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SASPU NATIONAL

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Let us have freedom in my lifetime says Mpetha

STUDENTS NEED to play their part in the fight for freedom and happiness in our country.

This was the message of Oscar Mpetha, one of the United Democratic Front's national presidents, in opening the 61st congress of the National Union of South African students (Nusas).

The veteran trade unionist and Western Cape community leader brought greetings from the UDF to Nusas, an affiliate organisation.

Nusas president Kate Philip, in her opening address, said the congress came at a time of massive mobilisation and protest throughout the country, including the university campuses.

Philip said the emergence of the UDF had shown students that a national progressive movement was possible and that they could participate in non-racial organisation.

During his address, Mpetha told the 400 delegates and observers that in liberation struggles around the world students had stood side by side with the workers.

'Our land is a rich land,' he said, 'and yet the children of the masses are dying of malnutrition. There must be something wrong and clearly this land of ours requires a change.'

'South Africa is crying out for change and students, whether black or white, must work together to bring about this change.'

He said white students should go out, as sons and daughters of the privileged class and pass on the message that freedom can only come when all the people unite against apartheid and oppression.

The UDF, said Mpetha, was not worried about the slight victory which the referendum represented for the government. The UDF was determined to mobilise all the forces of change in the fight for freedom.

The 73 year old activist who has a five year jail sentence for 'terrorism' hanging over his head, said the people of South Africa do not want freedom in their lifetimes, but now!

'Old as I am, I would like to see freedom in MY lifetime — and that means now!' he said to loud applause.

The annual congress of the student organisation began with songs of praise for Mpetha, who has become a symbol of non-racialism.

Unity was also a theme of Kate Philip's speech. 'The people of South Africa are clearly on the move and unity is being built between democratic organisations around the country,' she said.



Nusas president Kate Philip addresses delegates and guests.



Oscar Mpetha UDF president opens Nusas Congress: 'Students must work for change'



Mpetha salutes Nusas

She said the UDF began as a response to state attempts at co-optation and control — the new constitution and the Koornhof bills — but had grown into a unifying force which has advanced the non-racial movement for change.

'What was happening in Nusas during the year reflects what has been happening off campus,' she said.

'There was a rise in right wing activity on our campuses and a rise in right wing smear tactics, such as the notorious Campus News pamphlet which was distributed nationwide in May.'

'This necessitated a response from Nusas as to how we viewed change in South Africa and our role in this process. We managed to turn this attack to our advantage when we used the opportunity to promote our ideas of change on the campuses,' she said. Philip pointed to the anti-Quota Bill campaign as another example of a

state strategy which Nusas turned on its head and used to mobilise students. At UCT and Wits universities thousands of students turned out at mass meetings on the issue and at Rhodes and Maritzburg campuses thousands more attended protest marches against the racist bill.

'The danger of high profile mobilisation is that we neglect organisational activity on the campuses,' she said. 'But we have not fallen into the trap this year and have struck a balance between mobilisation and solid organisation around educational issues.'

Philip said education was one of the key institutions for maintaining the status quo and the education struggle, for Nusas, was a struggle to change people's ideas.

'Ideas have a real effect on people's lives and without changing ideas you cannot change society,' she said.

Looking ahead to 1984, Philip said

that the coming year was going to be difficult and challenging for all progressive groups including the National Union.

'We have to face the dual questions of co-optation and intensifying repression — especially in the bantustans — and we will have to develop an increasingly sophisticated approach to the struggle in South Africa,' she said.

She said this was necessary if Nusas was to be in a position to respond to the challenges which came from being a part of the non-racial democratic movement.

Philip said congress was a time to develop an understanding of the different campuses in Nusas and to build unity between them.

'Let us build unity between us so that we can go forward in strength to face whatever challenges confront us next year,' she concluded to loud applause.

Student press to challenge controls

THE SOUTH African Students' Press Union has a crucial role in developing democratic student organisation, passing on media skills and promoting progressive ideas.

This was the feeling of around 100 delegates from 25 student newspapers at the 8th annual Saspu congress.

In a resolution they stated that the strength of Saspu lay in its ability to give direction to affiliates and to promote contact.

Assessing the past year, outgoing president Annette Griessel said the quantity and quality of active affiliates in Saspu had increased, particularly in the area of faculty-based student publications.

She said that the student press had to continue its work and fulfill its aims, even in the face of increasing censorship from the state and university authorities.

In a motion passed unanimously, the congress condemned the repressive actions of the state. They said the silencing of the press was only one aspect of the clampdown on progressive organisations in general.

In another motion, Saspu resolved to actively support affiliates which are threatened by their university administrations. They lashed out at Rhodes and the University of Cape Town for recent censorship attempts on the student press.

Delegates condemned the commercial press for not giving coverage to the demands and interests of the majority of South Africans. The treatment by the commercial press of the repression in Mdantsane showed that objectivity was a myth.

The Saspu affiliates resolved to use the Ciskei issue as an example to make students aware of the way the commercial press supported an unjust system.

The new South African Media Council was attacked by delegates as a further restriction on the freedom of the press. They resolved to strongly oppose press control 'whether it be statutory or through a voluntary media council.'

Guilietta Fafak, a former Nusas media officer, was unanimously elected Saspu president for 1984. In her closing address to the congress, she stressed that Saspu's strength depended on the building of unity between affiliates, both on a national and regional level.

Fafak said the congress had stressed the politically educative role of the student press on the campuses and that this meant in turn that Saspu affiliates had to concentrate on their own internal education programmes over the next year.

Delegates said the debates at the congress and ideas for projects were likely to improve their newspapers and Saspu as a whole in 1984.

Right wing flounders in attempt to break Nusas

NEVER HAS the right-wing on the campuses had much support.

But this has not prevented it trying to influence the course of student politics

This year has been no exception. Right-wing students — usually posing as 'moderates' — have launched a number of campaigns on the Nusas campuses.

The only campus where there is a well-organised grouping is at Wits. Russel Crystal leads the Students Moderate Alliance.

Now Crystal has set his sights on organising similar groups on other campuses.

He has established connections with a small group of Pietermaritzburg students through the Students Action Front, has tried to woo student politicians in Durban and get them to set up 'moderate' organisations, and is aiding the formation of a right-wing organisation at the University of Cape Town to replace the discredited and defunct Conservative Students Alliance (CSA).

His success seems limited. According to reports, the Durban students have rejected his hand of friendship, and Nusas recently won the affiliation of Maritzburg as part of the National Union.

Cape Town sources report that there is little chance of a right-wing organisation emerging as a force after the leader of the CSA was proved to have taken part in the shooting of PFP leader Eglin's house some time ago.

Although the SMA at Wits is vocal, producing glossy media in vast quantities, it has little credibility on Crystal's home ground.

But Nusas is worried about the right-wing not so much in what it is doing, but in who is behind it.

Crystal's grouping has the sanction of some high-level government members, and receives backing from prominent businessmen in the Nationalist Party

Said one Nusas spokesperson: 'This fits very closely the Broederbond's plan to destroy Nusas through undermining its base on the English-speaking campuses. State action has not stopped Nusas growing in strength. Perhaps the hope is that the right-wing on the campuses will undermine the gains Nusas has made over the years.'

The right-wing did have an effect at Rhodes, where it regrouped and launched a disaffiliation campaign.

A hallmark of right-wing activity has been pamphlets on the campuses, some 'anonymous', and many claiming to have been produced by left-wing student organisations.

●At the beginning of the year a publication appeared on all Nusas campuses and some Afrikaans campuses. Campus News, claiming to be the official organ of Nusas, called on all students to take up arms, join Umkhonto we Sizwe (the military wing of the African National Congress) and launch an assault on the apartheid state. This, said the bogus publication, was the logical conclusion of Nusas policies and aims.

●A pamphlet appeared, claiming to have been issued by the Wits Alternative Service Group.

WASG, which has committed itself to fighting for the creation of alternative ways of doing military service



Russell Crystal, leader of the Wits right-wing.

denied producing the pamphlet.

●A pamphlet on SRC letterhead paper appeared at Wits, trying to smear the SRC president, Brendan Barry.

●During the referenda the right-wing tried to link Nusas to the ANC. Pamphlets claimed Nusas was the 'missing link' between the ANC, Swapo and the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

●A pamphlet on Namibia was produced in large numbers, using the slogans and aims of Nusas in a distorted way.

●On August 9, National Women's Day, Wits was swamped with

booklets thanking women for the part they play in fighting poverty, hunger and the 'terrorist threat'.

●During the anti-constitution campaign Nusas posters were copied, and only the slogan changed.

Despite this variety of attacks Nusas is not worried about a threat to their strength. As president Kate Philip explains: 'The right-wing is not much more than a nuisance. Because it is loud does not mean that it is effective or has credibility.'

'But the right will keep going because of the non-campus people who are behind it, not because it has support on the campuses.'

Thousands of students opt for democracy and progress



UDF banners — backdrop to anti-constitution campaign.

NUSAS' FIGHT against the new constitution has given it a special place in South African extra-parliamentary politics.

Nusas launched its own campaign at Rhodes and the affiliated campuses, which received massive support from the students.

Prior to the white referendum 14 000 students signed a Nusas petition, unequivocally rejecting the new constitution as entrenching apartheid and excluding the black majority, and calling for the participation of all South Africans in determining a common future.

In response to the referendum results Nusas president Kate Philip said: 'It is not surprising that in a whites-only referendum, white South Africans should vote for a constitution that entrenches minority rule and white domination.'

'Real change in South Africa will never come from within the ranks of those who currently hold power. Therefore the challenge facing white democrats now is how to ally ourselves most effectively with those forces striving to build an undivided South Africa, one whose constitution entrenches the principle of the Freedom Charter that the people shall govern and share in the country's wealth.'

'The emergence of the United Democratic Front in this period is historically significant for our future. For it is in such unity between all South African democrats, black and white, that our hope for the future lies.'

'It is sobering to realise how entrenched Nationalist support is amongst the white community, and how small anti-apartheid forces are. In that context, the 14 000 unequivocal 'No's' from Nusas take on added significance.'

Nusas is now looking at how best to continue its opposition to the new constitution, carrying on its campaign which started with the referendum.

The referendum, Nusas believes, was only a rubber stamp for a decision which had already been rushed through parliament.

Special emphasis was placed in the petition campaign on the links between the new constitution and other aspects of the government's 'reform' plan. In meetings and pamphlets, they focussed on the entrenchment of the bantustan system, the introduction of 'new methods of control' over the African population, and particularly the African working class.

The campaign climaxed with UDF rallies on all campuses. The UDF was popularised throughout.

