 1978, elections for the community council, which replaced the AB, became the new locus of conflict; they were won by the anti-KWARU conservatives, who ran unopposed in 12 of 24 wards and won on an average turnout of 11% in the others.²⁷³ Factional conflict on the council again intervened to strengthen the opposition when A.Z. Lamani – the top CNIP vote-getter in the 1973 elections – was expelled from the party following intrigue in the Ciskei legislature, then detained after joining forces with the anti-Sebe opposition and generating a groundswell of support, then thrown off the community council; the result was to push yet another KWARU official – in this case, an influential but fairly conservative one – into the political opposition as well.²⁷⁴ For the anti-KWARU group, the chickens came home to roost during the 1979 controversy over the rent and service charge increases the council had approved. The ousted Lamani led a campaign of protest meetings against them, drawing crowds of up to 1,500, and circulated a protest petition which gathered 5,000 signatures, as well as calling for the formation of ward residents' associations and helping revitalize an existing one.²⁷⁵ Thozamile Botha emerged as the leader of the newly-formed Zwide Residents Association, gaining prominence when he led a joint delegation from the residents' bodies to the Administration Board, and, subsequently, proposed the groups' amalgamation into PEBCO. After its formation,

²⁷² Louis Koch, Cillie Commission Testimony, p.4388 (my translation); de Jongh, Interaction and Transaction, op. cit., p.745.

²⁷³ Ibid., p.136.

²⁷⁴ Eastern Province Herald, July 9, 1977, July 28, 1977, January 30, 1978, April 5, 1978, June 1, 1978, June 7, 1978, July 31, 1978, March 2, 1979, March 20, 1979.

²⁷⁵ Eastern Province Herald, April 19, 1979, May 5, 1978, May 18, 1978, October 16, 1979.

Lamani reinforced the group's sizable initial support with his own ample following of pensioners and older people from the extremely poor Red Location.²⁷⁶

While drawing together all those opposed to the elite within official institutions was an important factor in PEBCO's rise, its foundation lay in the opposition leadership, social networks, and collective identity which had emerged out of KWARU's struggles earlier in the 1970s. Much of the top leadership of PEBCO was drawn from KWARU: of the group of ten chosen to draft its constitution, at least four had been prominent in the rugby union, and two who had belonged to its associated AB faction, including garage owner Dan Qeqe, the best-known figure in the league. Through his involvement with KWARU, Qeqe had come a long way from the days when he had been an obedient minion of Sebe's CNIP, but his political involvement deepened further after the Soweto riots began. In August 1976, after unrest came to Port Elizabeth, Qeqe publicly declared the Advisory Board "useless" and said it "must be abolished."²⁷⁷ During the protests of 1977, he denounced the Community Council before a meeting of 1,500 and helped arrange legal defense for detained student leaders; for his pains Qeqe was himself held without trial for two months under security legislation.²⁷⁸ After his release, skirmishing between KWARU and the white administration continued. As the controversy over

²⁷⁶ Cooper, *PEBCO, op. cit.*, pp.27-33, *Eastern Province Herald*, November 14, 1979, Interview No.2, Monde Mditshwa, May 12, 1992. Lamani's career displayed a remarkable degree of skill and opportunism from start to finish. In early years, he swung from the ANC in the 1950s to the quiet AB politics of the 1960s, joined both the CNIP and the KWARU group in the 1970s, moved to PEBCO at the start of the 1980s only to swing back to the Community Council and CNIP a couple of years later, dropped out of the Council in 1989 as the winds were shifting, and died in 1991, after coming full circle, as a card-carrying ANC member. However, this does not mean that he lacked a following, or that his movement to PEBCO in 1979 did not provide it with a fillip. For more details, see "Rugby in the Eastern Cape: A History," *Work in Progress*, no. 17, 1981, pp.1-5 (attributed to Jeff Peires), and *Eastern Province Herald*, November 7, 1991.

²⁷⁷ *Eastern Province Herald*, August 20, 1976.

²⁷⁸ *Eastern Province Herald*, October 12, 1977, October 15, 1977, October 17, 1977, December 14, 1977.

township service charges heated up in 1979, Qeqe became a spokesman for the aggrieved residents, and hired lawyers to press a legal challenge to their imposition.²⁷⁹ By the time of PEBCO's formation, it was only natural that he was included among its leading lights. But his story also shows the process which led in many townships from an alliance of convenience with the opposition to one based on conviction for some members of the old elite, who, despite their small numbers, contributed substantially to the opposition in terms of their resources, prestige, and followings.²⁸⁰ But it was not only KWARU's top leaders, like Qeqe, who contributed to the growth of PEBCO. KWARU officials, players, and fans in individual townships and neighborhoods brought their followings and friends into the PEBCO fold, and many of the league's office local office-holders also held positions in PEBCO.²⁸¹ Indeed, the aggregation of social networks of sportsmen, neighbors, friends, activists, and sympathizers which formed PEBCO represented a mobilization of the oppositional collective identity, blending black nationalist and patronage politics, which KWARU had stirred and the reverberations of Soweto strengthened.

PEBCO was also an expression of the new, post-Soweto popular consciousness and leadership which emerged from the BC era. Although fear of politics had not disappeared, there was an eager public response to the new opportunities for participation which PEBCO offered and a willingness to engage in organized political activity which

²⁷⁹ Eastern Province Herald, June 9, 1979, August 9, 1979.

²⁸⁰ For example, PEBCO was never short of venues for mass meetings – frequently a problem in the townships – because it could use KWARU's Dan Qeqe stadium, built by the league without state funding.

²⁸¹ Interviews, Dan Qeqe, Port Elizabeth, August 8, 1992, Max Mamasi, Port Elizabeth, August 8, 1992, Xego, Mono Badela, No.2, Johannesburg, June 8, 1992.

was a clear contrast to the situation just a few years earlier. While the BPC had struggled to attract a few dozen members to its branches, thousands were willing to sign up as PEBCO members and tens of thousands attended its meetings and participated in or materially supported its collective actions. PEBCO offered an outlet for political expression to an urban black population hungry to end its silence, anxious to achieve the status of citizen, and ready for militant action. Carole Cooper, who conducted extensive interviews with PEBCO activists for a history of the movement, said it:

“constituted for the black population a platform of political expression at a time when organized and overt political activity was non-existent. ... PEBCO caught the imagination of the rank and file through its confrontational attitude to the authorities.”²⁸²

It gave the new popular consciousness an organized, structured form, with formal membership, meetings, branches, and even plans for full-time officials (aborted by Botha’s detention). Its leadership also incorporated BC elements who had been associated with KWARU and the city’s new black professional elite. These included figures such as Lizo Pityana, brother of Barney, Biko’s lieutenant, Moki Cekisani, the popular schoolteacher and rugby coach, Mono Badela, former KWARU President and head of the local branch of the Writers Association of South Africa, the successor to the banned UBJ, actor and KWARU activist John Kani, two prominent attorneys and a personnel manager, and Botha himself, a former SASO member.²⁸³ Then 31, Botha was articulate, educated, and charismatic, able to stir a crowd with fiery Xhosa and charm an interviewer with precise English. A Port Elizabeth native, he went to Fort Hare in 1975-

²⁸² Cooper, *PEBCO, op. cit.*, p.49.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.28, *Eastern Province Herald*, October 16, 1979, Adler, “The Factory Belongs to All Who Work in It”, *op. cit.*, p.332.

76, where he was exposed to Black Consciousness, but left during the 1976 unrest. He taught math and science in 1977-78 at KwaZakhele High School, his alma mater, where he was popular among the students for his “critical, outspoken” approach, and was involved in BC circles. In October 1977, as president of the local Association for Science and Technology, he organized a fundraiser for legal defense for the detained local student leaders, and was himself detained soon after. He was hired by Ford in late 1978 as a trainee draftsman, and his dismissal from this post sparked off the first Ford strike.²⁸⁴ In short, if Qeqe represented the radicalized members of the old elite, Botha was the model of the new type of township leader, first exposed to politics in the BCM, who would emerge in the 1980s.

Another important element in the rise of PEBCO was the institutions whose politicization was begun by the BCM prior to 1976 – the church, school and press – who played a mutually reinforcing role which helped to mobilize township society as a whole. Three ministers – the Reverends James Haya, Soga, and Mzwandile Maqina (author of the BC play “Give Us This Day”) had high profiles, offering their churches for meetings, speaking at political funerals, allowing activists to address their congregations, and mediating conflicts with the authorities. Others began to offer more discreet assistance: hiding places for activists on the run, money, or contacts. These developments reflected changes among clergy and their flock: Black Theology had popularized among congregants the idea that Christian faith in shared humanity required the church to accept a more worldly role, and ministers, some out of agreement, others due to pressure,

²⁸⁴ Biographic information on Botha is drawn from Cooper, *PEBCO, op. cit.*, p.27, *Eastern Province Herald*, October 16, 1979, and Interview No.2, Monde Mditshwa, Johannesburg, May 12, 1992.

accepted it.²⁸⁵ The growth of COSAS, the new students' organization, was also an important source of support. After the October 1977 bannings, it was the first new mass organization to emerge; Port Elizabeth was its earliest stronghold and the home of its first three presidents. The youthful activists – many with previous experience in the local SASM branch or the city-wide SRC – were building up a new, more extensive pupil organization – based, like PEBCO, on mass membership rather than an elite network, as SASM had been, and struggling around practical issues such as the establishment of school SRCs. They worked tirelessly to build PEBCO as well as their own organization, urging their parents to join and even hawking subscriptions on township street-corners.²⁸⁶ (The student activists were also one of the earliest sources of ANC influence in the new civic organization.)²⁸⁷ PEBCO could also count on support from black journalists, since the city's most prominent black journalist – Badela – was a member of its executive committee. This, in part, helps account for the extensive, sympathetic, and nation-wide coverage which the new movement received. The power which these institutions represented, collectively, was significantly greater when behind an organized mass movement like PEBCO than in the case of the struggles without mass organization of earlier years, because an organized movement could use their resources in a more sustained and strategic way than could one whose only connection with its followers was

²⁸⁵ This account is based on Adler, *"The Factory Belongs to All Who Work in It"*, *op. cit.*, pp.293-294, and Interviews, Mditshwa No.2 and No.4, Arnold Stoffie, Alice, December 6, 1991, Dennis Neer, Port Elizabeth, May 19, 1992.

²⁸⁶ Adler, *"The Factory Belongs to All Who Work in It"*, *op. cit.*, p.332, Interviews, Monde Mditshwa No.1, Johannesburg, November 7, 1991, and No.2.

