

Chapter Eleven

“A devil’s piece of legislation”. Chief Luthuli¹

“Bantu Education or the Street”

The first half of the 1950s was the formative period of apartheid and the liberation movement fought simultaneously on four fronts against a new wave of fascist measures that restricted education, movement, residence and work. For the most part, the action occurred while the majority of the Congress Alliance leadership was either banned, on trial or serving short sentences in prison. The main activities revolved around the introduction of “Bantu education”, the threatened extension of the pass system to African women, the forcible removal of Africans from the Western Areas of Johannesburg and new labour legislation – in which Africans were seen as “unfit for trade unionism”. The policies of Group Areas and Bantu Education, supported by the core of legislation that regulated the labour market and managed industrial relations, formed the kernel of the apartheid system. Despite the obnoxious character of all this legislation, the Bantu Education Act was the measure that provoked the most prolonged resistance, which ended only with the Mandela government in 1994. While the new laws restricting movement, residence and work were strenuously opposed by the Congress Alliance there was none so inherently disempowering as the Bantu Education Act. What made it especially offensive was its essential idea that future generations of Africans were to understand that they were unequal, inferior and different.

In 1954 African parents were faced with the cruel dilemma of accepting a “rotten education” for their children or “no education at all”. As the more militant church leaders said, it was “Bantu education or the street!” Although the Bantu Education Act was potentially the most disabling act introduced by the apartheid regime, the resistance to it in 1953 was vocal and well-intentioned, but insufficient to prevent its passage through parliament – or to make it inoperable once it had become law. When its contents became known in 1953 the ANC campaigned against it and in 1954, with the act’s implementation, a boycott of government primary schools was organized. Thereafter it prepared for an interim alternative education system to meet the demands of an anticipated student withdrawal. Apart from a lack of capacity to do this, the ANC’s resources were severely stretched. Its leadership was banned and it did not have the expertise to provide an alternative educational system – the legality of which was in any

case exceedingly uncertain. Hatred of the principles behind the legislation, however, continued to simmer for the rest of the century, until Mandela took office in 1994. Until then there were at least 15 education departments, one for each of the ten Bantustans, a department for each of the four population groups and a national department. These were disbanded and welded into one in 1994. As a teacher I volunteered to assist the campaign against Bantu education and helped to develop an “interim alternative” to the new system. This last, in the legal-speak of the 1950s, was tactfully described by Professor Z.K. Matthews as “a programme of cultural activities”.

Verwoerd introduced the bill on Bantu Education to parliament in 1953 with a wordy statement that was as provocative as it was objectionable. The more he said, the more he revealed the real intentions behind the measure, which were to prepare African children for the lower echelons of the labour market. Under the new system, education would be transferred to the Native Affairs Department (NAD) where Verwoerd (as minister) could more effectively control it. Z.K. Matthews, acting president of the ANC at the time (Chief Luthuli had suffered a stroke and was seriously ill) communicated his thoughts on this in a letter to Tambo, saying: “The more I think about the system of education under review, the more I am satisfied that the underlying philosophy and the administration of it are even more important than the content of the syllabuses.”²

He was right. The statements and debates in parliament that I read were unashamedly blunt about the bill’s intentions. In the eyes of the government, the new education policy was clearly too ideological and too important to be left to the management of the Christian mission schools or the four provincial administrations who were previously responsible for the provision of African education.³ Once removed as a function of the provinces and made the responsibility of the Native Affairs Department, African education would be treated as a “native affair” and be seen in its “proper” context as a preparation for labour.⁴ In 1954, six years after the National Party victory, the NAD was already burdened with the multiple tasks of undertaking the re-tribalising of the African population under the Bantu Authorities Act, overseeing the operation of the pass laws, collecting the poll tax, and in the words of I.B. Tabata, writer and activist, would now place African education “in the service of these activities”.⁵ He went on to say: “It is well known that when a government wants to juggle with the social order, it reconstructs the system and the substance of education to suit its own aims.”

This insight became more apparent with each new statement made by Verwoerd. For him the “Bantu” family was traditional and almost changeless. Boys and girls received their training from their parents and older relatives. The chief was the father, judge, guardian and link with the spirits. Men tended the cattle, sheep and goats and the women undertook the work of hoe culture – which was “poor in technique and based on the extravagant use of land”. Ideas of an almighty or creator had no practical effect on their

conduct, while the paramount belief was in the immortality of the spirits and supernatural phenomena.⁶ The long-standing entry of Africans into wage labour in mining, manufacturing and farming was not seen to contradict this view. For him, migrant labour was “the customary life of tribal peoples within the Union” and had been encouraged “to make manageable the enormous, if not overwhelming burden of adjusting the Bantu population to modern standards of health, order and civil life”.⁷

Neither Verwoerd’s spurious references to the spiritual virtues of the “Bantu” community nor his senseless rationale for Bantu education could change the perception of African parents that this was a measure for the intellectual enslavement of their children. Africans spoke of it as a “poison”. For the most part, National Party legislators had made it abundantly clear years before Bantu Education was enacted that they did not approve of education for Africans beyond reading, writing and elementary arithmetic. Their speeches repeated the conventional wisdom that “native education” should do no more than “teach Africans to work”. The speakers seemed quite oblivious of the poor logic of their statements: “No member on this side of the House wishes to impede the progress of the native”, one National Party MP said in 1945, “[but] we say that he must live in the hut and we must live in the house ... We want to retain the respect of the native but we are not going to sleep with him in the kraal”.⁸ Another outspoken MP declared:

We should not give the native an academic education as some people are prone to do ... If we do this we shall later be burdened with a number of academically trained ... non-Europeans ... and who [then] is going to do the manual labour in the country?⁹

Their vision of the future South African economy was one of a low paid, labour-intensive workforce where all but the basic industrial skills were the privilege of the whites – and where “the natives knew their place”.

Inferior

As a teacher in a privileged white school, already an activist in the Congress of Democrats and the SACP, there was no question of my not placing my expertise – such as it was – at the disposal of the Cultural Clubs that were soon to be formed. There were, of course, consequences – not least my inclusion in the Treason Trial, suspension as a teacher by the Transvaal Education Department and consequent loss of income. It was difficult to stand by and do nothing as the National Party’s plans for African education unfolded. The contents of the Eiselen Report, named after the Commission’s chairman, Dr W.W.M. Eiselen, secretary for Native Affairs were even more unpalatable than those expressed at the turn of the century.¹⁰ Referring to the functions of Bantu education, Eiselen cited statements from 1903 and 1908 in the Transvaal and Cape respectively to

lend weight to his recommendations.¹¹ According to the 1903 statement, education had the effect

of creating in the natives an aggressive spirit [and] ... an exaggerated sense of self-importance, which renders them less docile and less disposed to be contented with the position for which *nature* or circumstances has fitted them.¹²

It is difficult to believe that the Eiselen Commission, reporting in 1951, could be more retrograde than this. But judging from the commission's extraordinary racist terms of reference, it based its recommendations on the assumption that Africans were a "race" set apart from the more rational varieties of the human species.

Its findings were premised on the understanding that the "Bantu" were "an independent race in which their past, [and] inherent racial qualities" were to be taken into consideration when it came to providing education.¹³ In the language of the Eiselen Commission, the word "Bantu" denoted the many tongues spoken by original tribes living south of the equator, "some of whom were dwarfs or dwarf-like". Others again, "can hardly be distinguished from the black West African negro".¹⁴ As to whether Africans and whites were equally intelligent, the commission kept an "open mind" on the matter, noting that "while the volume of evidence on this subject ... was considerable, it was of a very contradictory nature".¹⁵ As this line of enquiry was evidently inconclusive, they conceded (awkwardly) that, "no evidence of a *decisive nature*" could be adduced to show that as a group "the Bantu could not benefit from [the same education as whites] or that their intelligence or aptitude were of so special and peculiar a nature as to demand on *these grounds* a special type of education" (my italics).¹⁶

They therefore found other grounds on which to base their recommendations, retrieving the sentiments of the earlier commissions they cited and adding their own perceptions on the relevance of the family unit and the significance of the "Bantu" social structure to "native education".¹⁷ Verwoerd was immersed in this rhetoric and drew on it when introducing the Bantu Education Act to parliament in 1953. The guiding aims of the new system were to be based on the assumption "that the sale of African labour was of evident importance to the educator" and that "native education must be coordinated with a definite and carefully planned policy [for the development of Bantu societies]".¹⁸ The concept was less benignly expressed in Verwoerd's assertion that "there is no place for [the African] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour ...".¹⁹

It was these values that we tried our utmost to counteract when designing the activities for the Cultural Clubs we formed after Bantu education was introduced into the schools in 1954. The new system was based on the assumption that Africans in the urban areas were only there as temporary, unskilled workers and that Bantu education would

produce the sort of individual “who may safely approach ‘his’ future without the enervation brought about by his imitation of European ways of life”.²⁰ Much of the curriculum depended on what the ruling party considered to be its guiding principles that “Bantu education should stand with both feet in the Reserves and have its roots in the spirit and being of Bantu society”. The starting point of this understanding (pre-set in the Eiselen Report) recommended the teaching of social values “that make a man a good member of the [‘Bantu’] community”. These were specified as loyalty to the chief, self-confidence, reliability, a sense of duty, good manners and the “power to concentrate”.²¹ All of them good qualities for a job.