Many students were reached. Seminars, plays, pamphlets, mass rallies and publications drew in large numbers of people and guaranteed the success of the petition.

At UCT 30 student organisations united in the Students Against the New Constitution (Scanc) organisation. Scanc put out a regular newsletter, and has involved its affiliates in an extensive programme of action since early this year.

Women win creches at Wits, UCT

DAY-CARE centers have finally become a reality at universities.

For years students and staff have fought and pleaded with the university administrations to set up child-care facilities for students and staff, but have met with stubborn refusal.

The universities of Cape Town and Wits finally gave in to pressure and are to subsidise the centers which will make the lives of many working and student parents easier.

The SRC's first came close to getting child-care facilities established in the mid 1970's, but were frustrated by the administration's argument that the costs were too high and 'it is not the duty of the university' to provide care for children.

Only this year did the administrations change their tune.

The UCT SRC started their own day-care center in an unused university building, and recently the university administration agreed to give the center an annual subsidy of



Members of the Wits Women's Movement in their campaign for creche facilities.

R18 000.

A five-year campaign at Wits culminated recently with the Wits admin agreeing to set up a creche in 1985.

The Wits Women's Movement, which led the campaign, pointed out that it was mainly women who bear the responsibility for child care, and with the lack of creche facilities at

universities, they have little opportunity of pursuing a career or studying.

In order to remedy this, the Wits SRC took up the campaign. A 'protest march' of thirty militant children launched the campaign, which drew wide support. After a mass meeting 4 000 Wits students signed a petition calling on the ad-

ministration to set up a creche. The Wits Council agreed that Wits should have a non-racial creche from 1985, which would cater for an initial 70 children.

These victories are still to be repeated on the Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses, where creche committees have been set up.

A survey run by the Organisation Against Sexism in Society (Oasis) at Pietermaritzburg revealed an urgent need for a creche.

At Durban, students and staff have been negotiating with admin for over a year. Promises of facilities have not been carried out.

According to a Wits Women's Movement spokesperson, 'until such time as South African universities establish child care centres, they will continue to limit the opportunities of women, and those unable to pay for child care, to work or study.'

UDF blossoms in Cape Town's gardens

WHITE DEMOCRATS in the Cape Town suburbs of Gardens, Observatory and Claremont have become involved in the United Democratic Front's activities.

The three area committees, with a combined active membership of at least 250 people, have elected representatives to the Western Cape UDF's general council.

The area committees are also draw-

ing in people who have been traditionally engaged in parliamentary politics, but are beginning to show an interest in non-racial extra-parliamentary opposition.

Sub-committees include media, fundraising, education and training, and a contact committee to keep members informed of activities.

These activities have included:

●A meeting in Observatory attended

by at least 400 white democrats.

●A public meeting in the Rondebosch town hall, which, despite being initially banned, attracted a thousand people. Helen Joseph, Trevor Manuel and one of the Nyanga Bush squatters addressed it.

●Weekly pickets on main roads. Posters covering a wide range of topics are held.



An Inkatha impi parades its strength a few days after the Ngoye massacre. Eight students were killed in the attacks, 150 injured.

Gatsha under fire following massacre of five students

GATSHA BUTHELEZI, Chief Minister of KwaZulu, and head of Inkatha, is facing repeated calls to resign as Chancellor of the University of Zululand.

Staff members, students and student organisations have called on Buthelezi to resign, following the death of students after clashes between them and Inkatha members last month.

Buthelezi has refused to resign and has shown little remorse at the deaths of 'his' students.

The clashes left five people dead and hundreds of others injured. The university was closed and conflict between Inkatha and other opposition organisations has been heightened.

The United Democratic Front, Azaso, the Congress of South African Students and scores of other organisations including the black

consciousness Azanian Peoples Organisation and Azanian Students Movement united to denounce Inkatha and Chief Buthelezi for the incident.

He now has to face powerful opposition to his role in the campus incident and to his plans to incorporate Lamontville into his bantustan, as well as increased opposition to his role in ruling KwaZulu.

The campus incident came only a week after a Johannesburg newspaper published a desperate appeal from students. 'Keep Inkatha off the campus or it could lead to violence,' they said.

They argued that there was a great deal of opposition and strong feeling about him and his organisation on the campus and his presence could lead to violence. But Chief Buthelezi, who is also rector of the university, was determined to go to campus



Two of the injured students — head wounds and a broken arm from knobkiri and assegai attacks.

The day before his arrival, students boycotting classes in protest against his visit were dispersed by riot police using dogs and teargas.

According to reports, all 3 000 had stayed away from classes

According to students, Inkatha impi armed with sticks, knobkerries and pangas had sneaked onto campus early on the morning of the rally.

The stillness of the morning was shattered by screams as the impi stormed through the campus, students said.

Students said the impi had

stormed the dormitories, breaking down doors to get to students and beating them without mercy.

People who visited the campus the next day described blood smeared over the walls and floors of the dormitory, smashed doors and windows and signs of desperate struggles.

Opposition organisations reacted immediately. In an unusual move non-racial organisations joined with Black Consciousness organisations in calling for a day of mourning

The university was then closed down and exams were delayed until January next year.

Mdantsane students to consider new strategy

AT A meeting held in East London recently Mdantsane students felt that their school boycott, into its fifth month, should be called off.

It was felt that divisions had been created among the students and that intimidation and violence had resulted in many going back to school. It was a priority to overcome these divisions, and to reorganise students.

Students wanted to ensure that nobody was barred from school next year because of the boycott. However, the meeting reached no final decision because they were not satisfied with attendance.

A final decision on the boycott will be taken at the next meeting. How to deal with the problem of people who have not been able to write exams will be discussed.

An idea being widely discussed is to wage a campaign around a petition, calling on the authorities to allow students to rewrite exams early next year. The East London branch of Cosas, together with the regional organiser Zukile Gxavu, released a statement making this call last month.

Students are still to decide how the call will be taken up. It is essential, they say, to involve as many students as possible in the decision. A Cosas exec member estimated that about 60 percent of the students have gone back to school, but many of them are not writing exams. The call for exams to be rewritten not only benefits those still in detention and on boycott, but also those who have missed too much of the school term to write exams.

Poor attendance at the recent meeting was partly due to exams. The second meeting will be held after exams.

The boycott started in August in reaction to the shooting of commuters by Ciskei police. Students decided they could not go to school while 'our parents are being shot.' In addition they demanded the release of detained students.

A boycott committee was set up, but students were prevented from organising. Meetings were banned, students were detained in large numbers and venues they had used were suddenly unavailable.

At one stage police and soldiers were moving through the streets beating up anybody who looked of schoolgoing age. Houses were searched and students taken to the police station, beaten, made to do excessive exercises and made to wash cars.

In spite of the difficulties, meetings have been held whenever possible, and informal channels of communication have been set up.

Niehaus gets 15 years for treason

IN A packed Rand Supreme court, Wits student Carl Niehaus and schoolteacher Jansie Lourens, both 23, were convicted of high treason. Niehaus was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment and Lourens to 4 years.

Although Lourens was acquitted on the charges of becoming and remaining an ANC member, the judge found that because she knew of Niehaus' activities and failed to report them she was guilty of high treason. This decision may serve as a

legal precedent.

Charges against the two included passing on information to the ANC, attempting to recruit people for the ANC and distributing ANC propaganda, including writing and distributing a pamphlet explaining why the Pretoria bomb was necessary.

Niehaus was also charged with taking photographs of the Johannesburg City Council's Gas Works after identifying it as a possible target for sabotage, attempting to explode a

pamphlet bomb outside the SADF recruiting offices in Johannesburg and purporting to establish an organisation known as the Afrikaanse Sosialiste Alliansie to gain the support of Afrikaans speaking South Africans for the ANC and the South African Communist Party.

Much of the evidence against Niehaus and Lourens was given by security police spy Warrant Officer Robert Whitecross, a Wits student who had been recruited by Major Craig Williamson in 1980. He had

shared a house with Niehaus and told the court how he had 'assisted' him in various activities including photographing the gas works and finding hiding places for banned literature.

Whitecross had also tried to infiltrate Wits Nusas organisations, but had met with little success as his behaviour had aroused the suspicion of student leaders.

Niehaus, an NGK deacon, had previously studied at the Rand Afrikaanse Universiteit, but was expelled in 1981 for refusing to apologise for putting up Release Mandela posters. He had subsequently been recruited into the ANC.

Explaining his support for ANC activities he said: 'On the one side there is the violence which is institutionalised in South African society, on the other side there is the kind of violence employed by the ANC. The ANC line also happens to agree with my Christian principles... I would like to draw a parallel with Nazi Germany where the churches went along with the system.'

Giving evidence in mitigation he told the court that in 20 years, the PFP had been unable to bring about effective change.

He said that only co-operation with the black majority could lead to change.

Jodac forges links with UDF

THE JOHANNESBURG Democratic Action Committee (Jodac) took a unanimous decision recently to affiliate to the United Democratic Front.

The young organisation took the decision at a general meeting.

In the wake of the excitement generated by UDF's national launch, Jodac was formed by a large group of mainly white democrats opposed to the new constitution and the Koornhof Bills.

It decided to take part in the UDF programme of action which culminated in the People's Weekend at the end of last month.

Jodac took an active part in the campaign rejecting the new constitution. Under the slogan 'voting NO is not enough' it put its case forward through pamphlets, press-releases and a well-attended public meeting.

The meeting of over 600 people was addressed by Patrick Lekota, publicity secretary of the UDF, Fr Albert Nolan, head of the Dominican Order in South Africa and Nicholas Haysom, a past president of Nusas.

In response to the government's referendum victory, Jodac stated that: 'Opposition to the constitution does not end with the referendum, but continues with ongoing cam-

paigns and organisation. Under the leadership of the United Democratic Front many South Africans are coming together to demand a non-racial democratic future in one united South Africa.'

Since the referendum, Jodac has concentrated on educating and consolidating its membership. The debate around affiliation to UDF has been a part of this process.

Other issues of focus have been the events in Ciskei, the implications of the Koornhof Bills, the place of white democrats in the movement for change, and the structure of the organisation.

SASPU **NATIONAL**

Organising a generation

THE FUTURE lies with the youth.

How often have we heard this said by our teachers, parents, leaders and ministers of religion?

In a crude sense, it is true. We are the generation that will assume the responsibilities of working to support ourselves and our families; of educating our children; of maintaining the economic, political and social life of our country.

These are responsibilities of which many people are unaware. No one formally (or even informally) mandates us to guide and influence and maintain the economic, political and social relations which govern our lives.