²⁸⁷ In 1977, some members of the Port Elizabeth SRC ran an efficient guerilla recruitment operation for the ANC, allegedly spiriting 75 young people out of the country before their arrest. Glenn Moss, *Political Trials South Africa*, *op. cit.*, p.209. In the COSAS period, more students were recruited into the ANC underground, and ANC literature began to circulate more widely among members. Interviews, Bangani, Mditshwa No.2.

discursive. This became particularly clear when the efforts of all these groups to rally the township as a whole behind the Ford strikers became an important element in the success of the strikes.²⁸⁸

PEBCO was a transitional case which, even as it displayed continuities with the BCM, pointed the way to the extra-parliamentary mass organizations which would become the principal vehicles of South Africa's struggle for democracy in the 1980s. The organization's BC lineage was avowed, and unmistakable, in the political pedigree of Botha and other key leaders as well as in its discourse and tactics. Like the Black Consciousness groups of the 1970s, PEBCO emphasized black solidarity and limited its membership to blacks, elements which would remain common in most black political organizations in the decade to come. It also carried over the moral absolutism of the BCM, including its absolute rejection of participants in government-created institutions and its rejection of negotiation – stances which made it difficult for an organization with specific civic aims to cultivate allies, reach compromises, or display flexibility.²⁸⁹ Like the other BC groups, despite its hostility to the patrimonial politics of the regime, PEBCO's own organization was weakly structured and heavily dependent on charismatic "big men" and their followings, underlined by its rapid decline after action was taken against Botha and some of his lieutenants. Yet in addition to these similarities, there were also some fundamental differences between PEBCO and its predecessor organizations which made it an organization which was capable of responding to the new, post-Soweto political possibilities. Although it was not fully successful, it aimed at building a mass

²⁸⁸ Cooper, *PEBCO, op. cit.*, p.33.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.3, 25, 56.

organization capable of disciplined, large-scale collective action, not just mass conscientization. The means of mass politicization were to be mass membership and participation in struggles around concrete local problems, building power around smaller issues to become able to handle larger ones, an approach impossible before 1976, when the public sphere was effectively restricted to a discursive awakening of the masses and the camouflaged politics of cultural and sporting activity.²⁹⁰ Moreover, rather than seeing students and intellectuals as the vanguard, PEBCO sought to build popular power by aggregating the aspirations and organizational resources of workers, students, the church, and other community interests, seeking through this alliance to create a sturdier institutional basis for the mobilization of black civil society than discursive linkages alone could provide. Finally, though the ANC was not directly responsible for its initial foundation, PEBCO was backed from the outset by its supporters, and after 1980 the civic group, like those in other cities, offered one of the channels through which the underground movement exercised a growing influence.²⁹¹ PEBCO's achievements – and limitations – were an important influence on activists thinking about civic organization elsewhere in the country. (In Soweto, it encouraged the Committee of Ten to form a Soweto Civic Association, but also taught them the importance of creating strong neighborhood branch structures.)²⁹² Although PEBCO itself lay dormant for several years after the repression and conflicts of 1980, the organization re-emerged in the mid-1980s, reorganized by youth activists around grassroots street and area committees and

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.20, 32.

²⁹¹ Interviews, Badela, Neer, Mditshwa No.4, Bangani.

²⁹² Interview, Motlana.

linked to the national campaign against apartheid.²⁹³ Thus, though the days when organizations proclaiming loyalty to Black Consciousness would be in the forefront of black political activity in South Africa were ending by 1979, developments which began in Port Elizabeth that year showed that the rise of extra-parliamentary mass political organizations powerful enough at last to challenge the white minority regime would be the most important legacy of the BCM.

The period after Soweto thus marks the start of the penultimate phase of South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy, in which the changes in the discursive environment, community institutions, and popular consciousness produced by the uprising and the BCM shifted the initiative to emergent mass opposition groups. Large-scale organization and collective action were made possible by the new collective action repertoire – national in scope and autonomous of the regime's local power brokers – diffused by the national uprising, and by the new collective identities and outspokenness which made possible the new types of action and in turn were reinforced by them. The reform initiatives undertaken by government in response further opened public space for an organized challenge, permitting organization for black workers, and placing reinforced collaborators in competition for legitimacy with the political opposition, which required toleration for groups representing civic and other social interests. The sharpening rivalry between government and opposition doomed moderate black leaders, notably Buthelezi, who had tried to straddle the two camps; they were forced to reveal that despite their muscular rhetorical opposition to apartheid, they preferred a share of power in alliance with the white regime to alignment with those seeking its overthrow. Meanwhile, the

²⁹³ Adler, "The Factory Belongs to All Who Work in It", *op. cit.*, p. 334.

opposition, both external – the resurgent ANC – and internal – the new elite produced by the Black Consciousness era, came to the conclusion that the best opposition for increasing their power in the post-Soweto environment was building mass organization and mobilization. Port Elizabeth became the first and best-known example of this, as the unrest of 1976 was followed by a series of organized collective protests by students, workers, and community members which demonstrated the form which the struggle for democracy would take throughout South Africa in the 1980s. “The impact of Soweto on the political scene cannot be over emphasized, because it established the fact that new conditions had arisen in South Africa that made possible, once more, the organization and conduct of mass political struggles,” Wolpe noted in 1984. “Indeed, since 1976 there has been a mushrooming of black community organizations and continuous agitation on specific demands (transport, rent, social welfare, health, the position of women, schooling, etc.), but also, frequently, on more general claims formulated explicitly with reference to the Freedom Charter and the ANC. This political activity, the political stance of the black churches, the increasing politicization of black culture, the recent revival of the Transvaal Indian Congress, the links between trade union struggles and the communities, and the formation of the United Democratic Front as a broad political front to organize for the winning of the demands of the Freedom Charter are all manifestations of the de facto reconstitution of the terrain of mass struggle.”²⁹⁴

²⁹⁴ Wolpe, “Strategic Issues in the Struggle for National Liberation in South Africa,” *op. cit.*, pp.239-240.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the outcome of the regime crisis in South Africa provoked by the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s, beginning with the outbreak of the Soweto revolt on June 16, 1976. It began with the taxonomy of the rebellion, exploring how a movement launched by SASM in Soweto grew from class boycotts, first into widespread rioting in urban townships and, in the two largest cities, general strikes, then into longer-lived campaign against groups seen as anti-social and collaborators with the regime. The combination of organized leadership and spontaneous support which characterized the movement can be understood through the role of Soweto as a “mobilization space.” Within the township, myriad linkages with other organized bodies in civil and political society which the SSRC strove to create translated into moral authority through shared anger, fear, and family and community ties, while in other townships, “Soweto” itself became a symbol whose mention evoked a solidary response from the entire community. A major reason for the longevity of the movement was its ability to draw on the key institutions of black civil society – church, press, educational institutions, and other affiliated bodies – which had been part of the process of networking and identity formation that the BCM had undertaken. They enabled the opposition to mobilize substantial resources during and after the offering, while becoming free spaces which offered it a degree of protection as well. Another important element in the popular mobilization was the combined impact of public discourse and public violence, both forming symbolic aspects of the double revolt of the students

against the dual faces of authority (state- and age-based). The student leaders re-worked the BC language of black solidarity into a concept seamlessly linking the loyalties of black families and communities, while performing symbolic acts of violence against those who defied their moral order. The results of the uprising in the political consciousness of urban blacks were dramatic: the spread of political courage, democratic values, and a forthright and increasingly militant rejection of the apartheid regime and the black elites associated with it. The uprising and its aftermath also re-constituted the structure of political opportunities for black South Africans: the new outspokenness it promoted and the national action repertoire it diffused, along with the revised strategies of government and opposition in its wake, opened the possibility of mass extra-parliamentary organization. This possibility, first realized – if partially – in Port Elizabeth, was the major outcome of the regime crisis of the 1970s, for, with the liberalization which accompanied it, it began the next stage of the regime transition: the struggle for democratization.

Structuralist accounts of the Soweto uprising and its aftermath do not offer an equally satisfactory account of its development, course, or results. The claim that the movement developed because of recession and economic stress is difficult to sustain. It broke out in the most affluent black community in the country; the BCM itself was strongest among the groups who enjoyed the fastest income growth in the 1970s, the young and the educated; and even unskilled black wage growth did not taper off until the fourth quarter of 1976, well after the uprising and its greatest collective actions had been launched.²⁹⁵ The principal reasons offered by such accounts for the spread of the revolt

²⁹⁵ The statistics on income gains from 1973 to 1975 were cited in Chapter Five, p.343; those concerning unskilled wages can be found in Kane-Berman, *Soweto, op. cit.*, p.51.

are the existence of organization and bandwagon effects. It was undoubtedly true that student organization was a necessary condition for unrest in the conditions of South Africa in 1976, and bandwagon effects undoubtedly amplified it. Yet it is impossible to account for the pattern, intensity, longevity, or variation in time and space of the uprising without an explanation of its discursive character, its linkages with civil society, or the extent of politicization in the communities concerned. The effects of repression, in such accounts, should raise the cost of protest activity and thus steadily diminish it. Yet what Soweto demonstrated, rather, was that, if conditions of social solidarity and symbolic unity have been established within and between communities, repression stimulates protest by increasing collective anger and unity, at least until it reaches the point where the literal operation of all structures of opposition organization has been rendered impossible. The aftermath of the uprising, for institutionally-oriented authors, would be one in which the state was caught up in its own contradictions and thus unable to engage in democratic reform, while elite-choice analyses would emphasize the existence of debates over strategy in regime and opposition circles. Both of these approaches present part of the reality. Yet their focus on elites as the driving force of change misses out on the changes in mass identity, attitude, and behavior which occurred after the revolt – without which the regime would have been able to treat Soweto, like Sharpeville, as a mere bump in the road. The new collective and institutional identities which the Black Consciousness Movement fostered provide an explanation as to why the post-Soweto period was marked by mass organization and collective action on a scale never before seen in South Africa, rather than by a costlier and more complex version of the co-optation and clientelism of the past.

The BCM's activity and legacy became key elements in South Africa's regime transition, even though its struggles did not immediately result in a change of regime, because it created the conditions in which the struggle for democratic change in South Africa became possible. Regime transitions often involve more than one phase, as a crisis of liberalization frequently precedes that of democratization. Prior to the emergence of the BCM, the conditions, actors, institutions, and identities required for national, autonomous, organized collective action on did not exist. While social and economic change had created the disarticulated elements from which social movements could form, there is no reason to assume that they would have spontaneously merged into large-scale collective action, much less a sustained struggle against the regime. Without a movement which had developed a discourse growing out of the experiences of urban blacks, harnessed the institutions they had created to spread it, and created a collective identity around it, it is unlikely that there would have been a challenge to the state on the scale of or the nature of that which emerged in Soweto. In turn, only when such a popular movement had been formed, created a crisis for the regime, and through it forced the re-opening of the field of political opportunities could a new phase of the regime transition begin, the crisis of democratization. This latter phase of the struggle, which took place from 1980 to 1984, is a different, and better known, story than the one which has been recounted in these pages. To conclude this dissertation, then, our recounting of the story of a social movement will end at this point, and we will return to the broader theoretical questions with which it began.

Chapter Eight

CONCLUSION: Social Movements, Civil Society, and Change in Authoritarian Regimes

Early one sunny morning in August 1981, as African workers in central Johannesburg streamed down Pritchard Street on their way to work, several halted to stare at a newsstand poster. In letters six inches high it proclaimed: “STRIKES TOPPLE PRIME MINISTER.” They crowded round, gazing at the papers, reading and chatting about how a massive strike wave by a powerful social movement had forced the resignation of the Prime Minister – of Poland. At a glance, one could read in their faces the thought that must have been on the mind of the poster writer as well: “It happened there. Could it happen here?”¹

This scene brings us back to the question that began this thesis: how can a people apparently armed only with words challenge a regime armed with guns? More concretely, it raised the issue of the role played by social movements and collective action in the regime crises that produce transitions from authoritarian rule. We juxtaposed two prevailing approaches to change in authoritarian regimes, institutionalism and process studies, both broadly characterized as “structuralist,” with an alternative approach focusing on the emergence of challenges from collective actors, described as a “discursive” theory of transitions. The initial critique flowed from the theoretical premises of structuralist approaches regarding the crises which change authoritarian regimes. Structuralist theories trace the origins of regime crisis to contradictions

¹ I observed this scene personally.

in economic and political structures and assume authoritarian rule is based on force alone. They link social mobilization as the crisis develops to changes in opportunity structure while taking social solidarities for granted. They explain the outcomes through rational choice aimed at maximizing objectively-defined interests by regime and opposition elites whose emergence and definition is unproblematic. We argued that these approaches are unsound because they evacuate politics out of transitions from authoritarian rule. Like structuralist approaches to social change in general, the prevailing theories ignore conflicts around the legitimacy of structures, neglect the processes and struggles through which rank-and-file and elites shape their own identities, and omit from consideration the pressures from below that constrain elites, redefine loyalties, and alter perceptions of interests in the course of regime crises. An alternative, actor-centered approach also was sketched out. It assumed a weaker role for structure and noted the importance of legitimation even in authoritarian regimes, sought the development of crisis in social movement activity that lay behind changes in opportunities, institutions, and identities, and explained the outcomes of these crises through collective struggles around values and legitimacy.