The system strove to undermine all previous primary education. By 1953 (prior to Bantu Education Act) most of the Africans who attended school were enrolled in the various mission, government, private and community schools. The principle of compulsory attendance did not exist.²² Only about 40% of approximately 2.1 million African children between the ages of six and sixteen attended the state and state-aided schools – “most of them in the lowest classes”.²³ Africans were at the bottom of the racial hierarchy in the allocation of financial resources. Each African pupil received only 14% of the amount spent on a white pupil and just over half the sum spent on an Indian or Coloured student.²⁴ Significantly, whilst the facilities were grossly unequal and the teachers under-qualified there was no official ideological slant to the curriculum, although the prejudices of each of the providers (church, government, community or private) were apparent in the limited scope of the curriculum. Verwoerd’s Bantu education system changed all that for the worse.

The coercive instrument to relieve the state-aided schools of their control of the curriculum was the withdrawal of financial subsidies if they failed to register with the Department of Education (DOE). These schools included the church mission and community establishments who received financial subsidies for approved staff as well as schoolbooks and equipment. The extent of state aid depended on the size of their enrolments. For these schools, which were chronically cash-strapped, it was either registration or closure. All existing non-government schools were required to apply for registration with the DOE and no new schools could be established without its approval.²⁵ It was not so much a reform of the existing education system (which was ragged), but the end of education for any African child who aspired to a world outside Verwoerd’s singular perception of the “Bantu community”. “The present native schools,” he argued “may be characterized as schools within Bantu Society *but not of that society* [it] is the government’s intention to transform them into *real* Bantu community schools” (my italics).²⁶ This was in line with his specious statement: “[u]ntil now [the African] has been subjected to a school system which drew ‘him’ away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed

to graze.”²⁷ As it turned out his version of the new Jerusalem had very little substance to graze on.²⁸ For most Africans between the ages of seven and ten years old, four years of schooling after two years in the infant grades, were the norm and the ceiling. Ideology was as important as the cost of African schooling. Even before Bantu education was introduced, Verwoerd had made it clear that “it was wrong to utilize expensive teaching staff to supervise large classes of bored children while thousands ... entitled to some measure of primary education are kept out of school”. The new system would cut costs and double the enrolment of pupils in the sub standards by shortening the number of hours of attendance to three hours a day. The pupils in the morning session would keep the seats warm for those who attended school in the afternoon!²⁹

“A devil’s piece of legislation”

This sophistry elicited an unusually bitter response from Chief Luthuli in December 1954 at the ANC’s annual conference, a few months before the implementation of the Bantu Education Act. “Leaders of white public opinion”, he remarked,

take every opportunity to present us in the world as sub-human beings incapable of assimilating civilization ... This matter of dwarfing our personality and trying to make us believe that we are nobodies is the worst sin the white man has committed against Africans.³⁰

He called the act “a devil’s piece of legislation”,³¹ Aware of the demoralizing effect it would have on every African parent, Luthuli was adamant that the ANC had to fight it “to the bitter end”.³² Because he was banned from entering Durban where the ANC had chosen to have its 42nd annual conference, 200 delegates travelled in buses from Durban to a location closer to his home-town near Stanger, to enable him to participate in a pre-conference debate on a possible boycott. His address to the delegates at the conference the next day was read by Professor Z.K. Matthews. Luthuli did not speak directly of a boycott but called for a multiracial front to challenge the menacing wave of reaction facing the country. The three issues of greatest concern were the Western Areas removal scheme, the threatened extension of passes to women and the question of the new Bantu education. When it came to the latter, the overwhelming revulsion at Verwoerd’s utterances in parliament, and the belief that the system spelt the destruction of all meaningful schooling for African pupils, led the delegates “to call upon the African parents to make preparations to withdraw their children from primary schools indefinitely as from 1 April 1955”.³³ This was the date on which the new syllabus was to be implemented by the NAD. The resolution itself insisted that the correct policy was the total rejection of

Verwoerd's evil act whose purpose was "the moral and spiritual enslavement of our children".³⁴

Seen in its context the resolution, although taken in haste and over-estimating the parents' ability to comply, was predictable. But in their statements before the conference the leadership (banned from attending the gathering) were apprehensive of a total boycott. Their views (heavily nuanced) were made known through the columns of *New Age*, which stated: "Bantu Education is a vital aspect" of the National Party's programme, part of its preparation for a fascist state. It was evidence of the government's determination to subject the majority of the people "to the lusts of a few greedy mining magnates and labour barons"³⁵ but a total withdrawal of African children from the government primary schools was not recommended as the first recourse against the government's plans.

For their part the parents, faced with the choice of having their children fed with "Verwoerd's poison" or removing them from school for an indefinite period, was a difficult choice to make. Already, acting on the conference resolution, some of the ANC branches in the Transvaal, the Orange Free State and Western Cape had begun to agitate for the boycott of government primary schools for an indefinite period of time. In Orlando West there were reports that anti-Bantu education committees were being set up and that volunteers had come forward to pledge that every household would be organized to resist the act.

Speakers at the numerous meetings were in a militant mood, positioning themselves in such a way that there was no exit if the boycott failed. One speaker declared: "Every African – young or old – should be ready for sacrifice rather than compromise."³⁶ He was not alone in taking this view. Elsewhere, another speaker, the Reverend E.G. Mokoena, chairman of the ANC branch in the town of Bethlehem, confidently told the distraught parents: "what does it matter if the whole of this generation will be without education if we know that through our struggle we will achieve our aim?"³⁷ He was supported at the same meeting by the branch secretary, J.M. Motaung, who said that the government schools were "youth Camps for our children, ...worse than prisons".³⁸ In line with the ANC resolution, the local branch there resolved to encourage parents to keep their children away from school from 1 April 1955 "when Verwoerd's poisonous syllabus" was to begin operating. It was the same at Langa, in the Western Cape.

Re-interpreting the Resolution

Despite the rhetoric, the general response to the call for the withdrawal of African children from government primary schools was uneven. At its annual conference the ANC had decided in principle to boycott the government primary schools, but it was for its NEC to clarify the precise intention of its resolution and the process to be adopted in carrying it out. An editorial in *New Age* similarly noted some difficulty in reading the

resolution correctly, adding that there were already conflicting views about the conference's intentions. Was the withdrawal of children from Verwoerd's schools to be a once off "demonstration" or was it to be "a stay-away from school for a week or so?"³⁹ The editorial feared that an effective boycott on 1 April 1955 was unlikely and suggested a temporary stay-away on that date "provided it was not seen as the beginning and the end of the campaign". This, it felt, would be an important step in the direction of preparing for a full boycott in the future.

Meanwhile, the ANC's NEC met in March 1955 and after a more temperate debate than that held at the conference decided to postpone the action. The NEC saw few signs of a general readiness on the part of parents to withdraw their children from government primary schools by 1 April and postponed the proposed action "to a later date, soon to be announced".⁴⁰ It had a broader strategy in mind, which Oliver Tambo (acting secretary general after Sisulu's banning) later explained.⁴¹ The plan was to allow the ANC regions more time for preparation and for consultation with parents' organizations, church bodies and other associations opposed to the act. The strategy was to broaden the campaign, secure greater consensus for the boycott and provide an opportunity to discuss the best methods of defeating the new education system with religious organizations, teachers' associations, as well as the congresses, the Labour Party and the Liberal Party. Two positive decisions taken at that meeting were: first, to hold a broad conference (as outlined by Tambo) during the Easter holidays in Port Elizabeth. Second, it called for a National Council of Education composed of representatives of organizations opposed to Bantu education. The idea behind this body, which would be wider than the ANC, was that it should draw up plans for alternative educational activities for African children "to be set in motion as and when the withdrawal from the schools is effective".⁴² I had no idea at the time how greatly, or how soon, this would affect my life. But I agreed to work in the new body when it was established in April 1955 and to contribute to the design of what we somewhat grandiosely referred to as a temporary alternative to Bantu education.

Helen Joseph and I served as representatives from the Congress of Democrats on the regional committee of the new body, which became known as the African Education Movement (AEM). Its brief was to provide "an effective alternative" to Bantu education, a tall order given our limited resources and the restrictive nature of the act, to say nothing of the depressing contents of the report of the Eiselen Commission and to Verwoerd's sickening speech in the senate on the aims of the Bantu Education Act.⁴³ As far as I could see, it was difficult to think of any way of preparing "alternative" educational material that would not contravene the rigid terms of the act.

The Act Comes into Effect (April 1955)

I thought Oliver Tambo's skirting of the issue of boycott and calling upon African parents not to collaborate in the "administration" of the act was potentially confusing. He appealed to the teachers and the parents to refuse to participate in the elections or serve on the school committees and boards that were hastily being constructed by the Bantu Education division of the NAD – but he said nothing of boycott.⁴⁴ Aware that the effective functioning of Bantu education depended on the parents' participation in these structures, the chief education officer, a naïve NAD official named Prinsloo, called for the establishment of "thousands of school committees", and invited greater African involvement in the "reformed" system.⁴⁵ It was an especially tense period for the parents, who not only had to resist the bullying of Bantu education officials and school principals, but also had to overcome their fears of punitive steps from the NAD for whatever action they might choose to take.