This lack of awareness, however, is not only irresponsible — it is positively dangerous.

In a society like ours, where economic, social and political power is concentrated in the hands of a small minority and kept there by the necessary and constant application of force, we have to make some pretty fundamental decisions about whether those economic, social and political relations should be acted out.

If we do not ask ourselves that question, then we act them out anyway.

If we do ask the question, we can only come to one of two conclusions: either we decide we are willing to accept the way our society works, or we are not.

A question of time

If we decide not to accept it, then we must decide whether we are only going to reject it in principle, or if we are going to do something about it in practice.

Now, the point is that we, the youth of South Africa, are asking questions. Plenty of them. We are looking long and hard at the way our society is structured and how it works. We are questioning the role that society expects us to play.

In a spirit of enquiry and exploration we are examining the attitudes and beliefs of our parents and friends, our bosses, bureaucrats, theologians, legislators, teachers.

This is partly because we are young. Youth the world over tends to be more critical and creative than their parents' generation. It has something to do with the fact that we do not have the same responsibilities of having to pay rent, buy food and clothes, and all the other necessities of life.

It has also to do with the fact that we are still fresh and energetic. The burdens of life have not yet weighed us down and dulled our senses.

Learning from history

But it also has lots to do with our own history, short as it is. Most of us were at school, or of school-going age, during the uprisings of 1976 and the boycotts of 1980. Many have seen friends and family die in these times. Others have been subjected to the trauma of detention without trial, solitary confinement and torture. Others have left the country. Too many have suffered for it not to have left a scar.

It taught us some harsh lessons about life in general and about South Africa in particular. And it thrust some conclusions into our field of vision. Namely, that the situation must be changed, and that change has to go right to the fundamentals of this vicious system.

That is our responsibility as the young people of today and the adults of tomorrow. It's worth remembering though, that many generations have set out to change the world and have either failed or given up. If we are to succeed it is vital that we appreciate what they attempted and achieved, and where they failed.

Our task is terrifying in its enormity. It is going to demand resolution and discipline on our part; a clear understanding of our situation — what is wrong with it and how it should be changed, and what organisation we need to bring about those changes.



The campaign against the Quota Bill was successful — the Bill was dropped. Now it's being sneaked in through the back door.

ADMISSIONS criteria to the English-language universities are to be raised in 1984.

Matric results will now have to be higher than in the past in order to gain entrance to the universities.

The administrations at the universities of Cape Town, Rhodes, Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Wits claim this is necessary to stop the high growth in the numbers of students seen in the past few years.

Students and academics, however, argue that this will automatically discriminate against black students wanting to enter universities. They point out that the Bantu Education system, with its inadequate teaching facilities, overcrowded classrooms, and severe lack of teachers ensures lower matric symbols are achieved by black matriculants.

By raising the standard of matric results needed to get into university the administrations will be discriminating against blacks and will reinforce the inequalities in South Africa.

It is said that the universities will be directly reinforcing apartheid.

Students and academics are linking the new admissions policy to the Quota Act, passed by parliament earlier this year. The Act was aimed at setting strict quotas for the numbers of black students admitted

Quota Bill is stopped ... but sneaks back

to 'white' universities.

After fierce opposition from Nusas, academic organisations and some administrators, the Minister of Education, Gerrit Viljoen, decided not to implement the Act. Explaining his decision Viljoen said that, after consulting with university principals, he was satisfied future university admissions policies would coincide with the desires of his government.

Academics at the recent University Teachers Association of South Africa (Utasa) conference in Rhodes condemned this as blatant collaboration between the universities and the government. They said the administrations, to avoid the embarrassment of implementing the official Quota Act, had agreed to establish their own unofficial quota by raising

admission requirements.

That all the English language universities intend to implement this policy at the same time, has only reinforced this opinion. The administrations themselves have been vague about the possible discrimination that would arise out of their new policy.

Research recently completed by Wits academics suggested there would be implications: if the policy was applied in 1983, over two-thirds of the black students registered for Bachelor of Arts courses would have been rejected.

They conclude that, by applying the discriminatory policy of raised entrance criteria, the university administrations will be applying the Quota Act in another form.

Pressed year for Saspu

1983 HAS been a stormy year for affiliates of the South African Students Press Union (Saspu).

Despite attempts by both university administrations and the government to undermine student newspapers, the student press has still made advances.

Two of the larger newspapers among the 40 affiliated to Saspu have clashed with university authorities this year. Rhodéo at Rhodes University and Varsity at the University of Cape Town were both forced to resist overt attempts by the administrations to control what they write.

At Rhodes the university senate attempted to set up an 'advisory committee' to screen Rhodéo before it went to print. The move, which would effectively have been a censor board, was dropped after Rhodéo and the Rhodes SRC mounted a campaign and mobilised student support around the country.

A similar strategy was adopted by the government to crush Wits Student and Saspu National, the national student newspaper. The two papers were effectively banned after being served orders forcing them to submit their newspapers to a censor board before distribution. On appeal this was lifted and both publications started production again.

At Durban University, a June 16 edition of Dome, the official student newspaper, was seized by security police and the publishers were threatened with charges.

At UCT 18 staff members of Var-

sity were sentenced in a university court for 'disobeying the principal's orders and for unethical behaviour'.

This extreme action was taken after Varsity published the text of a guest lecture by Dr Piet Koornhof, Minister of Co-operation and Development, on the constitutional proposals.

The lecture to the conservative Political Studies Department was restricted to the press, but Varsity ignored the ban and published the contents of the lecture 'to expose students to its contents'. Students mobilised against what was seen as an attack on the student press. Over 50 student newspapers, faculty councils and student societies expressed contempt at admin's handling of the issue.

Despite the repression, the student press has expanded on the campuses with many types of publications aimed at different audiences springing up.

In addition to the main campus newspapers — Wits Student, Rhodéo, Varsity, Dome, Nux (Pietermaritzburg) — are numerous faculty publications — Pulse (Medicine), Cogniscience (Science), Ascent and Artichoke (Arts), Deduct (Education), Psyche (Psychology), Bona Fide (Law), Mould (Architecture) and others.

Other publications affiliated to Saspu are produced by women's movements, labour groups, religious groups, SRC's, Nusas and political organisations.

All are united by their aim to promote progressive ideas and educate students about the way their discipline and interests relate to the South African reality.

Saspu president Annette Griessel says the student papers have played a crucial role in helping develop student organisation, popularising progressive ideas and campaigns, and educating students.

'They have been an important part of some of the major campaigns on the campuses this year. The press has done important work against the Koornhof Bills, the constitution and the Quota Bill, and in popularising the United Democratic Front, Nusas activities and the various campaigns of the SRC's,' says Griessel.

'The student press has also given more in-depth coverage and analysis to issues ignored by the commercial press and the government media — the banning of the South African Allied Workers Union, the events in the Ciskei, KTC, Crossroads and important issues such as conscientious objection, state strategies in the sphere of education, repression on the black campuses, local campus issues, repression and the United Democratic Front.

'We move into our annual Congress facing many challenges', said Griessel, 'not least of them the ideological challenge from the government. We are going to have a lot of work in building a solid press union that can withstand the pressures of working in the present political climate.'

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Students of the '76 uprising — restarted the fight against divided and unequal education.

Apartheid's education is just another crack in the wall, but the students are aiming at its foundation

It is not too difficult to see that racism is an element which keeps this state of affairs going. Racist laws are used to force people to accept this system, and are backed up by the police and the army. It is a means of political domination of the minority which owns the wealth, over the majority which doesn't.

Society depends on the education system to feed the required proportions of professional, skilled and unskilled labour into the economy. Because of this, breakdown in the education system has ripple effects throughout society. These can reach crisis proportions, and can severely hamper economic growth and limit profitability.

Such a breakdown can either be a result of the education system's inability to meet students demands and expectations and legitimise the system in their eyes, or could be a result of a lack of adequate training facilities.

In South Africa today, the crisis in education exists for both these reasons.

Ever since 1976, the education system has been repeatedly ruptured by student anger at conditions in education, and by the inability of the authorities to meet even their short term demands.

In terms of the new co-option strategy, an obvious target is university students. Already there have been moves to upgrade the universities of Durban-Westville and Western Cape with the inclusion of their principals on the formerly whites-only committee of university principals.

Clearly, the state is trying to cement together the cracks in the education edifice. But the proportions of the crisis are such that attempted solutions only scratch the surface.

Furthermore, students have identified the political root causes of their grievances. They are demanding political solutions that the government cannot provide within the framework of the existing system.

The analysis of South Africa as a system of class exploitation and domination provides a basis for defining what role students play in relation to broader political struggles.

This understanding gives a clear guide to those watching the 'reform' process taking place today.

A brief look at struggles in education this year shows an increased level of conflict and confrontation between students and the authorities.

Black education is unable to act as a mechanism of strict control through consent. Instead it has to resort to repressive methods at a time when the rules are supposedly changing to an emphasis on co-optive methods.

The banning of the SRC at UDW is the most obvious example of this. Other confrontations include the boycotts at Medunsa, Fort Hare, Mongasutho Training College, Mountview in Cape Town, the sport boycotts in many schools in Soweto, the solidarity boycotts in the Ciskei schools, and the murders at Ngoye.

This intensification of struggle in the education sphere poses the question of whether or not this organic and sometimes spontaneous opposition to the education system is being channelled into organisation.

A further question is whether student organisation has its fingers on the pulse of its constituencies, providing the impact and direction needed in crisis situations. This is an important challenge for next year.

The major challenge for 1984 revolves around the reform initiatives. Firstly, their attempts to co-opt coloureds and Indian students to cause division with African students will demand sophisticated response, and sophisticated analysis of the reform process will be needed.

At the same time, students will be part of the UDF's campaigns around broader aspects of the reform process. Because of our time, resources, person-power, skills and mobilising potential, students are a significant sector within UDF.

One campaign which has particular potential for building unity between Cosas, Nusas, Azaso and the youth is the issue of conscription, which is clearly on the agenda for coloureds and Indians next year.

Unity in the student movement is another important goal for 1984. Joint participation in UDF can, and already has, facilitated this, but it is important to emphasise that the basis for unity is more fundamental than this.

All three groups are challenging the overall educational role in reproduction of the system of racial capitalism. They are challenging the anti-democratic structures of the education system, that divide students against their will.

Cosas, Azaso and Nusas have common principles that go beyond those of the UDF, as a broad front of organisations sometimes have differing outlooks, but are united against a common enemy for the purpose of a particular campaign. Participation in UDF should not temper the students' assertion of their own principles.