To create a testable alternative to the existing “economistic” orthodoxies, we then elaborated an actor-based theory of transitions. It attempts to explain each of the three stages of a regime crisis – its origin, development, and outcome – as the result of discursive processes leading to the emergence of a “collective individual” or actor capable of shaking the regime.² The theory focused on three independent variables – the

² These characterizations of the two types of approaches are drawn from David Apter and Tony Saich, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press: 1994).

character of the public sphere and the discourses circulating within it, the relation between the state and civil society (particularly its communication institutions), and the discourse and practices of opposition groups. We examined the influence of those variables on two dependent variables – political culture and collective action – whose changes in turn mark the stages of crisis in authoritarian regimes and shape the context in which the independent variables operate in the succeeding stage. Those stages were described as follows:

Crisis origins are seen as discursive: words and processes that chip away at the legitimacy of the regime and promote the growth of channels for discourse outside its control. These are connected to the emergence of a public sphere and the circulation of critical discourses, which permit the awakening of public opinion, the resurgence of political conflict within private institutions (particularly opinion-forming bodies of civil society), and the words and practices of opposition groups seeking to form new values and an alternative elite. The results include the spread of oppositional identities and sub-cultures among the disadvantaged. This occurs through the circulation of “hidden transcripts” in whispers or samizdat, “everyday resistance” in dissident behavior, expression and action that is unorganized yet collective, and the spread of a wider sense of community, all cracking the atomization through which undemocratic regimes make individual calculation the basis for political behavior.

Crisis development is seen as the result of collective action by emergent social movements, which promote liberalization and democratization by making themselves into official or unofficial interlocutors for the regime and challenging the rulers’ control of the public sphere and agenda. Oppositional movement organization and elites develop through “self-discovery” in movement discourse, struggles to co-opt civil society organizations, and the expansion of oppositional discourse in public. Their ideas spread first through co-opted communication institutions, then into all walks of life, even among regime elites forced onto the defensive. In turn, the sub-culture and identities of the oppressed are increasingly anti-regime. Hidden transcripts are fashioned by movement activists into inversionary discourse challenging the regime, which reverberates through sympathetic communications institutions and stimulates a sharper sense of political consciousness. The group solidarity and mutual confidence which result allow anti-regime collective action to begin.

Crisis outcomes are seen as conjunctural, turning around the mobilization and transformation of identities, values, and attitudes of masses and elites, and thus shape the parameters of political change, whether formally negotiated or tacitly

permitted. In an increasingly tense atmosphere where all conflicts are read politically, an opposition action eventually explodes into a “simulacrum” of the state-people relation, turning its site into a “mobilization space” for the rest of society. This news cascades through the public sphere through the captured communications institutions, along with those of other bodies in civil society, while guidance and discipline for action is offered by opposition discourse (and often its public violence as well). The result is a massive mobilization against the regime, as the local solidary networks of dominated groups come together behind the opposition groups and their own institutions, and a democratization of political culture and massive expansion of perceived political opportunities.

The process somewhat schematically described here is not a mechanical one; in some cases the fact of mass mobilization is decisive, in others its possibility; in some a single crisis produces a shift from authoritarianism to democracy, in others the fruit of crisis is to advance the transition from a phase of liberalization to democratization. However, in general, we argue that this discursive approach offers a more accurate and adequate account of the crises that mark regime transitions than the structuralist alternatives.

The remainder of this chapter will subject this actor-centered account of the role of movements in regime transitions to empirical tests, in three different ways. First, the account of the Black Consciousness Movement and its role in the regime crisis in South Africa during the 1970s offered in the preceding chapters will be summarized and examined for its consistency with the theory presented here. Second, based on the case of the BCM, we will examine the predictive hypotheses elaborated in Chapter One (pp.50-51) regarding structuralist and discursive approaches to see which receives more support. Finally, we will briefly explore a comparative case – the rise of Solidarity in Poland – to see whether this theory can offer an intelligible account of a regime crisis in a context where political and economic structures were radically different from those prevailing in South Africa.

I. AN ACTOR-CENTERED ACCOUNT OF REGIME CHANGE: THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1966-1979

The story of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, which revived mass black political opposition in the late 1960s and touched off the national revolt in 1976-77 that began the terminal phase of the white minority regime, allows us to examine how well the actor-oriented theory outlined above fits a real-world case of regime change. However, understanding the development and course of the BCM required us to begin with an examination of the historical character of power and collective action among black South Africans during the decades prior to its appearance. These were marked by clientelist politics based on the confluence of state and society, not by their conflict. This was followed by a closer look at the workings of the apartheid regime in black communities in the years when the movement emerged, when a powerful social mobilization undertaken by conservative whites and blacks in authority provided the context in which the appearance of a movement shunning the state and aiming at autonomous mobilization of black civil society becomes comprehensible. The origins of the crisis of the apartheid regime were sought in the emergence from below of new solidarities, institutions, and identities within urban black communities, as well as the growth of dissidence which led to the birth of the BCM itself. The movement's growth led to the development of the crisis, as it seized the institutions of black civil society, politicized urban black culture against the regime, and helped inspire a new repertoire of mass mobilizations. One such struggle, waged by school pupils against the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, snowballed into the uprising that shook the country

for two years, transforming political culture and opportunity in ways that made extra-parliamentary politics possible and opened the phase of democratization in South Africa's drawn-out transition from race-based authoritarianism.

Although South Africa's black majority was largely disfranchised, before 1965 black communities were marked by a vigorous political life centered on networks of patrimonial relations that gave leaders and followers a measure of power and a stake in the status quo. In that era, South Africa represented an unusual combination of characteristics of Third World states. Socially it was a clientelist oligarchy, with constitutional democracy for the dominant whites and patronage rule for subordinate blacks; politically it was a colonial-type regime, with blacks subject to indirect rule based on patrimonial relations; economically it was a case of authoritarian peripheral industrialization, which labor repression, foreign investment, and domestic capital had propelled to semi-industrial status. In town and country, however, black politics largely was conducted on a patronage basis, turning on allocations of land by chiefs, and of houses and other privileges by urban bosses (traders, Advisory Board members, etc., themselves often connected to the rural elites). Political life was marked by the competition of elite groups for resources and followings, as well as vigorous efforts by members of the popular groups to work the system to their own advantage. The politics of personal dependency that permeated black communities also depended on the narrow character of the public sphere, in which illiteracy was the norm, so subordinate members relied for information as well as resources on face-to-face contact with their betters. The relationship was not one of radical opposition between the state and black political groups, deeply imbricated in the social order; rather the relationship was marked by

complex ambiguity, marked by tacit or overt co-operation, punctuated by periods of conflict over the terms of racial subordination. The political culture was marked by parochialism in the popular classes, reflected in ethnocentrism, racial tension, and a weak national consciousness, and by assimilationism and culture shame among a respectable middle class which accepted the legitimacy of the regime but sought a place within it. However, in the apartheid era after 1948, white minority-ruled South Africa diverged in a number of important respects from comparable societies. The Afrikaner Nationalist government intensified racial discrimination and refused political and trade union rights to blacks, while non-settler African colonies were incorporating the indigenous middle classes in the pre-independence years and other peripheral industrializers were doing likewise with their working classes in the populist period. The result was an escalation of black protest during the 1950s, and a brief explosion of outrage in the major cities after the 1960 Sharpeville massacre. But in the face of large-scale repression, mass mobilization could not be sustained without effective leadership and organization, support from civil society and media institutions, and grassroots solidarity in black communities around the country.

The restructuring of the racial authoritarian state during the prodigious economic boom from 1965 to 1975, was characterized both by large-scale social and political mobilization in a conservative direction and by large-scale repression of political opposition. The principal nationalist movements, African National Congress and its rival Pan-Africanist Congress, were banned after Sharpeville. Clientelist state-society relations were reinforced in both urban and rural areas: greater patronage power was provided to official representative bodies in the townships and the rural African reserves

were transformed into “homelands,” with their own bureaucracies, legislatures, and a promise of “independence,” while the discretionary authority of the chiefs who dominated in the homelands was expanded. Enjoying more power and influence, growing ideological sway, and the absence of organized opposition, the conservative section of the elite ran black community life and mobilized substantial followings, especially among older, poorer, less literate, and more conservative blacks. They were helped in this task by the fact that the public sphere was even narrower than before, due to legal repression, informal harassment of opponents, and the restricted scope of the subordinate black political institutions, along with the reinforcement of authority among the illiterate by state radio and separatist churches. The social institutions to which growing numbers of blacks had access (educational, print media, and religious) were also under white control, so they were not autonomous outlets for criticism of the regime, although they were rife with racial tension. In these circumstances, the growing balkanization of black political culture helped legitimate the regime, as tribal and racial chauvinism widened divisions among the conservative elite and a growing proportion of the masses, while black professionals turned from politics to acquisitiveness and drink. The regime also benefited from faith in the race-neutrality of the market and the corresponding belief that black inferiority explained inequality, as well as a pervasive powerlessness and fear that left those who disagreed feeling alone and immobilized. Consequently, conservative populists working within government-created institutions enjoyed considerable success in mobilizing support through a mix of patronage, ethnic pride, and vigorous intimidation of opposition.

However, in the years after 1965, other developments were also at work in South African society, ones that would create new possibilities for collective action and eventually result in a severe crisis for the regime. As the cities grew, a truly urban black population was appearing for the first time in South Africa, born in town, with weaker rural ties, literate, and increasingly essential as a source of personnel for industry and the professions. New micro-solidarities emerged within urban communities, as neighbors and schoolmates forged new social bonds, even as older black customs were revalued. At the same time, urban blacks were also creating new macro-solidarities, as they read the same newspapers, listened to the same music, attended the same plays, and cheered the same sports teams. The result was the emergence of an urban black public with its own new public sphere, its own tastes – including American rock and soul – and its own organizations and networks – including some which would become part of Black Consciousness in the townships. It was in this environment that circles of young, educated black dissidents emerged – first around Stephen Biko in the universities, and others sharing his views in the churches and the press – who broke with the white-controlled organizations in their institutions and established their own blacks-only groups that would form the core of the BCM. (Their watchword became, “Black man, you are on your own!”) As all these developments were taking place, changes were also underway in the political culture of urban black South Africans, including an increasing consciousness of urban and national identities, as well as a fascination with the culture of black Americans, other Africans, and overseas youth. Various forms of unorganized collective action were also occurring: everyday resistance, cultural resistance, isolated acts of public protest, even collective violence. By the early 1970s, the elements that

could cohere into a new social movement were in place – but an actor was still needed to connect them before large-scale collective action could happen.