It was also a frustrating time for the teachers who saw the shameful syllabi for the travesty they were and had to suffer the ignominy of administering the "medicine" of Bantu education, as the parents called it, to African children. As members of the same African communities the teachers were in an invidious situation. Those who failed to resist the act for fear of losing their jobs would incur the wrath of the parents and self-humiliation for their cooperation with the NAD. The government knew that the success of the education programme was to a large extent dependent on their ability to co-opt the teachers. They knew that the vast majority of the 22 000 black teachers employed by government in 1953, were "strongly against Eiselen's recommendations, despite subsequent inducements of greater mobility by promotion to the sub-inspectorates and its guarantees of job protection".⁴⁶ It did not help to allay the teachers' sense of uncertainty when Eiselen stated in his report that the payment of teachers would be protected by the State *unless* they broke their service and that if they did so, female teachers would be recruited in their place.⁴⁷ Oliver Tambo, himself a former teacher, tried to assuage their alarm by noting empathetically just before the boycott began: "the position of teachers is a particularly difficult one because they can only oppose Bantu education at the risk of immediately ceasing to be teachers". Aware that only a small proportion were prepared to take this risk, his advice to the remaining number was that they should not do anything that was calculated "to undermine or obstruct the national struggle" against Bantu education.⁴⁸

The mission schools – run by the Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Seventh Day Adventists and the Anglicans – were also caught up in this dynamic of threats and inducements. They objected to the principles of the Bantu Education Act, but were divided for reasons of finance, fear and indecision on the desirability of resisting the state on this issue; they lacked the spirit to take a united stand against the provisions of the

act. Ultimately each religious denomination salved its troubled conscience in its own way, with the result that only the Roman Catholics and Seventh Day Adventists refused to register their schools with the NAD. They alone rejected the view that “it was better for children to have a rotten education than none at all”. Some Anglicans thought otherwise, but closed their schools in the Johannesburg Diocese, notably the famous St Peters School in Sophiatown.⁴⁹ However, all the other Anglican educational establishments capitulated to the government. Later, reflecting on the almost complete surrender of the Anglican schools, Trevor Huddleston noted with characteristic starkness: “[t]he truth is that parents have no choice; or rather they are faced with the same hideous dilemma: ‘Bantu Education’ or the street.”⁵⁰

The ANC had set no new date for the boycott to start and the system would be implemented after the Easter holidays, when the pupils returned to school on 12 April.⁵¹ The leadership in the Transvaal were seriously troubled. They were critical of the NEC’s initial decision to postpone the boycott date and quickly called two (very vociferous) local conferences to discuss it, the first agreeing to ignore the NEC’s decision and go ahead with a boycott as planned, and the second agreeing to rescind that decision. The other ANC regions were in various stages of preparedness and it was not clear from their statements what they would do when the school term started and the new education system began. There were two options: indefinite withdrawal or a “strike” by the pupils for a day or two or more. The national leadership evidently favoured the idea of withdrawal for a day or a week as a signal of protest, but some of the activists (Chief Luthuli referred to them as “enthusiasts”) preferred a policy of *indefinite* boycott. Would they follow that option?

Brian Bunting highlighted the extent of the dilemma in an editorial he published in *New Age* on 31 March, on the eve of the introduction of the new system. “When African children go home for their holidays tomorrow,” he noted:

they will leave for the last time the schools run by the missionaries and the others who for all their shortcomings, aimed at giving them a general education in the universally understood meaning of the term. They will return on 12 April to institutions controlled by the Department of Native Affairs ... in which they are to be drilled in the lies of ... inferiority, baaskap and servitude.⁵²

The editorial spoke for the ANC leadership when it urged against a policy of uniformity of action in the hope that “somehow or other, everything will happen nicely and tidily on the same day, just as the planners have planned”. Activists in each region, it suggested,

should work and win the support of the parents to prepare for a mass withdrawal of the children *when they were ready*. In the interim, the ANC branches were to mount “some kind of protest demonstration ... for the 12 April when the education of 900 000 African children would be taken over by the NAD and the new system put into place”. It did not matter whether this was a leaflet-distribution or a conference of teachers and parents: that would depend on the state of organization of the people in each area.⁵³ (It was not unusual for *New Age* to clarify a confused situation. In view of the banning of national leaders and difficulties in rapid communication with the regions, its editorials almost certainly reflected the views of the Congress leadership. The paper would comment on events and policies, sometimes critically, but would not appear to make decisions for the Congress Alliance). In this instance *New Age* addressed the timing and tactics of the pending boycott. It was confident, along with the national leadership, that no “magical date” should be set for the boycott.

With less than a fortnight to go before the schools restarted, the parents’ would have to respond to “this devil’s piece of legislation”. The mood in the Transvaal and the Eastern Cape was militant.⁵⁴ Chief Luthuli issued a hard-hitting statement reiterating the NEC’s position, which was to defeat the intention of the government to regiment the African people and make them a “docile and willing nation of labourers and servants”.⁵⁵ He stressed the importance of co-ordinated action, stating that if the fight against Bantu education was to succeed, it had to be based on a “comprehensive plan directed by the elected leaders of the ANC and not on haphazard and spasmodic efforts.”⁵⁶

As in other campaigns, there were to be three phases of the action: phase one would be an intensive period of explanation of Bantu education and of the futility of joining school committees, school boards or accepting posts under the system. In most areas this phase, in which we had all been very active, had passed. However, there was still time to persuade parents who had already joined these committees to resign. Phase two would see the withdrawal of children in the organized areas and the establishment of broad provincial and local “peoples’ education councils” to provide educational and cultural facilities for the children. The National Educational Council (now referred to as the African Education Movement) was directed “to proceed without delay” to draft plans for alternative educational and cultural facilities for those children withdrawn from the schools. Phase three, which referred to “total non co-operation on a mass scale” throughout the country, did not materialize.⁵⁷

The NEC meeting at which this strategy was outlined was planned to coincide with the broad-based conference of organizations opposed to Bantu education to be held in Port Elizabeth on the same weekend of 7–9 April 1955 as the NEC. The planning for this conference was less than brilliant and Helen Joseph and I made hasty “last-minute” arrangements to attend the conference on behalf of the Congress of Democrats. Setting a

precedent for future trips, we travelled in Helen's beloved all-purpose mini, a miniscule vehicle, which I got to know quite well. (I had at least three cramped trips in it to different parts of the country, two in 1956 to workshop sessions with cultural club leaders, and again later, on another related mission just before the Treason Trial.) Helen was passionately fond of this car, providing it with quaint human attributes, such as "gallant" and calling it "Congress Connie". She had come to the Congress movement in the early 1950s and had recently become the Transvaal secretary of the newly formed Women's Federation. Remarkably young in spirit, with a commanding appearance and an imperious quality to her voice – she was fifty at the time – she led us in the campaign against Verwoerd's schools as soldiers marching as to war. Robert Resha, who always accompanied us, was a considerate traveller, close to Helen and a good companion in "Congress Connie". In 1955, in his mid-thirties, he was a sports editor on *New Age* and acting president of the ANC Youth League (succeeding Joe Matthews who had been banned). He was short, solidly built and formal in his dress. He was just as historians later described him, "aggressive, shrewd, and powerful on the public platform".⁵⁸

The conference itself has been quite well described by Joseph and by fragments of commentaries elsewhere. It began more than two hours late because the police had arrested Z.K. (still the acting ANC president) on a permit matter and the proceedings only commenced when he had paid the fines and was released from custody.⁵⁹ He was seemingly unperturbed by the police harassment he had suffered the previous night and from his subsequent arrest. He told the delegates in his usual didactic way that the campaign to withdraw the children from schools had been postponed and not cancelled; the NEC would decide on a future date, which would be announced later by the president. In the meanwhile, the move to establish a National Council of Education had been endorsed and local, provincial and regional educational councils would be set up as part of the NEC's plan to provide cultural activities for the children that had been withdrawn from the primary schools.⁶⁰

According to Helen Joseph, it was her first experience of a large ANC conference (the Congress of the People where she was prominent, was held a few months later, in June that year) and she was impressed by the militancy, the singing and the discipline at Port Elizabeth. "The Congress volunteers from the former Defiance Campaign days," she wrote, were "out in full force in khaki shirts and black berets to welcome and usher in visiting delegates and to maintain order. Many of the women were wearing the newly adopted black skirt and green blouse of the ANC Women's League."⁶¹ Her description, as far as I can remember, was accurate and confined to the scene of the meeting, rather than the debates, but is nevertheless still evocative. Another contemporary account by a member of the Liberal Party, noticeably alienated from mass politics, was less exuberant:

Most [of the 700] delegates represented the ANC branches and local ‘vigilance committees’. The COD sent two delegates from Johannesburg, and the Liberal Party sent three from Cape Town ... It was perfectly organized. There were all these young, uniformed men, around the sides. They saw that everyone was seated properly ... And then, of course, they always had the singsongs ... But this time it was a serious meeting ... The COD was there. They got up and started to talk emotionally again. And Helen Joseph was the one rapped over the knuckles ... She talked about the suffering of the people and Matthews cut her short. He said, ‘Mrs Joseph, we are here to talk tactics, policy. We know that there is suffering’.⁶²

It hardly seemed a reprimand. Z.K. always spoke that way, as most people knew. The Port Elizabeth conference was seminal in many ways: for determination to frustrate the implementation of Bantu education; for its anticipation of the sporadic militancy that was to follow the opening of the schools a few days later; and for the innovative model it helped to conceptualize for a system of alternative education. It also formally agreed that the National Education Council, renamed the African Education Movement, should steer the process nationally. I do not recall all the details the conference as well as Helen, for whom this was one of her first mass meetings of the ANC, but she recounts an incident on our return trip in “Congress Connie” which I do remember.

Apparently we needed petrol urgently after closing hours and in order not to arouse the suspicions of the white petrol pump owner “with our odd mixture of races”, we resorted to some reshuffling of places in the car. She was put into the driver’s seat and (she recalls): “Norman was squashed into the back with instructions not to show his white face ... while Robert appealed [to the sleepy white attendant] to help us out because his Missus ... had to get back to Johannesburg.” After that, Robert “nobly” continued to teach her some African freedom songs, but her ignorance of African languages and an unfortunate lack of a musical ear, left her “la-la-la-ing” while we made our way to Johannesburg.⁶³ It was difficult to forget that incident and the other rough overnight trips I took with her during which we argued amicably, slept in cramped upright positions, drank coffee and ate fish and chips when we were hungry.