All three organisations are committed to the Freedom Charter, to non-racialism and democracy in a unitary South Africa. Further than this, they share a common analysis of conflict in South Africa which is seen as class conflict, characterised as racial capitalism. This analysis provides the framework within which Cosas, Azaso and Nusas situate themselves and get direction.

All three organisations have faced some level of attack from the state, because clearly the student movement constitutes an obstacle to overcoming the crisis in education, exposing as it does the role education is geared to play.

Non-racialism undermines the very basis of Inkatha's ethnic organisation while the Freedom Charter's demands go beyond the kind of limited change Buthelezi calls for. Black consciousness groups, identifying conflict in South Africa in racial terms have also attacked student organisations, and used disruptive tactics, as was seen at Glynn Thomas and Medunsa.

So a final challenge for 1984 is to overcome these obstacles by strengthening the organised student base, taking up issues most appropriate to the different sectors of the student movement, and to forge unity on the basis of common principles.

THE UNITED Democratic Front has burst into the South African political struggle, capturing the imagination of hundred of thousands of South Africans. As UDF is not an organisation, its power depends on the strength of its affiliates.

A united grouping within the UDF is the student movement, which is well represented by the Congress of South African Students, the National Union of South African Students and the Azanian Students Organisation.

These organisations are devoted to struggling for a non-racial, unitary and democratic South Africa, which are also the aims of the UDF. It is on organisations such as these that the UDF, depends. Their ability to translate the UDF's programme into effective action in their constituencies will, in the end, be essential to the development of the UDF.

The student movement has, over the past few years, proved this ability. Like the UDF, the success of the student organisations depends on the strength of their affiliates and active participation of their membership.

The organisation of students, as has been realised, cannot simply develop out of occasional mobilisation in response to issues that arise. Rather, this response needs to be integrated into activity that is ongoing and programmatic.

Without this, activity cannot be sustained, depth of leadership does not develop, skills are not passed on. And, with the annual turnover of members that is a feature of the student movement, organisation can end up facing dismal collapse.

An ongoing programme may depend on hard work. But, more important, its basis lies in an understanding of why students organise.

The school students of 1976 and 1980 clearly saw that divided and unequal education in South Africa is designed to reinforce and maintain the divisions and inequalities of our society.

Furthermore, through what is taught and what is not, the education system tries to legitimise the apartheid system in the eyes of students. They are taught that tribalism, racism, competition and sexism are 'human nature'.

But education can also provide people with the tools to question what they are taught. The education system cannot prevent this process, particularly when the difference between what pupils are taught about apartheid and what they experience in their daily lives is so wide.

It is at this point where students reject the terms of their education, that the effectiveness of education as a means of control breaks down. It is here that the potential to build and reinforce progressive student movement begins.

The ongoing challenge to the student movement is to consistently widen this gap, to expose our education as a form of control.

At face value South Africa's problems are essentially of 'race relations', of white domination and oppression of the black majority. But explaining South Africa in face-value terms can be more than just wrong — it can be dangerous.

A 'black and white' explanation does not reveal to us why oppression, exploitation and hardship are enforced by the Sebe's and Matanzima's of the world. Nor does it reveal why the Hendrickse's, Thebahali's and Rajbansi's are so keen to collaborate with 'the whites', and share the golden fruits of apartheid.

Beyond the appearance, lies on something more fundamental. Scratch the surface of apartheid's irrational racism and it will reveal a complex system of coercion and control, geared towards the vast production of wealth for a minority.

Wealth created through sweat in the mines, factories and industries is taken by the few who hold the power to take it, and is kept out of the hands of the labourers who created it.

Some aspects of life are being 'deracialised', but the basic divisions continue to exist. 'Reforms' are necessary because there is another side to apartheid — it generates a conflict. This takes many forms, but the primary conflict is between those who own, and those who do not.

THE STORY OF AN UPRISING

AS THE tens of thousands of school students gathered on a cold Soweto morning in June none could have anticipated the bloodbath that was to follow. Nor could any have foreseen the mark that day June 16, 1976 would have on the entire history of South Africa.

The plan of the South African Students Movement Action Committee for June 16 was a straightforward one. Students would meet at 12 different assembly points in Soweto, and march at ten minute intervals to the Orlando Stadium. There student leaders would address them in a mass demonstration against Bantu Education in general, and the forced use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in particular. The demonstration was to be peaceful and following activities had not yet been planned.

The students never reached the stadium. On route they were confronted by an arc of heavily armed policemen who fired teargas in an attempt to disperse them. The students stood firm, and police opened fire, hitting at least four students with their first rounds.

Almost immediately students picked up whatever they could lay their hands on — sticks, rocks and bottles — and began throwing them at the police. Within minutes, a peaceful demonstration had turned into a riot.

As news of the shootings spread through Soweto, students took to the streets in anger. Any symbol of state control or oppression now became a target. Buildings and vehicles of the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB) were attacked, as were beerhalls and bottlestores. Barricades were set up on the main road, to prevent police from entering the township. When workers returned from work that evening they found Soweto in a state of chaos, with at least 20 buildings still burning.

The militance of Soweto students on June 16 far exceeded the original plans of the South African Students Movement (SASM) leadership. But the extent of the anger came as no real surprise. From the beginning of 1976 students had launched a series of boycotts of lectures and, eventually exams, in protest against the use of Afrikaans. It was the shootings of that first day, however, that turned this anger into a mood of outright confrontation. A student at the time commented: I remember one young girl from Rockville. She was actually bleeding from her ears, her mouth and even her eyes. It was a terrible sight. Now, given this type of violence, definitely it does transform one. It makes one a bit harder. This is the violence of South Africa.

The morning of June 16 saw fighting raging throughout Soweto. As hundreds of armed police entered the township in anti-riot vehicles, clashes occurred with youths manning barricades. By noon, Baragwanath hospital began burning injured people away because it had reached its capacity. At the same time the WRAB Chairperson, Manie Mulder, called a press conference to announce that virtually all their Soweto facilities had been destroyed.

The months of June and July saw demonstrations and violence spreading throughout the Transvaal, to the Orange Free State and Natal. Demands of students shifted from that of Afrikaans, to the withdrawal of the police from the townships, and the release of the hundreds of detainees that had now been arrested. Schools became a focus of attention and were burned by students in many townships, as the initial protest began to assume the nature of a national student and youth uprising.

It was not long before university students responded to the wave of resistance. On the South African Students Organisation (SASO) campuses, especially Ngoye, Turfloop, Fort Hare and Durban Medical School, solidarity protests soon turned into violent clashes with the police. While the Nusas campuses were largely out of touch with the extent of the anger in the black communities, solidarity actions started. The most dramatic was when 300 Wits students marched into



A student lies dead, his unfinished protest next to him. The day — June 16, 1976.

When students marched against Bantu Education on the morning of June 16, 1976, they had no idea their protest would spill over into the most massive student struggle in South African history.

For over a year the battle raged, but it never really ended . . .

central Johannesburg and were attacked by white vigilantes.

In the beginning, three groupings emerged to occupy the political stage. At the head was clearly the SASM Action Committee with two representatives from each Soweto school. With the slogan Don't Mourn — Mobilize, the committee co-ordinated events in Soweto and, in many senses, provided the inspiration for the country as a whole.

It became clear that the African National Congress was playing an important internal role. Pamphlets encouraging unity amongst students and workers, and commemorating Freedom Day on June 26, were widely circulated amongst demonstrating students. Thirdly, the Black Parents Association was formed. Led by respected figures in the black community, it emerged as the voice of Soweto parents and played an important role in supporting the students, particularly in taking care of funeral arrangements.

By the end of July it was clear to student leaders in Soweto that, if they were to maintain the tempo of activity, they needed a far tighter leadership group that could lead, rather than simply co-ordinate. Not only had the

police begun to detain the SASM leaders, but the staggered reopening of Soweto schools was clearly planned to prevent a united student response.

On August 1, Tsietshi Mashinini announced for the formation of the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC) and called for two representatives from each Soweto school to attend a meeting the following day. Mashinini emerged as the first president of the SSRC, the body which was to provide the leadership of Soweto students, and at times the community as a whole, for the following 14 months.

August 4 was set as the date for the SSRC's first offensive. Six weeks of activity had taught the student leaders that if they were to have a real impact, students could not continue their struggle alone, so they planned to coincide a massive student march from Soweto to the centre of Johannesburg, calling for the release of detainees, with a call for a worker stay-away on that day.

The first of the three worker stay-aways of the period was largely successful. Although students had to resort to extensive pickets, and even the sabotage of the Soweto rail line to prevent workers from going to work,

the events of the uprising had created considerable sympathy for the students, amongst the broader community. The stay-away lasted for a full three days and although it was uneven and tapered off towards the end, up to 70% of workers did not go to work in the Johannesburg and Pretoria areas.

The student attempts to march to Johannesburg ended in bloodshed. For three successive days, students gathered in different parts of Soweto and set off for Johannesburg. Each time they were confronted with police who opened fire and dispersed them. The anger that this created was enormous. Soweto residents once again manned barricades to keep the police out of the townships as the homes of black security policemen and 'collaborators' were set alight. The news that similar confrontations had broken out in other parts of the country, particularly the previously relatively calm area of Cape Town, further strengthened their resolve and spirit.

Towards the end of August, SSRC and ANC pamphlets began circulating in Soweto calling for a second worker stay away. The pamphlets called on parents and workers to show solidarity with the youth and were initially met

with a favourable response. On September 23, an exceptionally high percentage of workers in the Johannesburg and surrounding areas did not report for work. A day later, however, Soweto was reduced to bloody confrontation. This time, however, the confrontation was not against the police, but between the residents themselves.

The 'Mzimhlope Hostel Incident' was a brutal illustration of the police's ability to manipulate the inadequacies in the students' attitude towards the workers of Soweto. After a small fire at the Hostel, inmates emerged with sticks and assegais and went on a rampage of violence and destruction through the streets of Soweto. As police looked on passively, the 'impis' massacred Soweto residents, as what was seen as a direct assault against the ongoing worker stay-away.

Prof. Morobe, an SSRC leader of the time, recalls that 'the lack of strong worker organisation put restrictions on us. The whole thing might have been a genuine mistake on our part because we concentrated on people in townships with children at school. These school children could take pamphlets to their parents. But we cannot exonerate the hostel inmates completely. They must have known about the stay away. On the day, coincidentally, I passed by Mzimhlope on my way to an SRC meeting. I saw a group of these inmates standing there. There was one policeman who had climbed on top of a van. He had a loudspeaker and was addressing them. But our problems were a bit removed from them and our organisation in that respect was inadequate'.