The development of Black Consciousness into a mass movement between 1971 and 1976 coincided with, and largely produced, a widely-perceived political crisis for the apartheid regime. The political terrain itself, in and around South Africa, was changing, as guerillas triumphed in Mozambique and Angola and gained ground in Rhodesia, the economy cooled down, mass resistance began to erode the apartheid state's bureaucratic controls, and cracks appeared in the white monolith. But the most important development in this period was the growth of the BCM, which reached a mass audience among urban blacks with discourse inverting the legitimating claims of apartheid, stressing black solidarity, self-confidence, and culture, rejecting cooperation with whites and with politicians “within the system,” building an autonomous black civil society, and preparing for revolutionary confrontation. The movement's discourse and practice was strongly influenced by the overseas New Left, including the Black Power movement in the US and Third World activists, most notably Paulo Freire in Brazil. Spurred in large part by their examples, the BCM deployed large-scale efforts to “conscientize” the black elite and rank-and-file. These included leadership training courses, community development projects, collective struggles, and school pupil and youth organizations. It also struggled to build bridgeheads of influence in the institutions of black civil society through networking and waging struggles, particularly in the opinion-leading institutions of education, the print media, and the church, winning a huge audience among urban blacks even though formal BCM organizations retained a small, elite membership. The result was that BC's inversionary discourse reverberated through the new public sphere

of urban black communities, echoing from press, politicians, playwrights, and poets, and from them into all other walks of life. These words, and their bearers, had a profound impact on township political culture and activity. BC discourse politicized urban black sub-cultures against the regime, as personal narratives were reworked into the movement's inversionary discourse, a collective narrative describing how apartheid worked – and how it might be overcome – that connected the movement's activists to the personal lives and social networks of blacks at the grassroots. It helped blacks to develop for themselves a new conception of citizenship as well, one which rejected notions of black inferiority, challenged the legitimacy of the regime and its black collaborators, and widened their perceptions of political opportunity. In turn, the movement was a catalyst for a variety of local mobilizations that signaled the emergence of a new repertoire of collective action, autonomous and national rather than patronized and local as before 1960, and helped create a more volatile political atmosphere.

In June 1976, a protest touched off by one BC group – a class boycott of a number of schools in Soweto – blazed into a national uprising that would permanently change South African politics. When police fired on the students' demonstration, they touched off a social explosion that quickly spread along the Witwatersrand, then around the towns of the Transvaal, the Western and Eastern Cape, and several homelands, continuing in various forms for 18 months. As the uprising developed, school boycotts, demonstrations, and riots were followed by massive general strikes by African and colored workers, paralyzing Johannesburg and Cape Town, the two largest cities. The strikes were followed by lower-key campaigns within the townships against alcohol sales, rent increases, and black collaborators with the regime. The movement blazed back into

widespread riots and school boycotts after Biko's killing by police and the banning of the major BC organizations. The heart of the revolt was Soweto itself, the largest township of the country's principal city, which became a "mobilization space." Soweto was both the physical space in which the pupils' group leading the revolt, other organizations of black civil and political society, and indigenous neighborhood networks cohered into a sustained revolt around the discourse of BC, and the symbol which sparked similar processes in cities around the country, its very name a byword for black solidarity. All this was possible only because of the spread of the BC networks and discourse of identity into the community institutions – the black press, church, schools, and other bodies that could mobilize resources on behalf of the collective struggle. The movement connection thus deepened their political engagement and turned these institutions into free spaces that would support and shelter oppositional movements in the years ahead. However, because of the spider-web fragility of BC organizations themselves, the connections between leaders and followers during the uprising were indirect, through public discourse and public violence. These sought to proclaim the grievances of blacks; when they convinced the public that their concerns were connected to a proposed mobilization, they succeeded, aided by the force the students deployed to represent themselves as an alternative sovereignty. All these factors together made the Soweto revolt a turning point in urban black political culture. It marked the beginning of a new outspokenness which could not be repressed, the strengthening of unity in action across the lines of ethnicity, race, and class, the growth of national identity and democratic values, and an increased willingness to engage in political activity, protest, and even violent confrontation with the state. Though the flames of rebellion were burnt out by early 1978, the regime could not

extinguish the embers. Opposition movements were resurgent, both inside the country – largely made up of the networks formed by the BCM – and outside it – particularly the ANC, with established connections to some BC activists and soaring prestige due to guerrilla activity. Both concluded that they could use the political space the uprising had opened for mass mobilization., and ties grew between them as each became more aware of the other's aims. The first such mobilization occurred in Port Elizabeth. There, the emergence of a new civic organization in 1979-1980, led by former BC activists and dissident members of the old elite, with the blessing of the ANC, marked the new type of extra-parliamentary mass organization and action which had become possible, thanks to the sacrifices of the Soweto revolt and the achievements of the BCM.

Although black politic movements in the 1980s, the decisive phase of the struggle for democratization in South Africa, no longer flew the banner of Black Consciousness, the legacy of the BCM formed much of the basis for their success. They operated on the terrain of extra-parliamentary organization the BCM had forged, largely led by activists who had entered politics through the BCM, operating with similar institutional practices. The model of civic organization pioneered in Port Elizabeth was copied in townships around the country, and joined by new, mass-membership student and youth organizations, women's associations, and other organizations of subordinate groups. The leadership of these organizations was drawn from the new BC elite, along with some members of the old elite and a growing number of older ANC figures completing long prison terms. They received powerful institutional support from a burgeoning, militant black press, schools and universities in constant conflict with the authorities, and churches, mosques, and religious organizations which lent prestige and channeled

substantial overseas donations. In August 1983, at a meeting of 13,000 in Cape Town, many of the new groups came together to form the United Democratic Front (UDF), a national body to coordinate protest and opposition to the regime. Although formally “non-racial” in ideology, its discourse appealed to the idea of a majority-black South African nation that had emerged in the final stage of the BC era. While open to alliances with left-wing white groups, most of its constituent bodies continued to emphasize autonomous, black-led organization, and to operate through workshopping and consensus-building rather than majority voting and formal lines of command, New Left practices inherited from the BCM.³ The first half of the 1980s were also marked by the rapid growth of black trade unions, which occupied the legal space opened by the Wiehahn reforms, eventually uniting in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and forming an alliance with the UDF. In 1984, the UDF’s opposition to the government’s political reforms – the tri-cameral parliament for whites, coloreds, and Indians and the separate local authorities for Africans – touched off a chain reaction of general strikes, rent and consumer boycotts, and armed challenges to state control. These collective actions turned into a two-year insurrection that nearly succeeded in its aim of making the townships “ungovernable.”

The regime and its black allies managed to contain the mass mobilizations of 1984–1986, barely, but in their aftermath, it was evident that the days of white minority

³ The rump of BC activists who continued to proclaim themselves part of the movement – led by older, anti-ANC activists who had been associated with the Black People’s Convention – formed a successor body called the Azanian People’s Organization (AZAPO) in 1979. However, unlike their former colleagues in the UDF, the AZAPO activists never embarked on a large-scale organizing campaign, limiting themselves to the politics of the press release. In these circumstances their influence in black political circles fell fairly rapidly in the 1980s, although some clashes took place between UDF and AZAPO supporters in Port Elizabeth and on the West Rand in the mid 1980s (allegedly in part due to security force instigation.).

rule were numbered. Tens of thousands of individuals had been killed, injured, tortured, or imprisoned, but the UDF and COSATU as bodies could not be banned outright in an era when government proclaimed its policy to be “reform.” The vast majority of their activists retreated into safe spaces within civil society, but the mood of resistance and its institutional supports remained intact. As the urban centers quieted down, the crisis of legitimacy seeped into the rural periphery, and the homelands began to revolt. Lebowa in the Northern Transvaal, where old BC and ANC networks were strong, was the first. Then came KwaNdebele, where rebellion scuttled “independence” plans. Civil war with Inkatha spread through Kwa Zulu. A pro-ANC coup toppled the Transkei government in 1987 and inspired a copycat attempt in Bophutatswana the next year. By late 1989 the Ciskei was collapsing, as villagers burned CNIP membership cards en masse. Urban resistance revived as well, starting with a general strike in 1988; a year later, the bishops – black and white – were in the streets, leading mass marches and civil disobedience, while the ANC infiltrated leaders into the country to prepare a final revolutionary upsurge. Faced with this rapidly deteriorating internal situation, the new President, F. W. de Klerk – who had forced out the exhausted Botha for his unwillingness to contemplate change – announced on February 2, 1990 the legalization of the ANC, PAC, and Communist Party, the release of Mandela, and the formal start of South Africa’s democratic transition.⁴ With this announcement, the stakes abruptly shifted from the extra-parliamentary stage to the struggle for direct parliamentary power. On May 10, 1994, after years of negotiations punctuated by general strikes, boycotts, and violence on an even vaster scale, Nelson Mandela took office as South Africa’s first democratically

⁴ De Klerk’s decision was also encouraged by external developments, including American and British threats of stricter sanctions and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in mid-1989.

elected President, closing the era of mass opposition to the apartheid regime that Stephen Biko and his colleagues had struggled to open three decades before.

Recounted in this fashion, the narrative of the Black Consciousness Movement and South Africa's regime crisis of the 1970s corresponds fairly closely to the actor-centered theory of regime change previously sketched out. The movement's origins lay in the micro-solidarities urban blacks wove among themselves, the larger solidarities that grew around their collective institutions, and the appearance of circles of dissent challenging the contradictions created by white power within those institutions. Together, these developments led to the creation of new urban and national identities and drove unorganized, small-scale outbursts of collective action from time to time. Those changes also made possible the growth of the social movement organizations of the BCM, allowing the movement's activists to weave its narrative of black pride, solidarity, and autonomy and to network and struggle within black elites and institutions as they sought in order to reaching a mass audience with their discourse. In their quest to make their ideas hegemonic, they were largely successful; even their conservative competitors were forced to echo their discourse. The consequences of the movement's growth included the polarization of urban black identities in an anti-regime direction, growing ostracism of black participants in government-created institutions, and a growing perception of political opportunities, all helping to promote various local mobilizations which displayed the patronized politics of the past and the emergent action repertoire in varying proportions. The outcome of the crisis flowed from the changes in social consciousness and relations engendered by the Soweto revolt. The brutal confrontation of white and black power turned the township into a simulacrum for the broader society,

fusing activists, community organizations, and ordinary residents into a solidarity of loss and hope, supported by the institutions of black civil society that had been politicized by the BCM, and maintained by a volatile mix of inversionary discourse and intimidatory action. The results included mass militancy and mobilization among urban blacks on a scale large enough to threaten the regime and the expansion of black solidarity, democratic values, and national identity. The uprising also generated a willingness to engage in political speech and action. Together, these developments redefined from below the structure of political opportunity and created the possibility of the extra-parliamentary mobilizations which ultimately would wear out the regime. Thus the first of our tests of our alternative transition theory – its applicability to a concrete case – appears to be satisfied.

II. TESTING STRUCTURALIST AND DISCURSIVE HYPOTHESES ON REGIME CHANGE: THE CASE OF THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT

Verification of a new theory requires more than an account which offers a plausible summary of the facts of the case: its fit with data about the case should be shown to be superior to that of the prevailing approach. The object of this section is to complete our comparison of the explanatory capacities of the structural and discursive theories of regime change described above with regard to the case of the BCM in South Africa. This test began at the conclusion of the each of the preceding chapters, which

demonstrated, from a chronological viewpoint, that the findings concerning each successive stage of South Africa's regime crisis of the 1970s corresponded more closely to an actor-centered account than to the structuralist alternatives which predominate in the literature. Here, we will finish it with a thematic analysis, examining how well the two theories explain the data from this case concerning the major issues arising in the literature on democratic transitions. The contrasting structuralist and discursive approaches to each of these topics were outlined in Chapter One. We will now return to these hypotheses in order to determine which better fits the information we have uncovered.

Political legitimacy and values: Structuralist approaches posit no legitimacy for authoritarian regimes, independent of instrumental calculation. Accordingly, they also anticipate no major changes in political values or identity in the development of a regime crisis. A discursive approach, in contrast, would posit some degree of social legitimacy even for undemocratic regimes. It would therefore predict significant changes in political values as a regime crisis approaches, including declining legitimacy, stronger notions of citizenship, and new political and social identities.