Boycott

The next eighteen months were totally schizophrenic. I went through the motions of teaching by day at the over-endowed white school where I worked, giving all my remaining energy at the weekends and on some evenings, to a bizarre version of primary “teaching” in the townships when those schools re-opened. A wave of protest shook the Transvaal and parts of the Eastern Cape in April and May 1955, bringing the total number of African children who had withdrawn from the schools to approximately 7 000. On the

East Rand the withdrawal of the pupils was immediate.⁶⁴ This was due to the intense organization there when the ANC Youth League held an all night meeting and song-session “preparing for the death of Bantu education”.⁶⁵ They set out in a procession in the early hours of the morning of the 12 April, headed by two buglers, reminding residents that the boycott would take place on that day.⁶⁶ The results were impressive. Elsewhere, in Boksburg, Brakpan and Germiston – all along the East Rand – the parents heeded the call and (in the words of the ANC and *New Age*), “the children led the country”.⁶⁷

Anticipating turmoil, parents kept their older children out of the secondary schools with the result that many of the classrooms were empty there too. It was the moment of the youth. They took to the rough Benoni pavements, shouted anti-government slogans, sang the congress songs they’d learnt from their parents and were quite undaunted by the mounted police who towered over them as they marched six-abreast along the dusty streets of the township.⁶⁸ Sometimes regular police personnel followed them in vans, indiscriminately shouting threats of punishment – directed at the organizers, the parents, the children, the teachers, anyone in the vicinity! Unperturbed by the noise that came through the police loudhailers and buoyed by the attention they received from police and press, they returned the taunts of the special branch with jeers and cries of “Afrika!” and kept on marching. Nothing could stop them! The authorities would have liked to arrest them, but as one confused police officer in command of the Benoni operation reportedly told the media: “as African children are ‘very regretfully’ not obliged to attend school, [they] could not be legally prosecuted.”⁶⁹ He added that there were however, some regulations governing African townships under which they could be charged. Curiously, the officer did not refer to the demonstrators as children – or boycotters or pupils – but as “strikers” which in tune with the new legislation on labour relations, had a criminal connotation to it.

The processions in Boksburg, Brakpan and Germiston lasted the entire week. By the start of the second week, the authorities had become frantic. They were more than ready to arrest, expel, threaten and punish. Verwoerd’s frustration was also evident. He threatened 4 000 African children with expulsion from the Reef schools and dismissed 116 teachers. (Significantly 71 of these came from the Western Areas of Johannesburg, indicating how much the teachers had identified the struggle against Bantu education with the overall fight against apartheid). Verwoerd equivocated on the dismissal of the teachers⁷⁰ but would not budge on the exclusion of the children, stating that they “must return to school or lose their educational facilities for a long time”.⁷¹ He gave them a fortnight to return – until 25 April. The ANC’s National Working Committee responded by describing Verwoerd’s outburst as an “hysterical and panic-stricken ultimatum”. Instead of retreating in the face of his threats, it called on all ANC branches “to intensify the campaign against Bantu education in their areas”.⁷²

There were soon lengthy analyses assessing the situation and reviewing the preparations and planning so far employed, but the first round had shown a greater readiness on the part of the parents to react to Bantu education than the leadership had anticipated. Having achieved their purpose by the protests that followed the reopening of the schools, the ANC now urged the parents to send their children back to school and make Verwoerd's threats of expulsion superfluous. There would be another day, the ANC told them, when the children throughout the country would participate in a total boycott of the schools and the system of slave education would completely collapse. For the most part the masses followed this directive diligently, but not all parents were so persuaded. Significantly, the campaign suddenly gathered momentum and the boycott spread to the Western Areas of Johannesburg and then to the townships of Alexandra (near the northern suburbs of Johannesburg), Moroko in the South West of Johannesburg and Natalpruit. The tactics were not the same everywhere and the responses were uneven in intensity.

In nearby Dube, south west of Johannesburg, the ANC announced the establishment of local committees to ensure that no parents accepted positions on the school boards and other posts in the system. The same occurred some distance away in Lamontville, in Natal. And so it went. Parents in other parts of the country, including the small town of Bethlehem in the Orange Free State, imitated the pattern of the demonstrations in the Transvaal. Here there was no picketing, the children simply joined the ANC-led processions and stayed away from school. Wary of prosecuting the children on boycott charges, the security police vindictively threatened the local leaders instead. The outspoken Rev. E.J. Mokoena (remembered for his fiery speech exhorting the youth to stay away from school until liberation if need be) was arrested on a charge of staying in the township without a permit and threatened with eviction. He had lived there for 15 years. In another instance, in the same town of Bethlehem a teacher (H.Z. Nzimande) was dismissed for wearing an ANC badge! He took the matter to court but I don't remember whether he succeeded in forcing the NAD to reverse its blatantly desperate decision to ruin him professionally.

The instances of personal hardship are too numerous to relate, but the solid commitment of the teachers who would not acquiesce in the travesty of Bantu education was well known at the time. There is, however, little record of their contribution and there is no question that they deserve more recognition than the few paragraphs I can provide in this personal history. The parents received a richly deserved tribute from *New Age* when it noted that "they were not so [ill-prepared] after all ... The silent classrooms on the day the schools opened were loud testimony to the peoples rejection of Verwoerd's slave education." The paper queried the ANC's earlier decision to postpone the boycott and asked whether it was correct to doubt "that the forces of the Liberation Movement were strong enough to mobilize in a few short months an effective boycott". Adding a gloss to

what it thought might initially have been a tactical error in postponing the action, it concluded: “We are confident that other areas will follow the example of the East Rand ... for [invariably] ... each mistake leads to a greater clarity for the future.”⁷³

This was not wishful thinking. By the last week of May 1955, just when the government believed that the boycott movement had peaked, the parents in the Eastern Cape withdrew their children in force. The action occurred in the townships of Korsten, Veeplaats, Kirkwood and New Brighton, all dotted around the city of Port Elizabeth, always a militant area. In New Brighton at that time a large, populous township with muddy streets, no pavements, church halls and more than one primary school, some 2 000 out of a possible 4 500 pupils stayed away – creating a huge need for “alternative” tuition, which they looked to the AEM and the Cultural Clubs to provide.

The Cultural Clubs

Helen Joseph and I represented the Congress of Democrats on the provincial and other committees of the AEM. Father Huddleston and later Father Jarret-Kerr, both of the Anglican Order of the Community of the Resurrection, were the respective chairpersons of the new movement. Myrtle Berman, a comrade from the former CPSA and principal of the old CPSA night school, was its indefatigable secretary. The work in the Cultural Clubs and the AEM took precedence over all my other activities, private and political. The short hiatus between the actual launching of the school boycott and the establishment of the clubs gave us time to prepare material and attend the preliminary meetings of the AEM, which was to oversee the development of the Cultural Clubs. I have never met any of the clubs’ “graduates” since that time, but there ought to be many of them still alive who attended that extraordinary class of 1955/6. I have seen a few photographs of the club leaders standing close to the children during the police raids. In the background were exercise books, slates, blackboards and chalk strewn about the makeshift school space – frequent exhibits in the courts – but regrettably, I have never since met any of the former pupils, now probably in their fifties. Their oral histories would be an inspiration to young people today. Trevor Huddleston sensed the children’s political perspicacity as well as the “vibrant élan” of the clubs, despite the grim environment in which they functioned. Visiting a Cultural Club in Brakpan on the East Rand, he was greeted by the children with cries of “Afrika!” They gave him the “thumbs-up” salute and when he left sang “There are two ways for Africa, one way leads to Congress, and one way to Verwoerd!” This would not normally seem exceptional, but some of the singers, he notes, were only seven years old!⁷⁴

Helen and I (from COD) and Robert Resha and James Radebe (from the ANC), visited the clubs as often as possible, meeting many of the African ex-teachers who assisted the club leaders. In most cases the clubs were run by women, many of them parents. We did what we could to help with the “training of trainers” and with the planning of practical activities for the children. Fortunately, the ANC seem to believe unconditionally in our expertise. This was generous as none of us knew what we were doing and frankly learnt on the job, trying not to think of the serious responsibility we shouldered. I had no idea whether I was capable of carrying out any of the tasks I had to perform, but knew that I had to persevere. I think Helen Joseph felt the same, covering this by assiduously attending meetings and planning the club leaders’ conferences, tirelessly directing everything. She was inexhaustible.

In the end, it was thoroughly satisfying. The more contact I had with the parents and “teachers”, the more rewarding it was to be part of this uncertain undertaking. There were not many teachers on whom I could draw for enlightenment. I had only been in the profession for about two years, but that seemed to be irrelevant. It bothered no-one in the movement that I was twenty-six years old and that I was thoroughly ignorant of anything like “alternative” education or remotely related to it. I was as unfamiliar with the baffling concept of “informal teaching” as the least experienced of the club leaders. It took a little time to learn how to design programmes that covered what we thought to be the skills pupils needed in the primary school. The revelation was that it was possible *informally* to develop in older children the skills of listening, reading, understanding and creative thinking. Younger learners naturally learnt that way. The challenge was to connect what had become the different disciplines of geography, history, language, art, science and mathematics and weld them into a narrative that related to the children’s lives. Re-integrating all this knowledge was the real challenge. I learnt more from devising the “syllabuses” for the Cultural Clubs and applying them in the club leaders’ workshops than I did in my first few years in the profession. In the Cultural Clubs I discovered a new format for teaching and a different style of communication.