Although the worker stay-away continued into its third day, so did the violence of the Hostel dwellers. It was only a full week later that students were able to get access to the inmates and, after discussion, resolve to work towards unity. The extent to which the incident did shock the students into a greater awareness at the position of



Surrounded! Scholars flee in panic as police close in.



A victim of the Soweto uprising that changed the course of South African history.

migrant workers, was evident in the emphasis on worker-specific issues in their later pamphlets.

In the midst of this stay-away SSRC president, Tsietsi Mashinini fled to Botswana. The phenomenal speed at which he had emerged as both a Soweto legend and an international figure had brought with it intense police harassment and an eventual manhunt for him. Within a day of his departure, the SSRC announced that Sydney Khotso Seatholo would replace him. Although unknown and far less charismatic than Mashinini, Seatholo spent a great deal of energy systematically touring and speaking at

Soweto's schools.

The month of September in many senses saw the peak of the national uprising. The third worker stay away, which began on the 13th, was the most successful thus far. With the slogan 'Worker Power and People's Power' no intimidation was required to secure the support of between 75 and 80% of Johannesburg's black workers. The stay away also extended well beyond Johannesburg, the most significant addition being the massive two day stay-away of both African and coloured workers in Cape Town.

The month of September also saw student demonstrations continuing

throughout the country. Under the slogans 'Equal Education for All' and 'We want our Robben Island prisoners' Cape Town students held demonstrations in the very centre of Cape Town, at which scores of people were injured when police opened fire. In Port Elizabeth clashes between demonstrators and police reached a particularly fierce level. In Soweto, students continued to resist, now closing the issue of the visit of Dr Kissinger to South Africa, to stage a demonstration in the very heart of white Johannesburg.

As the end of 1976 approached, students were forced to explore new tac-



Police confront students. They later negotiated community.

tics and methods to maintain the momentum they had achieved. The SSRC called for a period of mourning for those who had died during the uprising, which was to last until the end of the year. The period of mourning was characterised by a series of calls, including a curtailment of Christmas celebrations; a vigorous campaign against alcoholism and particularly shebeens, and a boycott of 'white' shops. Although these calls were fairly successful, they did not necessarily make the SSRC popular. Whilst the unity of the black community was high, they often served to worsen the already heavy burden under which people lived.

The sensitivity of the SSRC's position in the community was best illustrated by the call for a five day stay-away in October. While the previous stay aways had been successful, this over ambitious call was almost totally ignored by working people. Students had begun to recognize the power that workers can wield, but had not yet appreciated the extent to which workers are primarily concerned with securing their own survival, and will not automatically throw their actual weight behind political campaigns.

At the same time students had begun to explore more militant avenues. A grouping calling itself the 'Destruction Committee' was established, and began to engage in acts of sabotage. Besides explosions at railway lines and burning of shebeens, the most dramatic act was the large explosion at the Jabulani Police Station in Soweto. It was at this time, that many students also began leaving South Africa to join the military arm of the ANC. On 16 December, traditionally known as 'Heroes Day', a pamphlet was released by the ANC praising the youth and calling on them to join the ranks of Umkhonto We Sizwe.

As the year closed, prime minister Vorster said of the events around the country 'The storm has not struck yet. We are only experiencing the whirlwinds that go before it'. In this light, the police continued their campaigns of mass arrests, detentions, and violently contesting demonstrations. In total, 21 537 people were prosecuted for events relating to the uprising in the year following June 16. In this same period, a number of people died in detention cells, including SASO executive members Mapetla Mohapi and Steve Biko.

The beginning of 1977 was not an easy time for the SSRC. The exams that students had boycotted the previous year had been deferred to February and a major debate broke out as to whether students should return to school and write exams or not. In mid-January Khotso Seatholo was shot by police in a car chase and slipped across the border into exile. The SSRC immediately elected Daniel Sechaba Montsitsi as its new president.

In April the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB) announced steep rent increases for Soweto, in some places of as much as 80%. The SSRC grabbed the opportunity to take up an issue that affected the community at large, rather than supply their education. A massive march was held on April 27 and, although they were confronted by the police, no-one was shot and it turned out to be the first violence-free march in the SSRC's history. The march also produced results, in that WRAB suspended the rent increases and, in so doing, projected the SSRC's image and support to an all time high in the eyes of the

community.

In May, the SSRC continued its offensive by calling on the members of the Soweto Urban Bantu Council (UBC) to resign. Although they initially refused to do so, when the two SSRC members who had come to meet with them were detained at the council chambers, popular pressure left them little option. Most council members soon resigned and on June 3 the UBC collapsed. Montsitsi himself then called on Soweto residents to reject government instituted bodies and form a representative body. The Soweto Committee of Ten emerged to play this role.

The credibility and support of Soweto's student leaders was something the South African state would not endure. On June 10, 21 people were arrested, including Montsitsi. Once again, the SSRC did not delay in appointing one of the two remaining Executive members, Trotoma Somo, as its new leader. The spirit of unity among the students was evidenced by the speed of Somo's appointment.

The SSRC set aside the week of June 13 - 19 as a period of mourning. Despite attempts at disruption by the police, commemoration services were held in various parts of the country.

The final action of the SSRC revolved around exactly the same issue that, 14 months earlier, had sparked off the uprising: Bantu Education. Identifying the schoolboard as the real 'collaborators' in the system, Somo issued a statement calling on them to resign. Although they initially resisted the call, student pressure eventually won the day and, nearly all the Soweto school boards collapsed. As a show of solidarity with the students in their opposition to Apartheid, teachers also began to resign from their posts. By September of that year, 600 such teachers had resigned.

On October 19, 1977, the state finally clamped down on the organisations that had dominated politics during the 1970's. The Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC), South African Students Organisation (SASO) and the South African Students Movement (SASM) were amongst the organisations banned on that day.

The youth and student uprising of 1976 and 1977 represents a beacon of courage and energy to many. While it did not fundamentally alter the Bantu Education system, the overall effects and repercussions of the uprising continue to be felt in almost every sphere of struggle today. Not only did it present the state with the first significant political crisis it had faced in close on 15 years, but it engendered South Africa's people with a sense of confidence and inspiration that has remained to the present day.

Many people tend to look back at the uprising as the heyday of the Black Consciousness ideological position. Dan Montsitsi, probably the most effective and respected of the the SSRC leaders, says of the period: 'You would find all shades of opinion in the SSRC. The point was at that stage the issues were an affront to all irrespective of whether you were Black Consciousness or not. That enabled us to work together. But as time went on, we were aware of the different trends, when the contradictions between B.C. and progressives intensified. But progressive students were there in the SSRC - it was only a question of profile'.



It's thumbs up to 1983 from the Azaso executive. Extreme right is Tiego Moseneke, Azaso president.

Nusas in strong position for 1984

FOR NUSAS 1983 has been the year of referenda.

The union not only actively fought against the new constitution, but also fought referendum campaigns at Rhodes University and the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

The organisation ends its 60th year stronger than ever, despite increasing attacks from the right.

Starting in February with the nationally distributed 'Campus News' Nusas and its constituent SRC's have faced a series of smear pamphlets, as well as other unpleasant incidents such as slashed tyres and personal intimidation.

A steady stream of right-wing propaganda has been distributed in an attempt to convince students that Nusas is not representing their interests.

Nusas has broken new ground this year in building student government through the National Faculty Council Conference.

It has also challenged white students to participate in the national non-racial movement for democratic change through support for the UDF.

Students have responded well to this challenge. This has come out in the extensive support for the anti-constitution campaign, the Quota Bill campaign and in the August SRC elections, where students on all five English campuses voted for a majority of Nusas supporters.

At Rhodes, where the referendum was narrowly lost, students reaffirmed support for Nusas by voting the leaders of the pro-Nusas Committee into first and second places in the SRC polls. At Pietermaritzburg, the SRC reaffiliated to Nusas.

Some of this year's highlights and crisis have included:

● **The Quota Campaign**
Thousands of students and many academics around the country united in opposition to the Quota Bill, which came before parliament early this year.

● **Women's Issues**
Women's issues were raised through meetings and publications on August 9, National Women's Day. SRC candidates at UCT and Durban stressed the need for women to participate in campus organisation, and focussed on action around security, sexual harassment, rape and contraception.

● **July Festival**
The Nusas July Festival 'Beyond Reform — The Challenge of Change' was the most exciting national student gathering in years.

It provided students with an in-depth analysis of the contemporary South African situation. With an understanding of the state's strategy in response to the crisis, the programme went on to look at the real alternatives to the present system of racial capitalism — and at how this alternative society can be built.

● **Anti-Constitution Campaign**
In the second half of the year, Nusas was galvanized into action against the new constitution.

Having raised the issue throughout the year through debates, information pamphlets and surveys, Nusas was in a strong position to respond when the challenge of the UDF arose. Nusas participated actively in the building of the UDF in the Natal, Transvaal and Western Cape regions, and delegations from all the campuses came to the historical launching rally at Mitchells Plain.

14 500 students signed a petition rejecting the constitution on the grounds that it entrenches apartheid and excludes the majority of South Africans and demanding that all South Africans should participate in deciding on our future.

THE AZANIAN Students' Organisation is now three years old. It has overcome many difficulties in this time, the most severe of which has been increasing repression in the bantustan universities.

1983 has been a year of growth and a year of lessons. Coordination and communication between the campuses has improved, organisation has been consolidated on existing Azaso campuses and the student organisation has expanded onto new ones.

The importance of strong organisational structures has been highlighted by the onslaught on the student movement from both university administration and the state.

SASPU NATIONAL looks at the activities of Azaso branches during 1983.

Stormy year for Azaso campuses

National Women's day, focussing on women's struggles since the 1950's. Other issues at medical school focussed on the high failure rate in all classes and the expulsion of a number of second year students.

NGOYE

Buthelezi's regime banned both Azaso and Cosas following discussion in the Kwa Zulu Legislative Assembly. Despite having no freedom to organize and being forced to work secretly, Azaso has managed to maintain a strong presence on campus.

Students have also continued the struggle for democratic representation through sports groups

Early in the year activities were held around the anti-constitutional proposals campaigns, Sharpeville Day and June 16. In addition a food boycott was organised and seminars were held on major political and educational issues.

Last month saw the invasion of the campus by Buthelezi's impis which resulted in the slaughter of five students and the injury of hundreds of others. The incident followed protests by students the day before Buthelezi was to address a meeting on the campus.

This horrific event has been condemned nationally and staff members and student organisations have called for Buthelezi's resignation as Chancellor of the University.