We found clear indications that the apartheid regime received a considerably degree of syncretic legitimation, blending traditionalist and modern discourses of authority. It received legitimacy through indirect rule, because patrimonial leaders in town and country occupying positions in government-created institutions enjoyed considerable support. Before 1960, this legitimacy inhibited engagement in militant opposition activity, despite the nominal alignment of many with the ANC. After Sharpeville, when the conservative patronage politicians ruled unopposed, there is considerable evidence that they enjoyed substantial followings, including attendance at

meetings, turnout and results of elections for official representative bodies, accounts by journalistic and academic observers, letters to the black press, and surveys by social scientists. The same sources reveal the pervasiveness of particularistic loyalties and the considerable success of the regime's appeal to tribal and racial chauvinism. By the mid-1970s, as the BCM challenged the regime, all these indicators moved in the opposite direction, confirming observations – widely made at the time – that the black leaders aligned with the regime were losing support among urban blacks, while parochial loyalties were blurring and becoming overlaid by larger identities. However, the state also benefited from more modern legitimating claims, as evidenced by the conclusions of social researchers and well-informed black observers (including ones with impeccable anti-apartheid pedigrees). Belief that the law and the market were impartial and race-neutral was commonplace among blacks before the 1970s, encouraging them to think that blacks' disadvantages resulted from their own shortcomings. This sense of inferiority was strengthened by a sense of culture shame – the belief that whites represented the modernizing elite of a superior civilization – and white hegemony was reinforced by the middle classes' desire to assimilate into the dominant culture, not to challenge it. There are clear signs that these perceptions were crumbling among urban blacks by the mid-1970s, particularly in Soweto, based on the comments of numerous observers and detailed qualitative research. During the era in which BC discourse pervaded the townships, blacks came to see the legal and economic system as rigged in favor of whites and to reject a sense of individual or collective cultural inferiority. Thus, the assumption of the structuralist approach that the state enjoyed no legitimacy amid black South Africans constantly seethed with the desire for revolt is not consistent with the data.

Rather, they support the view that the regime endured in good part because of legitimating discourses that received considerable acceptance, which had to be eroded by a determined challenge from the BCM before the regime became vulnerable.

Social organization among dominated groups: Structuralist approaches would focus on the development of institutional networks. An actor-oriented theory would also emphasize the emergence of submerged networks based on shared experience and discourse within functional spaces in civil society.

Here the evidence suggests that the social cohesion and mobilization units of urban black communities in the era under study emerged from above, via institutional structures, from below, via indigenous submerged networks, and from some sources having characteristics of both. Institutional networking and membership undoubtedly were important elements in the development of an urban black identity, with religious, educational, and sporting organizations playing the most important roles. However, the basic cells of which urban black communities were formed – local networks of extended family, pseudo-kin, friends, neighbors, and school- and work-mates, were largely self-organized from below, even if their members adhered (often *en bloc*) to larger institutional networks. There was also another sort of invisible “submerged network,” that of an intermediary set of institutions, such as newspapers and theaters. They did not have formal membership structures; rather, they attracted audiences composed of individuals who voluntarily subscribed to their discourse and thereby made themselves part of an “imagined community” (frequently, of course, encouraged by peer groups). Thus, if we seek the social groupings that provided the foundations of micro-mobilization, we find that the predictions of the discursive theory regarding submerged

grassroots networks which would complement institutional structures verified among black South Africans in the 1970s.

Explanations of mobilization: Structuralist theories of mass mobilization often present increasing economic strain as a trigger. Collective action is the aggregate of individual calculation, based on perceptions of rising opportunities, bounded rationality, or selective incentives. The foci of mobilization are movement organizations and institutional networks. Divisions in the regime elite and liberalizing steps that increase political opportunities precede mass mobilization. A discursive approach would not require immiseration to explain action. It would focus instead on solidarity based upon the collective identity of submerged networks that share discourses, along with institutional and movement linkages. Elite divisions and liberalization would follow the movement's development, seeking to compete with or defuse it.

In the cases of mobilization examined in the course of this study, no clear and consistent relation was found between economic strain, absolute or relative, and collective action. This was true whether the actions concerned were unorganized, isolated outbursts (Haroon's funeral procession, the Ceres riot, or the Fort Hare boycott), institutional struggles (in black universities, newsrooms, and churches), or localized community-wide mobilizations (the East London bus boycott, the KwaZakhele Rugby Union (KWARU) in Port Elizabeth, Cape Town's culture of activism, or the Soweto school boycotts). Indeed, all these developments occurred during a long boom in which real black incomes rose, an increase which came to an end only in late 1976, after – not before – the start of the greatest mobilization examined, the Soweto revolt. Nor did they appear connected to any increase in political opportunities: the apartheid regime did not relax political controls in any way prior to the resurgence of mass mobilization, nor is there any evidence of local liberalization in black communities that reduced the costs of

activism. (Some of the mobilizations did enjoy the protection of local patrons, but this was less a source of mass militancy than a response to it.) Participants joined in a mobilization fully aware that it could carry a cost to themselves – sometimes small, such as voluntarily paying KWARU admission fees, sometimes high, as with those who walked out of the black universities or confronted armed police – but they rationalized it in terms of identity and duty: loyalty to their ideas, peers, and community. Thus, our findings regarding the actual processes of mobilization among black South Africans in the period under study are not consistent with a structuralist approach and better fit the discursive model.

Movement discourse and practice: At most, structuralist approaches to regime change would suggest that the development of opposition movements can alter mass perceptions of political opportunities. Actor-oriented theory would expect movement activity to frame new collective identities and values as well.

As the BCM developed, the increasingly optimistic perceptions of political opportunities expected by the structuralist theory became, evident, but these were not the only changes in political consciousness that could be linked to the movement's discourse and practice. It was demonstrated that BC discourse reached a vast audience among urban blacks by the mid-1970s, through the institutions of civil and political society, their opinion-leading elites (opposition and official), and the submerged networks of kin and kind. This inversionary discourse, built out of urban blacks' own experiences and hidden transcripts of suffering, offered them an ideology which presented the racial political and economic regime under which they lived as the source of their complaints. It also offered them tactics and strategies for resisting it through the development of black

pride, solidarity, and culture, an autonomous civil society, and ultimately, revolutionary action. What is striking is how much not just the movement's slogans, but its perceptions, analyses, and values were echoed at the grassroots. These changes at the grassroots were reflected in the rejection of the regime's political and economic forms of legitimation, the revalorization of blacks and their own cultural practices and activities, the growth of black identity and its politicization as a byword for opposition to the regime, and the spread of democratic values and demands, all promoted by the BCM and discussed in BC language incorporated into the daily talk of the townships. Thus, the evidence supports the prediction of the discursive theory that the development of oppositional movements is associated with value change as well as change in perceived political opportunities.

Development of social explosions: Given the utilitarian assumptions of the structuralist perspective, the motive force would be the bandwagon effect (changing estimates of likely gains as mass involvement develops). Repression, in turn, would increase costs and reduce participation. Protest targets would be also determined by cost (vulnerability) and gains (looting, etc.). A discursive approach would see the trigger as an event which creates a simulacrum in a highly politicized environment, emphasizing outraged values more than rational calculation. In this environment, repression does not reduce and may increase participation. Targets of protest tend to be value-based (offenses against community norms).

The rapid spread of protest in 1976 – around the Rand, the province, and the Cape – strongly suggests that the bandwagon effect was at work, but our account of the Soweto uprising suggests that it was not the only motive force operating. It is certainly true that in the townships where the necessary institutional medium for transmission was available – particularly South African Students Movement branches or other pupils' organizations

– the events of June 16 and after served as a signal to spread resistance, and activists traveled from township to township to call for action from their peers. However, there was more than the utilitarian calculation assumed by structuralist theory at work here. Although there clearly was a perception that the regime’s vulnerability increased as protest spread (e.g. the possible returns on protest increased), it was most certainly not accompanied by a perception that the costs of protest were decreasing. In fact, the opposite was true: as repression mounted, month after month, pushing the toll of deaths, injuries, and detentions into the thousands, shared loss and anger intensified social solidarity and political protest. When police fired on unarmed students on June 16, 1976, they crossed a moral border, and “Soweto”, like Sharpeville before it, became both a powerful symbol and a call to action. Participants in the protests that followed explained their participation far less in terms of rational choice than in terms of self-expression, obligation, solidarity, and sacrifice for others, categories for which structuralist theories have difficulty accounting. They were bound together by their acceptance of BC discourse linking loyalty to family, peers, and community. Similarly, a mix of material interest and political values was evident in the targets of protest and attacks. Opportunistic looting of goods frequently took place, particularly in the earlier stages of the uprising when there was substantial *tsotsi* participation. Yet it is noteworthy how the vast majority of protest objects reflected a politically disciplined choice: white businesses’ property, government offices, and black collaborators or strike- and boycott-breakers were targeted, but other trucks, buildings, shops, or people were left alone. Thus, the characteristics of the Soweto uprising offer partial verification of the

structuralist hypothesis, but a fuller explanation of the origin, force, and spread of the revolt also requires the contribution of discursive theory.

Values and identity: Structuralist approaches would not anticipate permanent changes in values as a result of mass mobilizations, although changes in the perception of political opportunities would be possible. Actor-oriented theory would expect rapid and lasting changes in social identity and understandings of citizenship.

After the 1976-77 uprising, the new outspokenness and willingness to act politically predicted by structuralist accounts was present in South Africa's townships, but so were changes in values and political culture. Focus group and survey data show that particularistic identities and even BC's black identity were increasingly overlaid by a national South African identity and offer further evidence of the growth of democratic values and claims. In the urban centers most deeply touched by the uprising – Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Port Elizabeth – the de-legitimation of the regime was extremely broad, and support for revolutionary change and organizations was on the rise. Thus the results of the social explosion that shook South Africa after Soweto were not reflected just in cost-benefit calculations, as the structuralist hypothesis suggests, but in the transformation of political culture in the directions to be expected on the basis of the discursive approach.

Subsequent political situation: From a structuralist perspective, the results of a regime crisis are defined by structural forces in the state and economy and by struggles within state and opposition elites. For an actor-oriented approach, they would likelier result from the transformation of political space (the reconstitution of a public sphere) and the establishment of networks and values which can form the bases for subsequent mobilization.

In the aftermath of the Soweto revolt, as the structuralist hypothesis suggests, there were changes in the state's apparatuses and struggles within the white elite. Moreover, Botha's declarations of reformist intent in 1979 undoubtedly raised blacks' expectations of change and thus their perceptions of political opportunity. Strategic debates within the opposition elites, internal and external, and realignment by elements of the old black elite, were also important factors in the development of a new strategy for the opposition. Yet it is important to note that the movement that opened the new phase of struggle – the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organization – was born before the implementation of Botha's principal reform initiatives. The movement emerged to canalize the social force that had been built up within social circuits of the black community of Port Elizabeth, first energized by the politicized sport activists working within KWARU, then overloaded by the feelings and values emerging from the conflicts of 1976-77. Indeed, the basis for the black opposition elite's calculations that the time was ripe for community organization and mass mobilization was its awareness of the outspokenness, solidarity, and commitment left at the grassroots in the wake of Soweto. In this respect, the South African regime crisis examined in this thesis partly verifies a structuralist hypothesis on regime change, but also supports the complementary assumptions of discursive theory.