The name Cultural Club was an odd description for a makeshift school that was political theatre, workshop and classroom all in one. But as extraordinary as it seems, it worked. It was virtually impossible to refuse the insatiable requests of the club leaders for resource material and for training sessions when we knew how desperately they needed them. In any case I felt guilty at the prospect of their being prosecuted for applying our syllabi, as they were in the front line of the action and we were not. It was almost a forgone conclusion that the club leaders (along with those parents who volunteered to assist them) were likely to be charged with conducting illegal schools – even if they were not caught in the act of formal teaching. Although I never voiced the thought, I did not think the courts would accept the legal fiction that their activities were “cultural” and that

they were not providing formal education. I was convinced that they would see it for the sleight of hand it was, and reject their explanation. Interestingly, the club leaders had begun to find something inspirational in the broad content of the curricula (it broadened *their* knowledge) – constantly asking for more “roneo’d papers” – risking prosecution by adapting our material to suit their teaching needs. They treated the police raids and tedious court trials as rude interruptions to their cultural work and returned from the courts as fast as their fines had been paid, only to continue as before ...

The club leaders’ training sessions were initially tense, but as it became evident that we were all feeling our way towards something new but potentially exciting, the sessions became less formal, more comradely and often fun. The club leaders were regularly adapting the material we prepared to suit their interests and as far as I remember made the “lessons” infinitely livelier than we’d designed them. The “trainees” innovated, sang and moved around and expected the “trainers” to join in! I often wondered who was learning from whom. The “workshops”, as we called the shorter training sessions, were held in Alexandra township and occasionally on the East Rand, although Helen and I had to obtain permits to enter the townships there, making it difficult for us to complete the tightly designed day’s programme when permits were refused. The first training sessions started during the July school vacation soon after the boycott began in 1955 and continued exhaustingly for the rest of that year and much of the next. They took place on alternative weekends or on a Saturday and on occasion extended for a week, when we referred to them as “conferences”. We called our programme “Education for Knowledge”, and presented it to the AEM – initially as a basis for discussion for group activities and home education – but this was the format that was ultimately adopted.

The choice of the title “Education for Knowledge” was intended to mark the contrast between our approach to learning and the concept of Bantu education. We described the latter alternately as “Education for Slavery” or “Education for Ignorance”. Sometimes we appropriated the title from Tabata’s informative pamphlet “Education for Barbarism”, and called it that too. According to our draft programme, the clubs would provide informal activities that would help “to create democratic citizens who were able to compete as equals in the labour market”.⁷⁵ The reference to the labour market sounds somewhat curious 50 years on, but the phrase was obviously intended to counter Verwoerd’s ignominious expression that “there is no place for [the African] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour”.

Our aims, though noble, were not as coherent as they might have been, but we were still feeling our way. We intended to do more than supplement formal education with informal learning and hoped to provide education through group work, in which knowledge would be imparted through story-telling, acting and recreation. In view of the dearth of books, “listening would be substituted for reading”. The programmes included

music, handcrafts, physical education and “library”, for which we innocently pirated material from books and educational magazines in the African, English and Afrikaans languages.⁷⁶ This was painstakingly typed on stencils, reproduced on a Gestetner copy machine in the ANC’s busy office on Diagonal Street, Johannesburg. The content of the resource material we produced was uneven in quality and too often hastily extracted from reference books rather than written ourselves, but for all that it was vastly superior to Bantu education.

As the authors of the texts we copied would never in their wildest of dreams have had an audience such as ours in mind, we liberally adapted their intellectual property to suit our pioneering project. Plagiarism apart, we were too unaware of copyright constraints to plead that what we had done had been for a good cause. Fortunately there was no need to mount any such defence, as the prosecutions that took place were for teaching the course material, not printing it. Much of the history we reproduced was revised during the radical revisionist re-writing of South African history in the 1970s, but at the time we were in all probability quite unaware that the texts we copied were historically seriously flawed. Interestingly, both the leaders and the learners were captivated by the un-revised story of Nongqawuse and the cattle killing,⁷⁷ debating it and providing as many re-interpretations of the event as there were club leaders. The fact that the version we unsuspectingly circulated missed the point entirely, only served to arouse more interest than it would have if we’d known enough to revise it.

There were stories about Moshesh and Shaka, both of them popular histories that were un-revised and would not pass muster today. These were taken at face value but were nonetheless useful for the questions and answer exercises that followed the narratives, stretching comprehension, language and historical imagination. Other histories were more ambitious and concerned stories of colonial conquest, dealing with the interaction of the white settlers and the indigenous people. The series was called “How the White Man Came to our Country” and carried sections on the colonists’ relations with the San, Khoi and African people. In other stories called the “Forefathers of the Coloured People” and “Slave Life in the Cape”, the narratives respectively recounted the history of the Coloured people and the institutions of slavery. Often the topics were grouped in sets containing general information that we thought everyone should have – something that Bantu education would not provide on principle if it did not bear any obvious relation to the Bantu social structure as they had defined it. The general information series was probably among the most ambitious of the courses we designed. For the most part they were intended to make the seminal contributions to science, art and invention, accessible to the older participants. Like the other course units they were also in narrative form and carried the titles “The World around Us”; “The World of Knowledge”; and The World of

Imagination”. Although the texts were complex, there were regular requests for additional copies of the “knowledge” series, and appeals for more of this type of activity.

Knowledge Games

In a completely different vein, there was a set of number-rhyme exercises, ostensibly “games”, designed much less for fun than to improve the children’s skills in mental arithmetic. Among these was the song, “Ten Green Bottles”, which was awkwardly translated into Sotho as “*Imbodlela ezilishumi zijinga edongeni ... kodwa enye yazo yapphonenka yawa*”. Each line was sung by a different row of children until the end, when they all joined in, cupping finger and thumb to make a naught, as the last green bottle crashed against the wall! Finally, there was a three-part series which I compiled, called “The Country we Live in” – a conflation of history, geography and social studies, spoken by a narrator I’d invented called “Old Henry”. He would somewhat irritatingly stop talking at calculated intervals and snap questions at the children to see if they’d understood what he had said.⁷⁸ Fifty years later Old Henry did not seem to me to be very unlike his inventor.

Imparting the information contained in the course units was more demanding than teaching the three Rs and we used the fortnightly workshops and extended conferences to demonstrate how the course material might best be applied. The conferences were occasions for interactive activities, games and role-playing, when the trainers would become learners and the club leaders were the trainers. The first of these conferences was held in January 1956 in Alexandra township and was spread over five days. Participants came from all over the East Rand, hosted by the club leaders in Alexandra and also the ANC residents there. Even before Father Trevor Huddleston opened the first session, seven detectives sat outside on the verandah of a shop across the road from the conference venue. Fortunately for us, in their arrogance, they had failed to secure warrants to search and enter the premises and Helen Joseph frostily refused them entry.

For a while they stood outside or rode up and down on a motor cycle and then took up positions across the street, watching who was entering and leaving. They remained there throughout the five days, apparently having belatedly taken the strategic decision not to obtain warrants but to record details of the participants who came and went. A lot of the time they peered through a window at the side of the small hall to observe the proceedings at close quarters. Quite often we would stop what we were doing and watch them as they watched us, exchanging curious stares before carrying on with the business of the conference. The bizarre behaviour outside the hall made me more aware of the pressures the club leaders worked under than any of the accounts they gave of the police surveillance they regularly experienced in the clubs. I have no idea what reports the police scribes might have made to their seniors of this particular conference – not only of the

more formal proceedings but also of the singing of the number-rhymes which included an equally interminable item (also translated into an African language) entitled “Ten Fluffy Clouds”.

The conference at Alexandra township was intended to be a national one but at the last moment the club leaders in the Eastern Cape were prevented by travel restrictions from attending. Many of these leaders were inexperienced and without the benefit of the fortnightly workshops held with their counterparts in the Transvaal and they requested the AEM to send its Cultural Club Committee to the Port Elizabeth area to hold a similar conference there. This necessitated a long trip to PE in “Congress Connie” with the same contingent of passengers and even less in the way of leg-room, in view of the excessive cargo of course equipment we carried with us. The conference (meaning a training session) took place early in April 1956, during the Easter vacation, exactly a year after our first trip to the conference in the Eastern Cape. Much had happened in the area since then. The boycott had started a fortnight after the mass withdrawals on the East Rand and exceeded all expectations with an explosion of support in New Brighton and ten other townships around Port Elizabeth. Over 4 000 children were initially enrolled in the Cultural Clubs that sprung up in 11 areas including the larger locations of New Brighton, Walmer, Veeplaats and Korsten. The moment was marked by particular militancy, leading the state to ban all meetings of over 10 persons anywhere in Port Elizabeth. This ruled out our holding the conference there and we met instead in the Coloured Congregational Church hall in Uitenhage, a journey of approximately 20 miles from PE.

Conferences often followed the same routine, but not this one. In the morning of the first day the members of the ANC branch in Uitenhage helped us transfer the books and course equipment from overloaded “Congress Connie” into the church hall and we started off with a robust public session of parents and ANC officials, explaining what we understood by the concept of the Cultural Clubs and how this was to be supplemented by “home education”. If the audience was mystified it was probably because they doubted that the clubs were there for any other reason than to find new ways surreptitiously to teach the three R’s, and that all the books, charts and roneo’d sheets of course material (stacked in huge piles at the side of the hall) were there with that end in view. The discussion on the concept of the clubs and “home education” took half the morning and for the rest of the day and evening we worked exclusively with about 22 club leaders from six of the clubs, demonstrating through role-play, singing and simulation (as we had at the conference at Alexandra) how they might best apply the full range of course material we had prepared. By the end of the first night (we finished the session at 10 p.m.) the club leaders were in no two minds that we were a fervent foursome of instructors and even appeared less sceptical of the concept of informal education. Day one had been a long one and especially productive, even enjoyable. The hospitality had been generous (courtesy of

the ANC branch in Uitenhage) and we looked set for another four days of intensive activity in the spacious hall without the menacing presence of the special branch.