FORT HARE

The Fort Hare Azaso branch, although having always been strong and active, has faced a history of repression and was this year effectively banned by the Sebe regime

While being forced to operate off-campus the branch has nevertheless found ways to continue fighting for democratic student representation.

A major stay-away was successfully organised after 22 students were arrested and 14 charged with disrupting the peace during the save the six campaign.

Other activities organised both on campus and in the nearby townships included, for example, a commemorative service for National Woman's Day in August.

TURFLOOP

1983 has been a good year for Turfloop and Azaso has been considerably strengthened on the campus. There has been a positive shift from protest politics to solid organisation around educational issues.

Through concerted and dedicated action Azaso members have managed to build the student movement on this campus.

Following the expulsion of six students early in the year, a sit-in strike was organised for March 10. The protest was successful and the students were reinstated.

A few months later students were the victims of police violence when, after the June 16 commemoration, they were beaten up in the hostels for carrying placards and singing political songs.

A boycott was successfully organised in response.

Student activity during the second half of the year included an October 19 commemoration and UDF rallies.

WITS

The six year old Black Students' Society/Azaso Branch at Wits has been particularly active during 1983. In addition to commemorating historical events such as Sharpeville Day and June 16, there have been seminars and meetings around political issues in general and focussing on the United Democratic Front in particular.

Conflict arose during the year between progressive students and the right wing Student's Moderate Alliance.

The BSS elections were hotly contested by Azaso on the one hand the Azanian Students Movement (Azasm) on the other. Azaso achieved a landslide victory after Azasm withdrew

UWC

Azaso has had strong leadership and following on the campus this year. Azaso organised a wide range of activities, from the commemoration of historic days to more low

profile seminars on the campus. A lot of energy has also gone into encouraging students to participate in community organisations.

The SRC has an overwhelming majority of Azaso members. Consultation with the student body is underway to decide the manner in which the campus should affiliate to Azaso.

MEDUNSA

Intense repression by the Medunsa administration has forced the Azaso branch to operate from off-campus, yet a number of successful meetings and campaigns have been organised.

Two student leaders, Paul Sefularo and Confidence Moloko, were suspended, but later reinstated, following a boycott by the student body. The university authorities failed to substantiate allegations that they had intimidated first year students

During March a food boycott was organised on campus in protest against the low standard of food served to students.

Another boycott was organised — this time of extra-mural activity — after the administration chose to radically alter the Medical Students' Council constitution.

UCT

An Azaso branch has recently been formed on this campus to represent black students, articulate their demands and organise on their behalf.

Much Azaso activity this year has revolved around the UDF and the Education Charter.

RHODES

Azaso has branches at many other universities, such as Rhodes, Pietermaritzberg and Durban, and colleges, such as Mongasuthu and Mabopane Technikons. It is in the process of setting up branches at a number of other educational institutions.

According to Tiego Moseneke, Azaso president, Azaso is optimistic about the coming year. It has, he said, a sound base to work from, but most work will go into consolidating the organisation.

WESTVILLE

UDW has always been an active campus and has done much to build the student movement. The intense level of repression from both the administration and the state has made organisation difficult, yet Azaso has managed to grow.

The entire student body at UDW is affiliated to Azaso through their SRC, and activity on the campus has been intense throughout this year. In addition, through the Community Service Unit, students have begun playing a major role in the community.

Mass meetings were held around the constitutional proposals, Sharpeville day, June 16 and the campaign to save the six African National Congress guerillas sentenced to death. The major publication on the campus 'Critique', featured student news as well as in-depth articles.

During the latter part of the year, however, at the peak of the SRC/Azaso activities, the university administration clamped down. After more than a year on the campus, Azaso was banned for being a 'political organisation'.

The administration then closed down the SRC after accusing it of misappropriating funds.

Campus organisations have formed a broad front which is demanding the reinstatement of the SRC.

MED SCHOOL

During 1983 Medical School reached a level of political activity and awareness not experienced since the Saso days of 1976.

Azaso made tremendous gains through campaigns like the one to save the ANC six.

1983 also saw the birth of the Alan Taylor Residence women's group which was particularly active around



Scene from Soweto's youth organisation launch. Events like these have been frequent in the last months of 1983.

The growing power of youth

YOUTH CONGRESSES have spread through South Africa like wildfire in the past months.

Since the launch of the Cape Youth Congress earlier this year, at least 20 others have been formed, spreading from resettlement camps in Natal to the sprawling metropolis of Soweto, small townships on the Rand, to rural areas in the Orange Free State and Northern Cape.

Throughout history, the energy of the youth has been acclaimed. They have always been a dynamic force in the development of ideas, and been quick to organise themselves where the opportunity exists.

Today, the youth have taken a major step in organising those who fall outside of student organisation, trade unions and community organisation.

The present-day groups have dedicated themselves to gathering the youth together into a united movement, able to provide its members with direction and a sense of self-respect. They have dedicated themselves to building a future which holds more for them than the present, alongside their parents, workers, students and communities.

SOYCO

Early this year, after months of planning, campaigning and organising by a youth steering committee, the Soweto Youth Congress was launched.

Soyco was established to:

- Organise and unite the youth of Soweto, irrespective of race or religion, in the struggle for a democratic South Africa.
- Take up issues affecting youth.
- Instill in the youth non-racial and democratic principles.
- Promote social and cultural activities among the youth.

At a mass rally in the heart of the township, chanting and singing youths hailed the formation of the first youth organisation in the area since the banning of the 18 organisations on October 19, 1978.

Soyco — whose slogan is 'Freedom in our Lifetime' — intends forging links with other organisations working in the same interests as it.

According to an executive member, because of the lack of facilities for Soweto's youth, many are involved in meaningless activities. So it plans to provide sporting and recreational facilities and encourage young people of the community to participate in its activities. It plans to get support in fundraising and producing publications.

'We want to build strong structures said the spokesperson, 'and therefore call on all Soweto's youth to join us, look at the situation and try to solve our problems together.'



Sechaba Montsisi, past president of the SSRC, addresses Ayco

AYCO

The Alexandra Youth Congress (AYCO) was formed recently in an attempt to unite all youth organisations in the community. The organisations include the Alexandra Youth Council, the Thusong Youth Club, the Roman Catholic Youth Club and the Thabison Youth Club.

Ayco will respond to the cultural, political, economic and religious demands and aspirations of the youth. The aim, according to Paul Mashatile, Ayco's chairperson, is to 'mobilise the youth around popular democratic demands.'

The organisation is planning educational films, trips and other cultural and sporting events. Its members recognise the need to support the struggles of parents.

According to Nesto Keope, the treasurer of Ayco, the organisation regards itself as 'part and parcel of the oppressed and exploited majority. The long term goal along with all other organisations of the oppressed is a non-racial, democratic society based on the demands of the Freedom Charter,' he said.

KUYONI

At a meeting last month of 200 people the Kudumane Youth Unity (Kuyouni) was formed in the Northern Cape town of Barcharos.

Speakers included local members of the community and representatives of Soyco, the UDF and the South African Council of Churches.

A local chief told the meeting that 'it is in the youth that the hope of the people lies; you may not frustrate this hope.' Victor Sefora, of the National Seoposengwe Party called on the youth to 'endeavour towards the goals of the people, to formulate their strategies and to translate their ideals into reality.' He urged the youth to dedicate itself to the principles of the Freedom Charter and the UDF Declaration.

Kuyouni is considering joining the Northern Cape region of the UDF.

Kuyouni will organise the youth in the community and link up with other youth organisations in the

Northern Cape. Despite police harassment and attempts by school and Bophuthatswana authorities to discredit it, it has gained considerable support in the area.

CAYCO

The Cape Youth Congress (Cayco) was established earlier this year to co-ordinate and unify about 37 Cape youth organisations.

Shephard Mati, Cosas president, said at the opening: 'Cosas salutes you. The future belongs to you and will be what you make it today, not tomorrow.'

It aims to:

- Respond to the demands and aspirations of all people, whether they be cultural, economic or political.
- Unite the youth in the Cape.
- Find ways of linking up with youth in other areas with similar objectives to Cayco.
- Build good relations between youth and parents.
- Create a spirit of trust, responsibility, understanding and love among its members.

The organisation will organise among all youth — 'the workers, the unemployed, the teenagers and so on', said a Cayco member. The problems they experience will be tackled through united and collective action and Cayco intends to develop a role for young people in their communities and in the broader democratic movement.

Recently, Cayco was invited to attend the launch of the West Coast Youth Congress (Weyco) made up of youth from Saldhana Bay, Laaiplek and Vredenburg. The possibility of Weyco affiliating to Cayco is being discussed.

PEYCO

The Port Elizabeth Youth Congress (PEYCO) was established earlier this year as part of Cosas's policy of creating regional youth organisations. The congress is a non-racial organisation which aims to become directly involved in community projects and to create links with other



Cayco — one of the first to form progressive community organisations.

Other objectives are to:

- Normalise the relationship between youth and their parents.
- Create a spirit of trust, responsibility, understanding and creative companionship among youth.
- Instil a spirit of health and determination in disillusioned young people.
- Encourage youths to complete their academic education and strive for a better system of education.

According to Peyco president, Mkhusele Jack, by involving large numbers of youth in political and recreational activities the organisation intends to develop an atmosphere of peace, justice and mutual respect 'to promote equal rights and economic and social progress for all human beings.'

SAYO

The Sautsville Atteridgeville Youth Organisation (Sayo) was formed in the middle of this year to unite and organise the young people from these areas. It draws its membership from various cultural, sports and church groups and welcomes any group which accepts its aims.

Because of the lack of organisation in the area, Sayo will:

- Organise and unite the youth of Sautsville Atteridgeville.
- Contribute to the welfare of the community.
- Take up problems affecting the youth.
- Articulate the social and political outlook of the youth in accordance with non-racial, democratic principles.
- Create a spirit of trust, responsibility, understanding and creative friendship among the youth.

According to the president of Sayo, the organisation 'pledges to

grow side by side with other organisations nationally, so as to emerge with one national youth organisation which will enable youth to participate in non-racial democratic struggle.'

LYCO

The youth of Limehill, a resettlement zone near Ladysmith, recently joined the national trend towards youth organisations by forming the Limehill Youth Congress (Lyco).

Despite a lack of facilities and difficulty in communicating with other areas (all the telephones in the area belong to Inkatha members), the organisation has gained much support. It intends linking up with other progressive student and community organisations locally and nationally.

Lyco's primary aims are to unite and organise youth in the community and to support community efforts in the development of the broader national struggle.