Overall, then, although the case of the BCM provides partial verification for several of the structuralist hypotheses concerning transitions in authoritarian regimes, it offers broader support for a discursive approach to the problem. For those hypotheses where the discursive theory predicts the presence of factors complementing those

highlighted by a structuralist approach, our evidence indicates that the factors highlighted by both theories were present, each sharing responsibility for the phenomena to be explained. These factors include the social and discursive character of micro-mobilization, the effects of movement discourse and practice, the consequences of a social explosion for values and identity, and the political situation which follows such an explosion – all factors in the process through which regime crises occur. However, on the tests where the predictions of the two theories contradicted, the results favor the discursive theory. These tests include the role of political legitimacy, explanations of mobilization, and the development of the social explosion – the very factors which drive the process of regime change. Consequently, this case study suggests that we can conclude that on the issues relating to how regime crises occur, where a structural approach offers a partial explanation, discursive theory is necessary for a complete account. On the more fundamental question of why the processes that change authoritarian regimes take place, however, the discursive theory fits the evidence considerably better than the structuralist hypotheses do. Thus our second test, the head-to-head comparison of theories, favors the discursive, actor-centered approach to regime transitions, though not to the complete exclusion of the structuralist theory.

III. A COMPARATIVE CASE: SOLIDARITY IN RED AND WHITE, POLAND 1976-1980

“Strikes and demonstrations in several industrial cities ... in June 1976 were a spontaneous reaction to the government’s decision ... However, the reaction to it was unexpectedly strong and not proportional to its ... significance. ... [It] was seen as the breaking of a promise given by the authorities, thus as a breaking of this specific contract between the authorities and the society.”⁵

Though it sounds as if it might concern the events of Soweto, this quotation refers to contemporaneous events in Poland, where the long fuse that would result in the emergence of Solidarity and the social explosion of 1980 was being lit even as the students were marching and guns firing in South Africa’s townships. Indeed, as the opening of this chapter implied, the simultaneity and similarities in the processes of change in the two countries, despite the long distance and many differences between them, suggest that they offer us an opportunity to explore whether there might be common causes at work in the regime crises which led to their transitions to democracy. The Polish case is also particularly useful for this purpose because it is the principal one in which an actor-oriented perspective has entered the literature on regime change, so that some accounts are available which provide the information necessary to examine parallels with the process of political change in South Africa.

The rise of Solidarity in Poland represents a chance to conduct a comparative test of a discursive theory of regime change by examining the theory’s applicability to a case quite different in structural context from that of Black Consciousness in South Africa, but

⁵ Grzegorz Bakuniak and Krzysztof Nowak, “The Creation of Collective Identity in a Social Movement: The Case of ‘Solidarnosc’ in Poland,” *Theory and Society*, vol.16 (1987), p.407.

comparable in the factors which such an approach to regime crisis treats as determining. The differences are evident. Poland in the 1970s was a fairly developed European society, with an established national tradition, a communist political system, a socialist economy, and a large working class. Internally, it enjoyed economic progress through the first half of the decade, 1970s, sliding into economic crisis from 1978, although opposition activity increased during both periods. Externally, its circumstances could not be said to have been conducive to the development of an opposition social movement, since the country was within the Soviet bloc, Cold War tension was increasing (particularly after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1979), and the specter of Soviet intervention hung over every political move. Yet there were a number of parallels with the South African situation, particularly in certain socio-political aspects important from an actor-centered perspective on political transitions. The public sphere was very limited, with organization autonomous from the ruling Communist Party highly restricted and press freedom tightly circumscribed by censorship. Although there was a sense of national identity, the lack of autonomous organs of civil society meant that there were few social or institutional linkages to connect the grassroots cells of civil society outside the state. Social life tended to focus on primary affiliations – very localized social networks of family, friends, neighbors, school- and work-mates (*srodowiska*, or “milieu”) – so that a leading sociologist, Stefan Nowak, termed Polish society a “federation of primary groups united in a national community,” cut off from each other.⁶ The hegemonic ideology was not traditionalist but socialist and Marxist, stressing the supra-

⁶ Stefan Nowak, “Values and Attitudes of the Polish People,” Scientific American, vol.245 (July 1989), p.51.

national bond of class rather than kin or clan, but it, too, was anti-national. Despite ups and downs – serious labor unrest forced changes of leadership in 1956 and 1970 – there is evidence suggesting that until the years after 1976, in Poland, too, the hegemonic ideology enjoyed considerable social support.⁷ It was supplemented by a pragmatic “social contract”: rising living standards and a sphere of personal freedom were offered in return for a willingness to accept strictly limited political rights.⁸

The origins of Solidarity lay in circles of dissidents, in conflict with the regime and its values, but emerging from within the institutions and sub-cultures of Polish society, principally composed of students, workers, and church people.⁹ Many leading figures among students, youth, and the intelligentsia more generally were deeply alienated when student demonstrations for intellectual freedom and “real socialism” in March 1968 – part of the worldwide student upsurge of that year – were met with brutal repression and anti-Semitic purges. For many, it was the end of their willingness to appeals through reason for change within the system, the so-called “revisionist” approach; the recognition dawned that they would only be able to speak of change with a popular power base. In December 1970, workers struck and marched in Gdansk, a major Baltic industrial city, protesting against price increases and for free speech, and were met

⁷ The Polish Communist Party won the multi-party election of 1946, the only free vote prior to the Communist seizure of power, with 39% of the vote. Surveys from the late 1950s until the late 1970s – Poland was the only communist country where the authorities allowed considerable freedom for opinion polls – showed a high degree of support for the basic values of the socialist system. Public satisfaction was particularly evident in polls taken during the prosperous years from 1971 to 1975. Jan Kubik, The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland (University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press: 1994, pp.243, 249).

⁸ Bakuniak and Nowak, “The Creation of Collective Identity in a Social Movement,” op. cit., p.407.

⁹ The discussion in this paragraph draws on David Ost, Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics: Opposition and Reform in Poland Since 1968 (Philadelphia, Temple University Press: 1990), pp.50-56, Bakuniak and Nowak, “The Creation of Collective Identity in a Social Movement,” op. cit., p.408, and Kubik, The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power, op. cit.

with a hail of police bullets. Although the 1970 unrest led to the rise of a new leader, Edward Gierek, other concessions granted in its wake were gradually withdrawn. The next strike wave, the one that broke out in response to price increases in June 1976 in Radom and Ursus, near Warsaw, was also forcibly put down, followed by a humiliating “normalization” campaign in which workers who had not joined in the strikes were forced nonetheless to denounce them.¹⁰ The official response left a deep residue of bitterness within participants and non-participants alike, as well as a core of radicalized worker activists among those who had helped lead the strikes. Finally, the Roman Catholic Church, with which the vast majority of Poles were nominally affiliated, had a tense relationship with the regime from the outset, but until the 1970s organized opposition had not become rooted within it. This situation began to change in the late 1960s with the renewal of grassroots-level pastoral work after the Second Vatican Council, which brought a number of priests into contact with the social concerns of their parishioners. The church’s political involvement developed even more rapidly after 1978, when Karol Wojtyla, a leading intellectual and bishop within the Polish Church – was elected to become Pope John Paul II.

During the 1970s, opposition activists developed a new framework of thought about Polish society and a novel narrative of how it could be changed, focusing on rebuilding social unity, individual self-esteem, and national pride through the establishment of an autonomous civil society. In debates in local samizdat, émigré journals that filtered back into the country, and face-to-face discussions, the thinking of the former student activists and of their colleagues in many ways paralleled that of

¹⁰ Bakuniak and Nowak, “The Creation of Collective Identity in a Social Movement,” *op. cit.*, p.409.

Western New Left movements: they, too, emphasized breaking through the restraints within society that encouraged apathy and conformity, sought a participatory democracy, and were drawn to the counter-culture of the 1960s. At the same time, their strategic situation also paralleled that facing dissidents in authoritarian peripheral industrializers (a closed public sphere, legitimated through social dependence on the state) as well as that of colonial or racial domination (an oppressive socio-political system imposed from without by an alien social group). In the mid-1970s, these elements formed the backdrop to the articulation of a new narrative or framing discourse that led the thinkers of Poland's post-revisionist opposition – above all Adam Michnik, a student leader in the 1968 protests, and Jacek Kuron, a somewhat older activist and one-time scout-master of Michnik's – to radically new strategic and tactical conclusions.¹¹ (See Figure 8.1.) The new narrative frame, common cause for the activists of the new generation, included the facts of conquest and dispossession (the partitions of Poland, World War II, and the communist takeover; Soviet and communist domination of Polish life; the lack of alternatives to conformity or co-option available within official political institutions; and the dehumanization, alienation, and fear which resulted. All these themes grew out of experience, historical and individual, reflected in the hidden transcripts of loss, foreign and communist domination, the brutality of communist rule, and the isolation, fear, and tension of daily life. From this picture came an important change of tack for the opposition: instead of trying to persuade the ruling elite to change through reason or

¹¹ The argument regarding Polish opposition discourse above is a re-working of the discussion in Ost, *The Politics of Anti-Politics*, *op. cit.*, p.64ff.

Figure 8.1: The Structure of the Polish Opposition Narrative

Categories:	Narrative/ Framing Approach/ Discourse (Hidden Transcript)	Strategy	Tactics
Somers & / Apter & Johnson / Scott Meta- / Long Narrative/ Story	National / Conquest Liberation / & Dispossession & Human / (partition, Dignity / WWI, communism) (HT: Popular memory of loss, longing for change)	Cultural + civic democratization precedes political	1) concentrate on independent cultural / public sphere activity initially 2) eventual movement capable of pressuring authorities
Onto- /Intermediate logical / Story	Focus on / Soviet and Society and / Communist Nation / Domination (HT: Common experience of Soviet and communist domination)	Social and Cultural Solidarity	1) social autonomy / self-determination 2) rebuilding national and social ties and self-consciousness
Conceptual / Short / Story	Rejection of / Conformity & Communist / Co-option: dictatorship / in-System ship / politics (HT: Experience of communist political system)	Autonomous Civil Society	1) co-opt or replace civil society institutions 2) create "parallel polis" outside of govt-created bodies
Public / Hidden / transcript	Affirming / Atomization, National, / Alienation, and Cultural / Fear Tradition (HT: Revival of tradition, reassertion of ties, anger and fear)	Affirm Social, National Continuity Challenge Fear	1) reassert and reshape national and cultural traditions 2) "anticipatory democracy": act as if free, avoid confrontation with state

direct confrontation, the new strategy urged dissidents to engage in independent social activity to begin change outside the control of the state – or as Ost puts it, “the politics of anti-politics.” The long-term perspective the new philosophy suggested was the belief that cultural and civic democratization were prerequisites for political democratization. Tactically this led to a concentration on the creation of an independent public and cultural sphere, preceding the eventual emergence of a mass movement capable of pressuring the authorities. (Given the reality of Soviet might, only social movement activity, not armed struggle, was contemplated.) The intermediate or ontological story focused on establishing social and national solidarity against communist and Soviet domination, through the establishment of social autonomy and self-determination and the rebuilding of social ties and self-consciousness. The short-term story made the immediate objective the creation of an autonomous civil society, through the co-option or replacement of the institutions of civil society, and the creation of a “parallel polis” (the phrase, though drawn from Czech dissents, fits the Polish project well), an alternative Poland centered on discourse and social life outside official channels. Finally, the public face of the project involved a response to the prevailing alienation and fear through the reaffirmation of social and national traditions and a challenge to conformity through “anticipatory democracy.” Opponents of the regime should act as if they were already free, without directly challenging the authorities’ claim to state power. As Ost notes, this emphasis on building a participatory, democratic movement based on civil society, a fundamental part of the New Left, “seems to link groups as diverse as solidarity, the Greens, Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, the human rights movement and Christian base communities in

Latin America, and the ecological and women's movements in Europe, the United States, and Latin America."¹²

Operating within their new philosophy, Polish opposition activists energetically encouraged the development of independent social and cultural activity, building social networks among dissidents, establishing free public spaces, and forming a counter-culture with tremendous mobilizing potential. All these developments emerged out of the local social circles in which the activists themselves were immersed, the networks or *srodowiska* of daily life.¹³ Ost writes that "the goal of the opposition in the 1970s was to get people to do things – anything – just as long as they did it on their own, with no official mediation." Such activities included "recreating the classic institutions of the modern public sphere" – meeting places, interest groups, a free press publishing newsletters, journals, and pamphlets, educational activities such as the "Flying University," clandestine classes in private apartments in officially disapproved subjects. It also involved more informal activity – a discussion group, an unofficial theatrical work or art exhibit, helping the persecuted. "All these were felt to produce an ethos of self-determination, a belief in one's ability to act publicly. New social institutions, if they were to come at all, would only come after; and in order for them to come later, new beliefs would have to be inspired today."¹⁴ The most important of the organizational networks was the Committee for the Defense of the Workers (KOR, by its Polish

¹² *ibid.*, p.30.