We were naïve in the extreme. Fresh from a welcome night's sleep in a bed and ready for another round of role-playing and demonstration, we arrived at the hall at about 9.30 a.m. the next morning, only to be met by the township superintendent who seemed to have taken over the participants, the course material and even the hall. He announced that we happened to be in a Coloured area, on proclaimed land, and that we were subject to location regulations and needed permits from *him* to be in the township. In the next moment everything seemed to collapse in confusion around us. The superintendent ordered the two whites (Joseph and Levy) to leave the hall and follow him while the local congregants began to pour into the hall, headed by their helpless pastor who hopelessly tried to persuade the superintendent that as the hall was church property and he was in charge, all the authority was *his*.

As this went on, a posse of municipal police who had accompanied the superintendent began to take the names and addresses of the club leaders in the hall, only to be stopped from doing this by the more experienced ANC cadres who insisted that these officials were not proper police and had no power to take their names. Meanwhile, in the chaos the superintendent disappeared and momentarily returned with five armed policemen and a police sergeant, who took the names of everyone in the hall and ordered those of us that did not live in the township to leave the premises. None of this occurred in an orderly way or in silence, because the local people had now become angry at the treatment of their pastor and protested vehemently against the disruption of their conference, the behaviour of the superintendent and the intervention of the municipal police, who they thought should go.

More farce ensued when Helen and I were taken to the superintendent's office where a special branch detective in plain clothes was waiting for us. We were told formally that this was a Coloured area, controlled by the location superintendent from whom we needed to obtain entry permits. He asked why we had not obtained these but we refused to answer questions "in the absence of our lawyers or in the presence of the special branch". A dumb show followed when no-one spoke. I wondered whether the next step would be an arrest and a trip to the police station, but all that happened was that the plain-clothes man scribbled something on a sheet of paper, stared at the two of us and left without a word to the superintendent. Outside he joined his men who sat in two police cars, parked outside the township office. There was nothing for us to do but to leave our names and addresses with the superintendent who did not seem to know what to do once the special branch detective had left us. Finally he escorted us back to our car which he directed down to the location gates where Robert Resha and James Radebe were waiting. We left the township without wasting any time, only to be followed all the way back from Uitenhage to Port

Elizabeth, where we would probably have been apprehended except for a red traffic light at the main street of the city, which Helen decided to ignore. This was an electrifying moment as I watched her put her foot down hard on the pedal, cross the intersection and race ahead. After that she turned into a side-street and then a garage and lost them. She wrote about the incident frequently, referring to the “little TJ car” that had given the special branch the slip.⁷⁹ Curiously, she noted in her autobiography that she had flouted the law inadvertently.⁸⁰ I would have believed that but for the look of total triumph on her face as she crossed the intersection at the traffic light and left the special branch to wait for the red light to change.

We had started the conference and we were going to finish it. The ANC, together with the four trainers and the club leaders, decided to resume the training sessions the following morning. After some serious reorganization of the agenda, in which we condensed three days’ activities into one, we were taken to our hotel and prepared for an early start the following morning. It was dark when we left (in another car) and were taken to a space in the open air where we sleepily watched the dawn break around us. I thought we were waiting for the club leaders to appear before moving off to the new venue, but of course I was totally mistaken. *This* was it! When the club leaders arrived their numbers had increased to 31 and all but one of the 11 clubs in Port Elizabeth were represented. We began after quickly briefing the newcomers, and then continued well into the night in the open air while ANC volunteers kept a careful vigil to ensure that we were not being observed. Fortunately there were no further interruptions and there was a real sense of collegiality at the end of the course as we loaded the remains of the equipment into the car and waved goodbye to the club leaders. If anything, we felt a sense of triumph that we had achieved most of what we had set out to do, despite the interruptions and lack of facilities.

In the report that Helen submitted to the AEM on our return, she recounted the antics of the location superintendent and the enthusiasm of the club leaders and then euphorically described the proceedings of the last day and how the conference “took on the pattern of so many of the clubs represented in Port Elizabeth – where the roof was the sky and the floor was the veld and the walls were the hills of the Eastern Cape”.⁸¹ That, at least, was one way of turning a near-debacle into drama! We were certainly enthusiastic over the clubs, the leaders and their refusal to be beaten by the system, but were concerned about how long we would be able to continue.

The fact that the clubs had survived for so long was attributable to the political awareness of the parents, the strength of the club leaders and the high morale of the children. Ultimately it was not the vindictive banning of club leaders or the incessant harassment, arrests and prosecutions that threatened the existence of the clubs, but our incapacity to find the resources to sustain them. For the moment we persevered. The

experience of the Eastern Cape was not very different from the Transvaal. The children would gather in any available space, enclosed or open, often in dark church halls and dilapidated garages in the townships. In one township they met in someone's backyard, in another a vacant shop, or if all else failed, under the trees where the proceedings were frequently overlooked by the security police, leaving the club leaders and children vulnerable and unprotected. In Despatch Village, near Port Elizabeth, the parents built a makeshift shack which served as a classroom and centre for the club. In Benoni, on the East Rand, the younger pupils were housed in an old cinema and the seniors in a cycle shop, long-since abandoned. Trevor Huddleston described the atmosphere in the cinema:

What light there was filtered through two holes, high up in the walls, where bricks had been removed just for that purpose ... Seated at the table was a young African woman, trying to demonstrate some game, trying to keep fifty, a hundred, children interested; or at least quiet.⁸²

I remember that old cinema, converted into a makeshift school, the children kneeling on the uneven floor, one group drawing pictures, others pasting illustrations in a sketchbook – dank pictures, torn from antiquated magazines. Exercise books, rulers, blackboards, slates and textbooks, the usual paraphernalia of the least equipped classroom, were initially absent from these sites but later these somehow surfaced, giving the place the familiar smell and friendly feel of a schoolroom. But if the presence of the special branch was scented they would be just as hastily collected up and secreted in a safe place in a nearby house or a rusted structure that was once a shed and now someone's bedroom.

Two Distinct Activities

It was easy to fall foul of the rigid regulation of African education. This led to two distinct types of educational activities in the clubs, one that was legal and the other not. The former was notionally informal and “cultural”, involving a macro presentation of geography, history, language and number exercises, combined into one. This was infinitely more demanding than the second outright illegal activity which was indisputably formal teaching. This occurred more often than we knew when the club leaders, frustrated with the pretence of appearing to preside over a cultural meeting rather than teaching the three R's, chose to blow their surrogate cover, abandon their roles as cultural club leaders and teach what they thought the children ought to be learning and what they as teachers knew how best to provide. Under these circumstances they would circulate the familiar school readers and (incriminating) exercise books which until then

were hidden away and put the cultural club material to one side. The result was a forgone conclusion and raid after raid occurred, followed by prosecutions.

Police persecution was incessant. In May 1955 in Alexandra township soon after the Club started, six Flying Squad cars and a troop carrier drew up outside the club and produced a search warrant in terms of the relevant section of the Bantu Education Act. They removed the club's records, counted the blackboards and made lists of the school equipment.⁸³ In the Jabavu Club, two of the women club leaders were sentenced to a fine of ten pounds each with an alternative of six weeks imprisonment, suspended for 18 months. On this occasion, the Native Commissioner's Court which heard the case held that the activities of the club – games, drawing and handwork – fell within the definition of education and were therefore covered by the act.⁸⁴ This was an alarming finding as it was through these activities that “informal education” was conducted. Yet we continued despite the raids and the intimidating behaviour of the police. In yet another instance, four club leaders in Brakpan were prosecuted. The chief witness for the crown (a Detective Sergeant Luttig) told the court: “I drew my revolver and pointed it in the direction of the children.” When asked by Advocate George Bizos for the defence: “What were you afraid of?” he replied (in an answer that might have been comical if it had not been so fraught with gravity): “The children!” A group of 17 armed police had raided the cultural club where between 500 and 600 children were observed writing in distinct groups on an open plot. They promptly collected all the exercise books, pens and pencils as well as the children's clothing found lying on the ground, and presented it to the court as “evidence” for the prosecution.⁸⁵

The raids were as regular as the mental arithmetic lessons. Joe Slovo, who often acted as a lawyer for the club leaders, graphically characterized the rash of court cases that occurred at the time: “The records of the trials were usually short, and the evidence uncontested.” A typical composite record of the police evidence read something like this:

I am a police sergeant in charge of X police station ... I received certain information and proceeded with my men to a spot which overlooked a large tree ... Soon after the sun rose I noticed groups of children aged between six and thirteen converging on a spot near the big tree ... The accused proceeded to suspend a blackboard (Exhibit A) from a nail which protruded from the tree. ... We kept the scene under observation for about fifteen minutes when I signalled my men to surround the accused and the children. I approached the accused and told him he was under arrest for conducting an illegal school ... The accused remained silent ... My men then proceeded to confiscate a number of items which I now hand in. Exhibit A, a blackboard with the five times table written out. Exhibit B, a batch of 20 exercise books, bearing the names of the different pupils.

We also confiscated a number of children's basic readers ... as well as some vernacular illustrated story books which I now hand in as Exhibit C.⁸⁶

It was difficult to believe that this was not an Orwellian satire in which the rulers had gone mad and the law turned into a lunatic's dream.