Various sub-committees have already been formed to deal with specific activities. A drama group staged a play entitled 'The winds of resettlement' which portrayed the lives of people discarded in resettlement areas; an educational sub-committee will develop awareness among members who can educate people in the community; and a sporting group organises sporting events in Limehill.

At a meeting held between the two organisations, Inkatha warned Lyco that its members were 'being watched'. Despite this intimidation, the youth group is committed to realising its motto — 'Unity and struggle'.

According to one member, 'the lack of facilities in this area has led to the youths becoming involved in aimless activities, and it is the purpose of this organisation to unite them around meaningful issues and to involve them in the broader democratic struggle in our country. We intend uniting people around community issues so that they themselves realise what the struggle is about.'

THABONG

Another youth congress was launched in October in Thabong in the Orange Free State. The new organisation will work closely with Cosas and will organise the youth in that area who are not part of Cosas' constituency.

At present Thabong has the only Cosas branch in the OFS; it has suffered harassment by security police and is having difficulty finding venues for meetings.

Moseneke



NATIONAL: Could you tell us about your main activities this year?

TIEGO: In the past Azaso had to impress on students the need for campus organisation and unity. It also had to make students on different campuses aware of its political policies and outlook, and increase people's understanding of the realities of South Africa. Azaso successfully managed to broaden its base to 14 campuses and seven colleges. This year we further broadened our base and consolidated gains made in the past two years. This was done at two levels: firstly, by encouraging a focus on student issues on campus — the demands for SRC's at Ngoye and Medunsa are examples — as well as food boycotts and the like. Secondly, there has been an upsurge in taking up political issues. Students have become receptive to progressive political issues, following the intensive political education that went into the campuses over the past years.

NATIONAL: What would be principles around which Azaso organises?

TIEGO: Azaso, first and foremost, envisages a struggle where the large bulk of people are involved. So we are supportive of the principle of mass-based organisation. We have tried to avoid elitist organisation. Second, we support non-racialism. However black students experience peculiar conditions and therefore demand a black student organisation. But this does not water down our non-racial principle. All South Africans can make a contribution if they support a non-racial unitary and democratic order for this country. In South Africa blacks are united by the national oppression which they experience. But, more fundamentally, our society is capitalist and so exploitation is more fundamental than oppression. We are, therefore, fighting a class struggle, and anybody wishing to join this fight should do so. In the process we must also fight against racial oppression. We also call for a unitary South Africa.

NATIONAL: What do you think it means that Azaso, Cosas and Nusas all hold these principles, and what is the relationship between these organisations making up the student movement?

TIEGO: First, Azaso and Cosas are principled allies in the student movement and have a very close relationship. We are one in our objectives and the use of the Freedom Charter as our rallying point with Nusas. On that basis all three of us agree in total. We and Cosas are similar as our constituencies experience the same problems, the inferior quality of education — a basic problem which faces blacks in this country. Azaso's strength will depend, to some extent, on the strength of Cosas, and it is our duty to assist Cosas in its organisation. With Nusas we have had a very good informal relationship. At this point there is no formal, or structural relationship, but we share the same objectives. The difference between us is that Nusas works with a privileged group of people, whereas Azaso finds itself fighting for basic needs — like proper facilities, food and SRC's — which are taken for granted on Nusas campuses. Nonetheless, Azaso and Nusas have a very good relationship. We have worked together in the Anti-Republic Day campaign very successfully, as well as the Free Mandela campaign and the anti-constitution efforts. However, there is still room for us to improve our relationship.

NATIONAL: All three organisations are in UDF. What is the significance of this?

TIEGO: Besides the common goals we have with other progressive organisations around the country, we and Nusas both organise at universities, we have the basis for working with Nusas against the constitutional proposals and the Koornhof Bills. It is likely, going through the anti-constitution campaign together our relationship will improve. We must, however, make sure that we do not replace the links we have with Nusas now with links only through the UDF.

NATIONAL: How can the participation of the student movement strengthen UDF?

TIEGO: Although we are a small part of UDF we can play a significant role. The student population is also part of the communities, and can have an influence there. Because the communities are receptive, students can influence what issues the community will take up. Students are very vocal, and so can spread the message of UDF to a large part of the population.

NATIONAL: How will Azaso itself be affected by the 'reform' initiatives?

TIEGO: As we know, a main objective is to divide the oppressed people, to strengthen the status quo. Historically, very strong links have been forged between 'coloured', Indian and African people, but now they want to alienate so-called coloureds and Indians from the Africans. This will obviously affect Azaso, since it is our constituency which they want to divide. The most important challenge, however, is conscription, which would follow the acceptance of the constitution.

NATIONAL: A lot of the reform initiatives are being carried out in the universities. How does this affect the basis for Azaso unity on the campuses, and the relations between the campuses?

TIEGO: The changes that come from South African society consistently prove the relevance of our analysis. There has

TALKING HEADS



always been a basis for unity among black students in the different educational institutions, arising not only from common experiences but also our perceptions of a new society. These 'reforms' will manifest themselves in different ways on our campuses. So, for example, the University of Durban-Westville and the University of the Western Cape are now 'autonomous' which means they will, perhaps, not experience the conditions found at other places. This could undercut that basis of a common experience we are talking about.

NATIONAL: How would you broadly categorise the different campuses in terms of the different level of organisation which exist?

TIEGO: There are those campuses where Azaso has been active since about 1981 where we have been accepted as the sole representative body of black students in the country today. Most of these campuses have developed to a point where students assist in community projects or trade union work, such as Westville or UNB. The other campuses have grown significantly in the last year or so, and the majority of students support Azaso. But some branches have not taken full root, especially those where students are hampered by repression. Some like Ngoye have managed to overcome this by good organisation but others are hampered by not being there, but not at the rate we would like, and Azaso cannot really be said to be mass based there. But at Wits, Turfloop, Rhodes, Mongasotho, Technikon and in Natal, Azaso is to a large extent accepted by students willing to work within the structures. Priorities next year will be to establish close contacts with communities, consolidate the campus and involve more people. Because of these structural problems and uneven development on the different campuses, we have not been able to take up national campaigns, like the Education Charter, at the same pace and time we would have liked.

NATIONAL: You have mentioned that repression has made it difficult to organise on some campuses. What has been the response of the state in general to Azaso?

TIEGO: State response to Azaso has been very harsh, and not only the state but its allies on the different campuses. A number of Azaso people have been intimidated or detained and questioned, usually for short spells — one or two days. But of more significance is the repression at bush colleges where police have featured on many occasions. The university administrations also play a repressive role.

At Fort Hare this year the Ciskei police maintained a constant presence, often assaulting students very severely. Students have also been detained and charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act. The University administrations, at Medunsa for one, have prevented student organisation from operating on campus.

NATIONAL: And the coming year?

TIEGO: With Azaso having identified itself closely with other organisations which are actively involved in the struggle of our people, and with the upsurge of political activity in the country today, I foresee an acceleration of political activity on the various campuses. This will no doubt be accompanied by increased repression in our institutions. This has led us to consolidate our forces and to strengthen ourselves to take any kind of onslaught directed at us during the coming year. I expect increased repression, increased student activity and increased identification with community and national struggles in the country.

Philip



NATIONAL: What were the major developments on Nusas campuses this year?

KATE: Nusas activity has been concentrated into two main thrusts, both of which fall under the Nusas theme - Educating for Change. The one thrust has been contesting issues relating to education, and here we have tried to build the structures most appropriate for taking up this struggle - the Faculty Councils.

The second thrust has been rising to political challenges. The key issues we have taken up are opposition to the Defence Amendment Bill, rejection of the Quota Bill, and our campaign rejecting the new constitution.

In the context of the state's strategies of reform we tried to provide an analysis of it, exposing its underlying motives.

At the same time Nusas has been part of the UDF's activities. This has given our work a particular stamp and drawn us into a far more overt expression of the alliances we have built over the past few years with other progressive organisations.

NATIONAL: Your anti-constitution campaign was a success, despite it arising at exam time coming at a time of year traditionally considered unwise to launch activity. How do you explain this?

KATE: In a sense we had been leading up to that campaign all year, with our attempts to expose the government's reform strategies.

Our starting point in the campaign was appealing to the broadest possible base of students, to mobilise them in rejecting of the constitution, and from there, to raise issues that could develop people's understanding of how the new constitution relates to, for example, the increasing control of the African population, and particularly the African working class. We used the campaign to raise the question of how change will come about in South Africa in the future, and emphasised the importance of students in Nusas allying themselves with the majority of South Africans in working for that change.

And here UDF provided a really important focus for this debate to hinge around. We could link this to the issue of extra-parliamentary opposition and show that this is in fact the real opposition in South Africa. This is the source from where change will come.

14 000 students signed our petition, committing themselves to the principles of our opposition.

NATIONAL: What are those principles?

KATE: Non-racialism, democracy, a commitment to a unitary South Africa, and support for the demands of the Freedom Charter.

A key principle in Nusas is non-racialism. One of the challenges of opposing apartheid is to instil in people an understanding of how racism has been used to particular ends, as a justification for denying political rights, forcing people off the



land, and introducing controls on their lives that will ensure they will provide a cheap labour force for the economy.

The important thing is that there is no way we can begin to build a free and democratic South Africa until the way racism, tribalism and ethnicity have been used, lies exposed, and is seen as something to be fought against.

But we think the issue of democracy goes a lot further than the question of the vote. There are many other structures and institutions in society besides parliament which exercise control over people's lives and influence them. We would want to see people having the right to participate in decision-making at as many different levels of society as possible.

As far as our call for a unitary South Africa goes, it relates to our rejection of the bantustan system. There is no way South Africans can be free until the bantustan system is abolished, along with influx control and the pass laws.

NATIONAL: What of Nusas cementing the alliance with other student organisations?

KATE: At the moment we are operating in the context of a divided education system, and Cosas, Azaso and Nusas have identified particular constituencies within that divided education system to organise in.

Students face different problems and priorities. The level of repression against students, the recognition of rights such as student representation, syllabi and facilities are all markedly different for white and black education, and for this reason it is important to emphasise that in terms of the student organisations, our long term goals and broad principles are the same.

On this basis, and because we are organising as part of the education struggle, there is the basis for a working relationship and strong alliance between us.

While there is certainly a long way to go I would imagine that it is an extremely important unity to strive for. At present there are still problems: the reasons why we organise separately remain, the conditions and issues still differ, and the different experiences of apartheid necessitate a different starting point for mobilisation. But it is important to take the gaps, where they emerge, to forge unity.

Our joint participation in the UDF does in some ways provide such an opportunity. It is important that the student organisations in UDF work closely together because the potential exists for cementing our relationship about those issues. But where that relationship and alliance needs to be cemented is in the education struggle, where the objective circumstances for that alliance hold.