¹³ "Social movement activity (both intelligentsia opposition groups and workers' strikes) depended on an intricate networks of micro-structures comprised of *srodowiska*. ... Opposition and Solidarity activity was overwhelmingly conducted with people one already knew – from school, church-related activities, a workplace of professional grouping – often in a pattern of interlocking *srodowiska*." Andrzej Tymoski, "Poland's Unwanted Social Revolution," *Eastern European Politics and Society*, vol.7 (1993), pp.196-197.

¹⁴ Ost, *The Politics of Anti-Politics*, *op. cit.*, pp.69-70.

acronym), set up by the dissident intellectuals to help workers persecuted in the wake of the 1976 strikes, which ultimately became a leading human rights and educational organization. It became the first of a constellation of acronyms, as other dissident groups split off from it or formed in other circles to carry on the work. By the end of the decade, several thousand people were involved in producing and distributing KOR's underground publications, while an important clandestine periodical put out by another group, Robotnik ("The Worker"), had attained a circulation of more than 20,000.¹⁵ The sermons and episcopal letters of the church became even broader-reaching media for the expression of ideas of democracy, pluralism, and a Polish alternative to the dominant ideology, while church halls and masses became important sites for public gatherings of the opposition.¹⁶ The encounter of student, worker, and cleric around all these activities marked the simultaneous formation of a counter-elite and the growth of an opposition culture around them.¹⁷ The result was a growing network of activist nuclei, formed of workers, church, and student activists, forming a community of discourse shaped by the same publications, books. Where these networks were strong, they would provide channels connected to numerous *srodowiska*, that could rapidly organize and guide collective action.¹⁸

Another major result of the Polish opposition's activity in the late 1970s was the popularization of an alternative public discourse and set of symbols, engaging the regime

¹⁵ Kubik, The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power, *op. cit.*, pp.154, 161.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.253.

¹⁷ Jan Kubik, "Who Done It: Workers, Intellectuals, or Someone Else? Controversy Over Solidarity's Origins and Social Composition," Theory and Society, vol.23 (1994), p.454.

¹⁸ Bakuniak and Nowak, "The Creation of Collective Identity in a Social Movement," *op. cit.*, pp.420-421.

in a contest of legitimacy before a mass public. As Kubik puts it, “the struggle in Poland of the late 1970s was not for political power, but for authority and legitimacy, i.e., for the public predominance of one of the two discourses defining social and political order. The fundamental distinction was drawn between those who had political and economic power, and attempted to construct for themselves authority and legitimacy, and those who had little power but struggled to make ‘their’ discourse visible, audible, and, eventually, hegemonic.”¹⁹ Here we can only give a handful of examples of the new, oppositional discourse that emerged around democratic, Christian, and national themes, but they offer an indication of how the ideas of the opposition activists received an echo among a much wider audience. For example, in August 1979 *Robotnik* published a “Workers’ Charter” demanding free trade unions, which was widely read and helped shape the demands and expectations of workers during the events of the following year.²⁰ When churches held masses commemorating figures or events important to the opposition, hymns and songs disapproved by the authorities because of their nationalist and anti-communist content were sung.²¹ In episcopal letters, the bishops encouraged their flock’s aspirations to national independence. (“The Polish nation never gave up this natural right of each nation to freedom, to self-determination within its own borders.”²²) Most important of

¹⁹ Jan Kubik, “Who Done It: Workers, Intellectuals, or Someone Else?” *op. cit.*, p.446.

²⁰ Kubik, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power*, *op. cit.*, p.162.

²¹ *ibid.* These included the “subversive verse” of the national anthem, “*Boze cos Polonia*” (“God Save Poland”), “Lord, return our free motherland,” as well as songs of Polish soldiers who fought the Red Army for Poland’s independence after World War I or in the non-communist resistance army which fought the Germans during World War II.

²² *ibid.*, p.173. A bishop told a packed church in Krakow, “No outsider gave us Poland. Poland came into being as the result of the nation’s struggles – and prayers.” *ibid.*, p.172. (The attitude might be paraphrased: Pole, you are on your own!)

all were the Pope's sermons during his visit in August 1979, which stressed human dignity, the dignity of work, and human rights – a code easy to interpret in light of the well of hidden grievances Poles felt. His sermons encouraged Poles to regard these grievances not as individual problems, but as a consequence of the regime under which they lived.²³ Thus, the “parallel polis” of the Polish opposition created space and opportunity in which activists could challenge official discourse and offer prestigious alternatives, emerging from Poles' own experiences. These let Poles connect their personal situations to problems caused by the regime and feel that the values and hopes of the opposition were close to their own.

From 1977 on, the networks and discourse of the opposition were increasingly able to reach and mobilize large numbers of Poles. Students, for example, clearly responded to the opening public space. A survey of Warsaw university students in 1978 found that 29% were willing to admit that their opinions on the Polish situation had been shaped by clandestine publications, and 28% said they were ready to join organizations disapproved by the authorities.²⁴ Thousands poured into the streets for public demonstrations, as when a student activist was killed by the state security apparatus in

²³ “The spreading of these concepts meant introducing an alternative symbolic universe into the sphere of public life. Familiar situations, using this new perspective, could be seen and interpreted in a new way, by direct reference to certain values. Because these concepts had been used in public, critical attitudes toward the elements of the existing social and political system were legitimated. Together with their appearance and objectivization the process of transforming the object of these critical attitudes commenced. From separate, fragmented phenomena that were the source of social satisfaction they moved to the whole of the social condition of each person. ... This was a large step on the road to emancipating social thinking from the influence of the official controlled system of social communication, because for the first time there was a framework for a total and compact reinterpretation of reality to rival the official framework. Bakuniak and Nowak, “The Creation of Collective Identity in a Social Movement,” *op. cit.*, p.414.

²⁴ Maria Dudus, “A quoi pensent les étudiants de Varsovie?” *L'Alternatif: Pour les droits et les libertés démocratiques en Europe de l'Est*, no.27-28, May-August 1984, pp.62-63.

Krakow in 1977.²⁵ The greatest numbers, of course, were mobilized by the church, the largest, strongest national institution aligned with the opposition. For instance, more than 20,000 attended the November 1978 mass celebrating the anniversary of Poland's independence in Warsaw, spilling out from the cathedral for blocks into nearby streets.²⁶ During August 1979, the Pope's 32 masses around the country reached literally millions of Poles. Through this process, the opposition demonstrated its capacity to reach into the local social networks that were the key to micro-mobilization, and began to build the capacity for mobilization on a much vaster scale.²⁷

The epicenter of the strikes of 1980 was Gdansk, which became a mobilization space, first locally, and after the signing of the historic Accord which bore the city's name, for the rest of the country as well. Strikes broke out first in other parts of the country in preceding weeks, but the decisive phase of the movement opened in August 1980 when the workers at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk again walked out. The turning point came August 17, when, after their economic demands had been met by the authorities, the shipyard workers decided to stay out to help strikers in other, smaller plants. This was followed by the formation of the Inter-factory Strike Committee, negotiations for the formation of free trade unions and a halt to censorship, and – to the

²⁵ Kubik, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power*, *op. cit.*, p.158.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ "Many experts were puzzled that the Lenin Shipyard strike of August 1980 could begin as a protest over economic issues and yet within a matter of days grow to form the nucleus of the largest spontaneous social and nationalist movement the Soviet bloc had ever seen. I think a significant part of the explanation lies in the often overlooked ongoing mobilization of independent public opinion by the oppositional groups through their publications and ceremonies. While congregating during the papal masses and independent celebrations, people realized the need and possibility of common action, as well as the availability of the reservoir of national and religious traditions still unclaimed by or suppressed in the official discourse of the People's Republic. The elements of this heritage (a potent counter-hegemonic discourse) ... were used to define 'us,' the nation or the society against 'them,' the state or Party-state, thereby challenging the latter's claims to legitimacy... ." *ibid.*, p.180.

amazement of all – the signing of the Gdansk Accord granting those demands on August 31, which laid the groundwork for the legal recognition of a free trade union called Solidarity.²⁸ Why Gdansk? An answer would have to look at the depth and effectiveness of opposition networks, as well as the powerful symbolic factors at work there. The Lenin Shipyard workers had been at the center of the strikes and shootings in 1970 and 1971; this left the scene itself symbolically saturated, as well as a nucleus of activists with experience of struggle (the idea of an inter-factory strike committee first surfaced there in 1971). In the late 1970s, fully 25% of the circulation of Robotnik, then a leading opposition journal, went to Gdansk alone. In 1978 a circle of activists connected with the paper's distribution there formed the Committee for Free Trade Unions, and a number signed the Workers' Charter the next year (including a Lenin Shipyard electrician named Lech Walesa). Moreover, Gdansk became the only center in Poland where all the diverse tendencies and groupings of the highly fractious opposition movement cooperated closely.²⁹ By the late 1970s, the power of the opposition movement and collective memory was steadily growing, as the crowds at commemorations of the 1970 strike showed: 1,000 in 1977, 5,000 in 1978, 7,000 in 1979.³⁰ When demonstrations were held on May 3, 1980, to commemorate Constitution Day, the largest crowd in the country, 15,000, turned out in Gdansk.³¹ Thus, when the summer strike wave began, the combination of local symbolism and activism made

²⁸ Bakuniak and Nowak, "The Creation of Collective Identity in a Social Movement," op. cit. p.404.

²⁹ Kubik, The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power, op. cit. p.162, 258.

³⁰ ibid. pp.164-165.

³¹ ibid. p.179.

Gdansk a mobilization space in which the stoppage took on particular power. Its remarkable success, along with the place that its history and symbolism gave it in opposition discourse, made Gdansk into a mobilization space for the rest of the country, as other regions fought to achieve similar accords.