Assessment

A year after we started we looked at the boycott more dispassionately. The consequences of the action were enormous in terms of the arrests, court appearances, fines and harassment of the club leaders and parents. It was also a distressing time for some 7 000 children who remained out of school once the protests had been made. Many of the parents were outraged by the motives behind Bantu education and acted out of despair for their children's future. Some genuinely believed that "no education was better than a 'rotten' education", but the majority could not deal with the consequences of that view. Engaged in a major anti-pass campaign at the time and in the throes of resistance to the Western Areas removal scheme, the ANC found its resources severely stretched. Weakened by the repression of its leaders and having simultaneously to fight on too many fronts, the ANC was in no position to challenge the state on Bantu education more aggressively or to provide an adequate alternative system, least of all one that would not fall foul of the law. Yet unable to stand by and allow the system to be imposed on the population without protest, it felt bound to act on its resolution to boycott the schools without seeming to be retreating from that decision. Sometimes leading from behind but often straining to contain the anger that the system rightfully aroused in the parents, the ANC did its best to ensure that the needs of those children who had entered the Cultural Clubs were addressed.

Z.K. Matthews had been the most prescient in his observations about the decision to boycott Bantu education. At the time, we who were working so closely with the club leaders thought him overly cautious and conservative, but in retrospect I believe he was offering sound leadership that few had the insight or courage to articulate. He warned that "an evil system of education ... cannot be effectively challenged by means of sensational, dramatic campaigns of short duration;" that the struggle would be long and bitter, requiring efficient organization – for the lack of which "the fight against Bantu education had fallen short of our expectations".⁸⁷ His strongest reservations were reserved for the "undue emphasis ... laid on the provision of alternative education as a condition precedent to children being withdrawn from Bantu education schools". This emphasis, he believed, "lent weight to the argument advanced as an apology for retreating from the struggle, namely that Bantu education is better than no education".⁸⁸ His point was that our educational propaganda should help parents to accept that the act of withdrawing their

children from Verwoerd's schools was part of the struggle for liberation: "The average parent," he said:

who follows our local call in the belief that his children will be given adequate alternative education will become disillusioned with the Congress if such education is not provided. He must act therefore out of political conviction, and ... must be made aware of the sacrifice this campaign, as well as others for freedom, will entail.⁸⁹

This seemingly harsh statement was made nine months after the first withdrawals in April 1955 and the parents were probably unprepared for the degree of police harassment the clubs suffered. In fairness to the parents, in December 1955 when Professor Matthews made these remarks, they were all too aware that the alternative provision we offered was far from adequate but saw the clubs as a symbol of their resistance and a rejection of the view that education was second to liberation. Yet, in the absence of a total boycott, the ANC had to accept that the campaign had failed. The resistance had been valiant on the East Rand and the Eastern Cape but only 7 000 children had boycotted out of a total of 900 000 in the whole country. After about 18 months the ANC and the other congresses accepted that the statesman-like decision was to advise the parents to send their children back to school. This was not an easy decision to arrive at, and for that reason the report to the ANC's annual conference in December 1956 read obliquely:

Conference will be asked by the NEC to endorse an earlier decision it took this year to the effect that the emphasis of the campaign must no longer be laid upon the withdrawal of children from the schools, although the struggle against Bantu Education and the boycott of School Boards and Committees, should be carried on.⁹⁰

The clubs continued until the end of 1956 when the boycott gradually ended but the system of Bantu education continued into the early 1990s.

The circumstances in 1956 were in dramatic contrast to the Soweto students' rebellion against Bantu education in 1976. The uprising in that year, although largely local, was the beginning of a movement that overshadowed the tense moments of the 1950s on the East Rand and in the Eastern Cape. For in the 20 years that intervened between the introduction of Bantu education and the uprising in 1976 the state had become more brutal. When it responded to the students' protests it did so quite oblivious of the tender age of the "enemy", sending soldiers rather than the police against the students with a determination to shoot and kill if they stood in their way. The fact that the enemy they confronted were sixteen-year-olds and younger school children, who were

seeking a more enlightened education in a language they could understand, mattered little to them. But it must have seemed a far cry from the 1950s for many of the parents who were themselves children in 1955. Many of them had been sent to the Cultural Clubs by *their* parents who refused to succumb to a school system they knew to be inferior. Their parents had simply removed them from the classrooms and sent them to the Cultural Clubs. But in 1976, when the scholars were five or six years older than the earlier protesters, the form of alternative education they sought was in the ANC's armed struggle, a much more attractive and viable option for the militant youth than a Cultural Club whose moment had come and gone and could not be replicated in an age of brutal repression.

Many of those who left the country to join Umkhonto we Sizwe, spent a few years at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO), the ANC's formal school in Tanzania, before they were sent for military training in Africa and elsewhere. The ANC insisted on this although many of the students had had enough of Bantu education by that time and wanted to challenge the state more directly. Interestingly, they spoke quite freely of "education after liberation" (echoing a sentiment held by some leaders 20 years earlier). Perhaps mindful of its earlier experience the ANC opposed this even more vigorously than it had in the mid-1950s. I was involved in this discussion at SOMAFCO much later. But it was contempt for the regime – then and later – that roused the resistance of the parents and club leaders and tested the system so severely. Together, the parents in the 1950s and the youth in the mid-1970s turned Bantu education from an instrument intended to perpetuate the regime into its nemesis. Lilian Ngoyi, ANC champion for women's rights, captured the mood for both moments when, standing on an open lorry in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in 1956, she told a mass rally of 4 000 ANC supporters: "We are not going to allow Strydom [Strijdom] to throw chains of slavery round us ... We fight for freedom and in that fight no power in heaven or on earth will prevent us from attaining that great goal." Turning more directly to Bantu education, she cited an old adage. "The best form of struggle," she said, "is to kill a man's mind. If we allow them to destroy our minds they have destroyed our manhood".⁹¹ She often mocked male virility when it came to men's passivity in standing up for women's rights, but in this instance, I think, she was urging everyone to defend their humanity.

The Landscape Transformed

Years later, when I came back from exile in the early 1990s, I again drove down that road from Port Elizabeth to Uitenhage. The all-white local authority was being transformed into an inclusive municipality to be controlled by all sections of the town's population. It

was still early days. The Mandela government was not yet in place and the white public servants who had run the apartheid municipalities for decades were jittery about their jobs. How different it all seemed at that moment. Instead of the municipal officials being arrogant they were contrite, “politically correct” and eager to please. I was invited to talk to the aspirant ANC local government officials and the current white incumbents about the local government affirmative action plans that we were developing at a technical group of CODESA (a sub-committee of the forum negotiating the new constitutional arrangements).⁹² The subject matter of employment equity is of course wider than “affirmative action” and goes to the heart of transformation, but the initial concerns were about the frameworks we were creating for affirmative action. I should have realized that the agenda of the meeting would be more specific than the broad principles of local government transformation that I’d been invited to talk about, but I was taken aback when I discovered that what all parties really wanted to know was who should properly head the new council. Should it be the seasoned white incumbent from the Uitenhage municipality or an inexperienced ANC nominee from the adjoining black township. In the course of the discussion, the black residents (all too familiar with the radical language of the United Democratic Front and the NGOs that were affiliated to it) spoke impressively of “civic structures”, local authority governance, and the “new formations”, while the whites could only speak of the expertise of the senior officials who had served the local authorities for years. The whites steadily lost their cool, while the blacks were losing patience, but held their ground. Suddenly there was silence and one of the senior white officials stood up, searched for the right words, pointed towards the black representatives and in what seemed to be a moment of self-realization that a new dispensation had fallen upon them, asked: “Can’t we be empowered like them?” His colleagues murmured in agreement and I realized at that moment that although there was still much work to be done, the two sides had found each other. The one side had the technical capacity, the other the vision. Thinking back, I’m not sure how I felt in 1956 after the encounter with the officious location superintendent and that excruciatingly long day and night with the cultural club leaders under the trees. But 50 years later, with the memory of that seemingly implacable racism in mind, I knew that we had moved on, that we had turned the full circle from outright lunacy to a point where we could at least entertain being rational.

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- 1 Presidential address by Chief A.J. Luthuli, ANC Annual Conference, 16–19 December, 1954 cited in Karis and Gerhart eds, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 3*, Document 7a, p. 40 para (d).
 - 2 Cited in Karis and Gerhart eds, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 3*, p. 89 footnote 109. The letter was dated 13 July 1956.
 - 3 One Nationalist Party MP, M.D.C. de Wet Nel, remarked three years before Malan came to power: “Just take the provinces in regard to native education ... each province simply adopts its own course and its

own directions, and ... does just as it likes while the Union Government keeps mum.” See *Hansard, Volumes 51–54*, 20 January–12 June 1945, p. 4495.