NATIONAL: What is on the agenda for next year?

KATE: We will certainly continue to oppose the new constitution and controls on the African population. Obviously a big question is how we respond to the implementation of the new constitution.

For Nusas the key issue will be to assert the importance of extra-parliamentary opposition. We will also need to define in what ways we can most strongly add to the UDF campaigns as a student movement — what our particular role in the front is.

Another issue that provides a basis for close working between the student organisations and the youth is that of conscription. This has faced Nusas and white students for some time, and we have had campaigns questioning the role of the SADF and focussing on the increasing militarisation of our society, particularly in the last two years.

It seems clear that with the implementation of the new constitution the government is going to extend conscription to

coloureds and Indians, and the UDF is already looking at ways of taking up the anti-conscription campaign. It will be important within this campaign to stress the political nature of the problems in South Africa and the need for political solutions which address the fundamental conflict in South Africa.

NATIONAL: What are the challenges for Nusas in the next year?

KATE: The prime challenge we face is to ensure that our activities and our participation in the UDF is rooted in the support of our campuses.

We have to continue to fight off the right-wing and extend the base of our support. The question this raises is that we not only want a broad base of students who are aware of the issues and who support us in a general sense, we want to draw such students into organisation to get them actively involved. Through that involvement get people to consolidate a commitment and understanding of how they can in the long term contribute to the struggle for a democratic South Africa by putting that commitment into practice.

Within that we must make sure, through our structures and organisations, that people are provided with the forums for developing a sophisticated theoretical analysis of South Africa so that all of our activities can be rooted and informed by that understanding. Only in this way can a solid commitment be coupled with a clear direction.

Mati



NATIONAL: What have been the major developments in Cosas this year?

MATI: Firstly, Cosas has developed a focus that is more concentrated on student issues, and consolidated the organisation at that level. This is a difference from the past when Cosas tackled community issues and isolated itself from its student base. But there are still tremendous problems conducting Cosas affairs along student lines.

Secondly, we have developed more of a second layer of leadership. Some of the branches have been working out their own programmes. In the past there was tremendous enthusiasm, but the people would wait to be given direction by the national executive, and the energy would fast disappear. Now that the branches are developing their own programmes and activities, on their own initiative, people have been thrown up who, given further development, would be our broad leadership.

Thirdly, in terms of our expansion there have been gains. In some branches activities have drawn in many people. For example, in the past, discussion groups were closed to members of the branch, but now they are open to the broader student body. This has generated the interest of people besides only those who hold membership cards, and so we have reached areas where we never had any inroads before.

Getting members to focus on these student issues is difficult in itself. And we need to consolidate more.

NATIONAL: Many organisations operate at two levels — first, taking up immediate issues. And second, going beyond those immediate boundaries to take up wider issues. Does Cosas do this?

MATI: I think we do. As I said earlier Cosas aims to consolidate and grow from the base upwards and outwards, through taking up issues that directly affect the lives of students at school and in the classrooms. On the other hand, it does have to play a role that goes beyond those classroom and school boundaries towards tackling community issues and national political demands. The activities at first level must feed into and strengthen, the second social and political level. Cosas has a duty to carry out, to represent the aspirations of oppressed students.

NATIONAL: In terms of those aspirations, what would the principles of Cosas be?

MATI: At the founding congress of Cosas, one of the questions which was addressed was: where do we go from here, in terms of outlook and direction and principles. We considered what the needs of the time were and how to continue the course of struggle. Amongst the basic principles to come out of the congress (and since then Cosas has been working around this is participating in the broader struggle) has been the principle of non-racialism. Whilst Cosas organises black students, it organises them towards a non-racial democratic education.

Furthermore, in the process of organising black students, our organisation provides means whereby racist and tribalist outlooks are steadily confronted and fought.

We believe that whilst we are workers for a democratic future, we should teach, preach and practice democracy as far as possible.

We also have the principles of mass mobilisation and unity in struggle. An assurance of a better education and future in our country is the mobilisation of the largest sections of the oppressed students and people. And always unity in the field of action.

NATIONAL: What does holding these principles mean to your relationship with Azaso and Nusas?

MATI: At the moment our relationship with Azaso and Nusas is the same, except in terms of our organising different types of students — them at a tertiary level and us at secondary school and below. Here and there we are developing joint activities and the relationship is growing.

There have been advances in our relationship with Nusas, especially with the emergence of the United Democratic Front where the student organisations are drawn together to assess their participation in the struggle against the Koornhof Bill and the constitutional proposals. Our relationship is founded on more than just a common outlook, but also on action. So with the kinds of issues and problems which are going to confront the youth of this country, we foresee that the relationship will improve.

NATIONAL: And all these groups have joined the UDF. What role do you think they have in the UDF?

MATI: First, these groups must move beyond the fact that the joined UDF in name. They must take their constituency with them. They have the potential to take their constituency into united struggle with other sectors of the broad democratic movement.

On the one hand, student participation can build the strength of the UDF, but it works the other way around as well. Participating in UDF and joint activities will expose students to other sectors of struggle and bring the masses together in joint struggle. Through that there is the potential to build participatory organisations, especially where gains are made through joint work. New possibilities are shown to student organisation areas with which they had no contact before might open up to them so that they can organise the unorganised.

NATIONAL: How is the reform process going to affect Cosas?

MATI: We will be drastically affected if the constitutional proposals are implemented. As has been made clear in the National Party Congress, a small section of the 'coloured' and Indian middle class would be won over to participate as junior with limited rights and privileges. In return they expect the majority of the youth, the oppressed and underprivileged to serve in the army, and risk their young lives in defence of apartheid which is responsible for their misery and oppression.

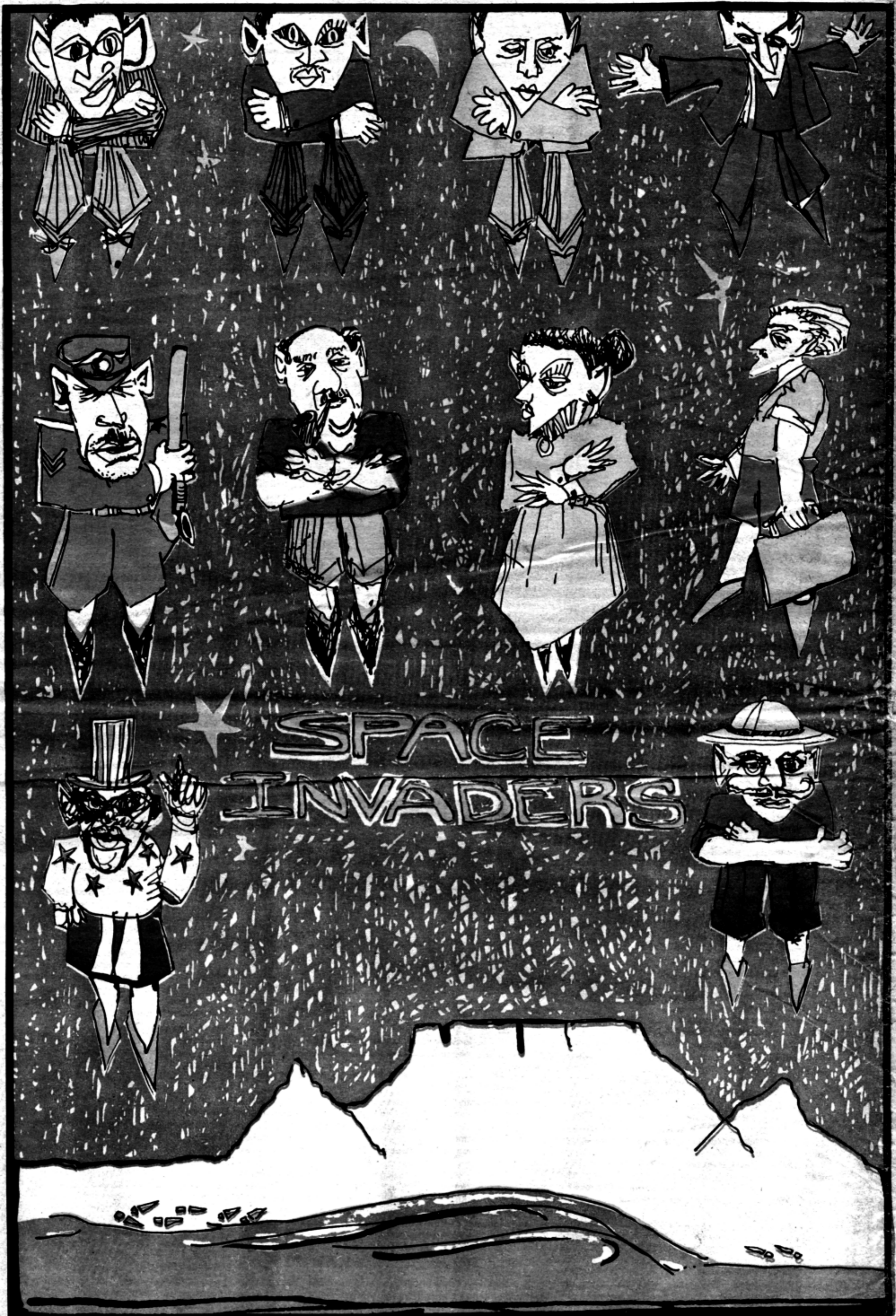
Second, if you look at education, it will remain racist, ethnically segmented. There will be no real change in this sphere, except that racist education will be entrenched. More corporal punishment, bad study conditions, arrogant teachers, and a decline in the standard of black education will result. More and more people will be denied education — which has become privilege in our country under apartheid. There will not only be division between urban and rural students, but deprivation well — of these young people's rights as South Africans. The doors of learning and culture will remain closed.

NATIONAL: How has the state responded to Cosas — you have always been a target of attack, so how do you cater for it?

MATI: Yes, the state is very interested in eventually stifling Cosas, and the democratic movement as a whole. They have had a few opportunities to harass us in the past. What is important is that, of late, they have managed to gain the service of the bantustans which are intolerant of democratic opposition.

Generally, our members are constantly harassed and intimidated. With the strengthening of its powerful forces, we have seen other attacks. Government commissions have, for example, tightened up the security laws. There is little we can do about these laws, but we must be determined to organise and mobilise students, strengthen our organisation and most important, develop a depth of leadership.

Only under a democratic, non-racial peoples' government will these laws finally be abolished from the face of our country. Then there'll be no tension, mistrust and hatred among people, but peace, better education, freedom and love.



SPACE INVADERS

351 years and three constitutions later...

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