This account of the process of the development of Solidarity in Poland and the associated regime crisis clearly reveals parallels to the circumstances involved in the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, despite the differences in detail. Both movements emerged out of networks in similar sectors of civil society: students, church, and writers, with the addition, in Poland, of workers (who would only enter the fray in South Africa in an organized form after 1980). Similar ideas and organizational models, flowing from the worldwide student movements of 1968 and their successor movements in the 1970s, served as the references and parallels for their activists. In both cases, New Left activists emerging out of student movements responded to the political and social constraints of highly authoritarian societies with remarkably similar strategies: the construction of an autonomous civil society, a stress on independent cultural and civic action, and the restoration of individual pride, social ties, and national traditions. (Indeed, “solidarity” became a watchword of both, and the structures and claims of both narratives were remarkably similar, as a comparison of Figures 7.1 and 5.1 makes clear.) The work of the activist networks in both countries involved forming a counter-elite and counter-culture through the institutions of civil society that they sought to co-opt or create, and spreading the movement’s discourse through them to a mass audience. This public discourse, which in each case brought together the themes of national identity, democratic values, and Christianity, was a direct challenge to the legitimating discourse

of the regime, breaking the monological relation with the public that had supported the regime and seriously eroding its legitimacy. The combination of public discourse, alternative institutions, and networks of opinion-leaders enabled the opposition to reach into indigenous grassroots social networks and launch a series of local mobilizations, which themselves served as schools of activism, exposing participants and onlookers to movement discourse and teaching the possibility of collective action. In both countries, there was one center where opposition organization was particularly deep and movement discourse particularly resonant, which became a mobilization space for a national social explosion that shook the regime, rewrote its rules for political discourse and behavior, and began the process which ultimately transformed it. In these ways, the case of Solidarity in Poland indicates that an actor-oriented account of regime crisis and transition is applicable to more than the case of South Africa alone.³²

CONCLUSION

What is the significance of our finding that a discursively-based and actor-oriented account is more useful than the structuralist alternative in explaining regime crisis and democratic transition in South Africa and other cases? At least four potential

³² "What did August 1980 mean in Poland? We are of the opinion that it is sound to interpret it as the emergence of a civil society. It came about by way of processes of overcoming atomization, the objectivization of a new vision of social reality (in which society was presented in opposition to the state) and of the organization of the project of social action that aimed at the realization of various goals and values of this society. These were carried by a social movement, the organizational form of which was 'Solidarity.' With the appearance of the idea of 'solidarity' there appeared a new 'collective actor'

contributions to knowledge can be suggested. (1) It offers an important addition to regime transition theory, suggesting that the role of social movements and collective identity should be brought from the margins of the field to a place much closer to the center. (2) It offers an implicit critique of the rational choice approach to political behavior so widespread in the discipline of political science today. (3) It helps us place institutional theories of politics in the larger context of political discourse and social identity which shapes the character and workings of institutions. (4) It expands our understanding of political change in South Africa itself, where the roots of the epochal democratic transformation which took place in 1994 are all too rarely traced back to the years prior to 1976.

First of all, the findings of this study cast doubt over the adequacy of the structuralist approaches prevalent in the literature on democratic transitions, and strongly suggest that more attention should be given the actor-oriented alternative. The prevailing approaches were not able to explain the different stages of the regime crisis of South Africa in the 1970s – its origin, development, or outcomes – nearly as effectively as the actor-oriented approach. Nor could the hypotheses underlying them be verified when tested against the data on the case. All this shows that structuralist understandings of past – and possible future – democratic transitions cannot tell the whole story, or even its most important aspects. An actor-oriented approach means looking at the process of political change from the bottom up – in terms of the attitudes, identities, and constitution of political actors through social and discursive action – rather than from the top-down, elite and institution-oriented perspective predominant in the literature. Since mood shifts and

undertaking action on the scale of the entire society.” Bakuniak and Nowak, “The Creation of Collective Identity in a Social Movement,” *op. cit.*, p.401.

local mobilizations can be signs that the potential for large upheavals is present, even many of the transitions which have been seen as “pacted” and elite-driven may well have been impelled in large part by elite fears of the developing potential of social movements. Moreover, the actor-oriented approach can explain an important aspect of democratic transitions about which structuralist approaches can say little: the emergence of democratic values and political culture. Structuralist writers of all stripes are silent on the genesis of mass political values, although they do worry about their effects on the transition. (The transition process school tends to express unease at mass mobilization and expectations from fear they may disturb the delicate negotiations between regime and opposition elites seen as the crux of democratization, and discussions on the consolidation of democracy after transitions include concern over whether public attitudes and demands will be supportive of democratic institutions.) Our results demonstrate that mass participation and mobilization in social movement struggles for democracy can help to instill democratic values even as they shake an authoritarian regime. Thus, this study suggests not only that a structuralist approach provides a less accurate account of regime crisis than an actor-oriented one, but that such an understanding misses the role of social movements in the formation of groups which become collective actors and the creation of a democratic political culture.

Secondly, the results of this case study pose serious challenges to the rational choice approaches to collective action inherent in structuralist theories of regime change and influential in political science as a discipline more generally. When accounts of mobilization were tested head-to-head in this research, the utilitarian approach of rational choice was found wanting. Once the values of a solidary group or network had been

engaged by discourse to spur collective action, cost-benefit calculations had remarkably little influence over mobilization. Although movement activists certainly thought in strategic and tactical terms, their behavior, both in the formulation of their narrative and in the conduct of their struggles, was less that of “movement entrepreneurs” than of “truth seekers” out to discover their identity and express their values, if necessary even at high cost from the standpoint of instrumental rationality. This was true both in mobilizations within institutions – such as student protests – and mobilizations outside of them, whether local or national. In addition to better explaining the observed phenomena, a discursive approach is able to explain phenomena which a structural approach does not treat: the origins of solidarity and identity prior to mobilization. The question of how group identity forms – of which of the various possible identity claims individuals will respond to – receives short shrift in rational choice theory. Yet, as we saw, the BCM’s promotion of cross-ethnic identification among Africans in Johannesburg and of inter-racial solidarity among coloreds and Africans in Cape Town was a crucial element in the development of social movement mobilizations in those places in 1976. Thus, the results of this research serve as a salutary reminder that politics involves more than just rational economic choice. It is an autonomous sphere of human activity in which power is exercised through conflicts about values and struggles over loyalties, as well as through constraint and calculation.

Third, our findings show that while institutional approaches to political change are useful in understanding the means of operation of political processes, an actor-oriented approach is necessary to explain the ends those institutions serve. In this account, as we have seen, the institutions of civil society and the state played important

roles in the development of the BCM, the contest for popular legitimacy, and the development of the regime crisis. But the pro- or anti-regime orientation of institutions tends to be taken for granted by institutional approaches, rather than treated as a political phenomenon that requires explanation, much as is the case with group identity in the rational choice perspective. Yet whether institutions serve power-holders or their challengers is the result of struggles within them, and these, as we have seen, are discursive in character rather than resource-based as institutionalists might expect. Furthermore, in situations where legitimacy is in question and the regime is in crisis, the authority of institutional rules themselves is in question, and the constraints on political opportunity are subject to redefinition from below by collective actors, not merely through reform from above by regime elites. By taking the results of institutional struggles for granted, and by regarding the authoritative character of institutional rules as a given, institutional approaches thus evacuate many of the most important political issues from their discussions of regime transitions more generally, reducing politics to elites playing games or the clashing gears of institutional machinery. Our findings show that just as the field of the political is more than just a marketplace, it is also more than a chess game, even though it may include aspects of both.

Fourth and finally, this account is intended as a contribution to our knowledge of South Africa's transition to democracy, to help both South Africans and others interested in their country to understand the under-emphasized but crucial importance of the Black Consciousness Movement in launching the process. Even today, the belief remains widespread in public discussion and scholarly literature that little of note happened in black South African politics between the Rivonia trial of 1964 and the Soweto uprising of

1976, apart, perhaps, from a handful of protests by students and strikes by workers. Indeed, accounts of change often skip quickly from the pre-1960 period when the ANC and PAC were legal to the post-1980 era and the emergence of the UDF and COSATU, with only a cursory glance at the BCM. Yet the die was cast concerning the fate of the apartheid regime in the years between 1965 and 1979, when black South African politics underwent a fundamental transformation. A new elite was formed, the institutions of black civil society took on autonomy and a political orientation, public discourse swung sharply against the regime, whose legitimacy was seriously eroded, new solidarities, identities, and values were formed, and an enormous variety of mobilizations — organized and unorganized, patronized or autonomous — took place against various aspects of black life under the white minority regime. The thread of continuity running through all these occurrences was the development and involvement of the BCM..

It is consequently fitting to close this dissertation by recalling words spoken in South Africa by Sen. Robert F. Kennedy at the start of this period, in June 1996, before a hall packed with excited university students. Kennedy declared, “Few will have the chance to change history much, but what we can do together will make up the history of our generation.” One of Kennedy’s listeners was a young freshman at the black section of the University of Natal named Bantu Stephen Biko. In the years that followed, Biko and his colleagues in the movement he helped to launch and inspire did change the history of their country, much like Adam Michnik and the creators of Solidarity in Poland, and countless others struggling to bring down undemocratic regimes elsewhere. What they achieved through collective action makes up not only the history of their

generation, but a substantial part of the legacy of freedom today enjoyed by South Africans and citizens of other new or restored democracies.

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Interviews

All interviews were conducted by the author, except for the two where other interviewers are indicated.

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 Card, Donald, East London, December 7, 1991.
 Cekisani, Moki, Port Elizabeth, May 19, 1992.
 Chalmani, Tom, East London, May 25, 1992,
 Chonco, Sishi, Durban, September 10, 1992.
 Cooper, Saths, New Haven, September 24, 1988, conducted by Kumi Naidoo.
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 Daniel, John, Grahamstown, December 1991.
 Diliza, Mji, Durban, September 11, 1992.
 Diseko, Mathe Johannesburg, August 26, 199, August 28, 1991.
 Gwentshe, Mzimkhulu, East London, December 5, 1991.
 Haya, James, Port Elizabeth, May 19, 1992.
 Hirsch, Alan, Cape Town, July 5, 1991.
 Hope, Ann, Cape Town, July 7, 1991.
 Isaacs, Henry, Washington, DC, September 1989, November 22, 1989
 Issel, Johnny, Cape Town, July 5, 1991.
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 Jiyane, Ziba, New Haven, August 20, 1989.
 Khoapa, Ben, Alice, May 22, 1992.
 Kistner, Wolfram, Johannesburg, August 4, 1992.
 Klaaste, Aggrey, Johannesburg, August 2, 1991
 Lacey, Marian, Grahamstown, December 3, 1991.
 Latakomo, Joe, Johannesburg, August 7, 1991.
 Laurence, Patrick, Johannesburg, October 21, 1991.
 Lekota, Patrick, Johannesburg, August 21, 1992, September 4, 1992.
 Mabandla, Lindelwe, Johannesburg, May 14, 1991.
 Mabin, Alan, New Haven, 1989.
 Mabizela, Stanley, Johannesburg, August 13, 1992.
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 Mafuna, Bokwe, Paris, September 1990.
 Makapela, Mthembu, East London, May 26, 1992.
 Mamasi, Max, Port Elizabeth, August 8, 1992
 Mani, Ashik, Cape Town, July 8, 1991,
 Masethla, Billy, Johannesburg, August 17, 1992,
 Mashabela, Harry, Johannesburg, October 9, 1991.
 Mati, Joseph, East London, December 9, 1992.
 Manuel, Trevor, Johannesburg, August 11, 1992.
 Mditshwa Monde, Johannesburg, November 7, 1991, May 5, 1992, May 12, 1992, June
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Moulder, James, Pietermaritzburg, September 9, 1992.
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Nqakula, Charles, Joahnensburg, October 8, 1991, October 18, 1991, November 18, 1991.
Nurnberger, Elise, Pietermaritzburg, September 9, 1992.
Nurnberger, Klaus, Pietermaritzburg, September 9, 1992.
Nyanda, Siphwiwe, Johannesburg, August 14, 1992.
Pinnock, Don, Grahamstown, December 2, 1991
Qeqe, Dan, Port Elizabeth, May 20 1992.
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Ramusi, Collins, Sekhukuniland, July 1993.
Roji, Skenjana, King William's Town, May 26, 1992.
Ruiters, Greg, Johannesburg, June 17, 1991,
Sayed, Farid, Cape Town, June 5, 1991.
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