- 4 The transfer of African education to the Native Affairs Department was immediately seen by the congresses as a retrograde step, “an attempt to turn education into an instrument which can be used by the government to further its policy of perpetual helotry for Africans”.
- 5 On this topic see I.B. Tabata, *Education for Barbarism* (Prometheus, Durban, 1959), p. 28; Brian Bunting, *Education for Apartheid* (Christian Action, London, 1966), pp. 4, 5.
- 6 National Archives, Pretoria, Union Government (hereafter UG)53/1951, Report of the Commission on Native Education 1949/51, pp. 10–12, paras 34, 45, 46 and 48.
- 7 UG53/1951, Report of the Commission on Native Education 1949/51, para 99, pp. 20, 21.
- 8 G.H.F. Strydom, *Hansard, Volumes 51–54*, 20 January to 12 June 1945, p. 4607.
- 9 J.N. le Roux, *Hansard, Volume 53*, 5 March to 13 April 1945, p. 4527.
- 10 UG53/1951, Report of the Commission on Native Education 1949/51.
- 11 The 1908 statement noted that, “no proposal for a plan of education would be likely to commend itself to the great majority of the people of this country that did not contemplate the ultimate social place of the native as ... an efficient worker”. See UG53/1951, Report of the Select Committee on Native and Coloured Education (Cape) of 1908, cited in Eiselen Commission Report, para 214, p. 40 (The commissioners obviously “forgot” who “the great majority of the people of this country” were).
- 12 UG53/1951 South African Native Affairs Commission 1903–05, cited in Eiselen Report para 215, p. 40 (my italics).
- 13 UG53/1951, Eiselen Commission Report, Terms of Reference (a), p. 7.
- 14 UG53/1951, Eiselen Commission Report, p. 9.
- 15 UG53/1951, Eiselen Commission Report, para 60, p. 13
- 16 UG53/1951, Eiselen Commission Report, para 60, p. 13 (my emphasis)
- 17 H.F. Verwoerd, Native Affairs Department, *Bantu Education: Policy for the Immediate Future* (Government Printer, Pretoria, 1954), p. 23. The statement was delivered by Verwoerd to the senate on 7 June 1954. See also Muriel Horrell, *A Decade of Bantu Education* (SAIRR, Johannesburg, 1964), pp. 5, 6.
- 18 UG53/1951, Eiselen Commission Report, para 121, p. 27; and paras 765, 766, p. 130.
- 19 Verwoerd, *Bantu Education: Policy for the Immediate Future*, p. 24.
- 20 UG53/1951, Report of the Commission on Native Education 1949/51. Dissident remarks by A.A. Murray, p. 172.
- 21 UG53/1951, Report of the Commission on Native Education 1949/51, para 99, pp. 20–21.
- 22 This was a factor that ironically prevented parents (and sometimes pupils) from being prosecuted when children were withdrawn from government primary schools during the boycott or when the pupils joined demonstrations and stuck their thumbs in the air to give the Afrika salute.
- 23 Verwoerd, *Bantu Education: Policy for the Immediate Future*, p. 15.
- 24 Horrell, *A Decade of Bantu Education*.
- 25 Verwoerd, *Bantu Education: Policy for the Immediate Future*, p. 13.

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- 26 Verwoerd, *Bantu Education: Policy for the Immediate Future*, p. 14 (my italics).
- 27 Verwoerd, *Bantu Education: Policy for the Immediate Future*, p. 24.
- 28 Verwoerd, *Bantu Education: Policy for the Immediate Future*, p. 15. The Lower Primary School, as it was called, with its provision of reading, writing and numbers (taught in the mother tongue) and one official language were sufficient, it seemed, to equip an African work-seeker “to meet the demands which the economic life of South Africa will *impose* on ‘him’”. An interest in the soil and the observation of natural phenomena (clearly of interest to prospective employers on the farms) as well as recreation, religious instruction and practical hygiene, were more important than the teaching of the three Rs. The official language (English or Afrikaans) was essential to enable workers to communicate with their employers. For this reason, it was to be taught “on a purely utilitarian basis as a medium of oral expression of thought to be used in contact with the European section of the population”.
- 29 In this way, he reasoned, both the teacher and the classroom will serve two different groups of pupils every day – and so would the furniture, the school requisites and class reading books. In future there would be two sessions a day from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The mission schools, which were soon forced to register or close, were quick to note that children starting at 11 a.m. would miss school because their parents are at work, and children starting at 2 p.m. were thrust onto the streets for the rest of the day for the same reason. For reasons of ideology and cost education beyond the Lower Primary School depended on the outcome of testing and personal assessment to determine whether sufficient progress had been made and whether the pupils would benefit from the Higher Primary School course. Meanwhile, the “Bantu” teacher was to be “integrated” as an active agent in the development of the Bantu community if “he” was not to become frustrated and rebellious when he tried “to make his community dissatisfied because of ... misdirected ambitions which are alien to his people”.
- 30 Presidential address by Chief A.J. Luthuli, ANC Annual Conference, 16–19 December, 1954 cited in Karis and Gerhart eds, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 3*, Document 7a, p. 140 para (d).
- 31 Presidential address by Chief A.J. Luthuli, ANC Annual Conference, 16–19 December 1954, cited in Karis and Gerhart eds, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 3*, Document 7a, p. 140 para (d).
- 32 *New Age*, 23.12.1954.
- 33 Karis and Gerhart eds, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 3*, Document 7d, Resolutions, p. 168.
- 34 Karis and Gerhart eds, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 3*, Document 7d, Resolutions.
- 35 ANC Statement to *New Age*, 9.12.1954, prior to annual conference.
- 36 *New Age*, 20.01.1955.
- 37 *New Age*, 03.02.1955.
- 38 *New Age*, 03.02.1955.
- 39 *New Age*, editorial, 10.02.1955.
- 40 NEC Report to ANC Annual Conference, 17–18 December 1955, cited in Karis and Gerhart eds, *Volume 3*, pp. 231, 232, Document 13c. Instructions from the National Secretariat had actually been given in January 1955, soon after the ANC’s annual conference, directing the provincial ANC executives to hold a series of meetings, appoint local campaign committees and submit regular progress reports to the NEC. Much of this was done in some areas, but the lack of reports from the regions was probably due to the fluidity of support in some quarters for an indefinite withdrawal. There was also some confusion as to how literally to interpret the annual conference resolution for an indefinite boycott.

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- 41 From later correspondence between Z.K. Matthews and Chief Luthuli, it is quite likely that some senior ANC members favoured postponement of the boycott date because they were not entirely comfortable with the conference decision to boycott indefinitely without sufficient time for preparation or any sustainable alternative educational programme. See Karis and Gerhart eds, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 3*, pp. 31, 32.
- 42 *New Age*, 17.03.1955. See also Karis and Gerhart eds, *Volume 3*, p. 234, Document 13c, December 1955.
- 43 This was his statement, entitled, *Bantu Education: Policy for the Immediate Future*, published by the Native Affairs Department in 1954.
- 44 *New Age*, 17.03.1955.
- 45 *New Age*, 17.03.1955.
- 46 UG53/1951, Report of the Commission on Native Education 1949/51, p. 20.
- 47 The reason for this was not difficult to discern: the basic salary and cost-of-living allowances for women teachers were far less than for men. As the latter represented 70% of all black teachers, the threat to replace them with women was no idle boast.
- 48 *New Age*, 31.03.1955.
- 49 Trevor Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort* (Hardingham & Donaldson, Johannesburg, 1956), pp. 172–174. In Huddleston’s phrase (p. 172), only those schools that closed chose the path of “death with honour”.
- 50 Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, p. 174. The Anglican authorities also shut down Adams College in Natal, the alma mater of many prominent members of the ANC, and closed their mission school at Modderpoort, in the OFS.
- 51 No new date was ever announced in view of the unevenness of the state of organization in the different provinces.
- 52 *New Age*, 31.03.1955. Brian Bunting could not confirm that he was the actual author of this editorial piece but acknowledged that he normally wrote the paper’s editorials. The word “servitude” is an appropriate synonym for “baaskap”.
- 53 *New Age*, 31.03.1955.
- 54 Karis and Gerhart eds, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 3*, p. 33.
- 55 *New Age*, 02.06.1956.
- 56 *New Age*, 02.06.1955. Professor Z.K. Matthews chaired that NEC meeting that took place before the schools opened. He acted as president, in the absence of Chief Luthuli, who was still seriously ill in Durban.
- 57 *New Age*, 02.06.1955.
- 58 Karis and Carter eds, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 4*, p. 132.
- 59 He was still acting for Chief Luthuli who was in hospital in Durban.
- 60 For a fuller report see *New Age* 14.04.1955.
- 61 Helen Joseph, *Side by Side: The Autobiography of Helen Joseph* (Zed Books, London, 1986), p. 50.
- 62 Cited in Karis and Gerhart eds, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 3*, p. 88.

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- 63 Joseph, *Side by Side*, p. 50.
- 64 *New Age*, 21.04.1955. The school of the AME Church in Benoni was the first to be boycotted, after that the others reportedly joined in and “the children circled the streets in a crocodile around the location until the classrooms emptied”.
- 65 *New Age*, 21.04.1955.
- 66 *New Age*, 21.04.1955.
- 67 *New Age*, 21.04.1955.
- 68 *New Age*, 21.04.1955.
- 69 *New Age*, 21.04.1955.
- 70 According to *New Age*, 12.05.1955, Verwoerd referred to vacant posts in the Transkei and Ciskei for which the teachers might apply. The teachers dubbed the “offer” as a “dummy suck”.
- 71 *New Age*, 22.05.1955.
- 72 *New Age*, 21.04.1955.
- 73 *New Age*, 21.04.1955.
- 74 Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, p. 177.
- 75 University of the Witwatersrand (hereafter Wits), William Cullen Library, Ref Ca 1.14: SACOD, Memorandum as a basis for discussion, concerned with the possibilities of extra-mural education through group activities and home education.
- 76 *Ibid.*, SACOD memorandum.
- 77 A significant event which occurred in 1857. The historical controversy concerns the role in the cattle killing attributed in part, according to later historians, to the Cape Governor, Sir George Grey (1854–61) and the missionaries.
- 78 A number of these narratives have survived the police raids. Some of them bear the official stamps of the Security Police. See Wits, William Cullen Library, Ref Ca 1.14.
- 79 This refers to the registration number plate. The letters stand for *Transvaal Johannesburg*, no longer used today.
- 80 Helen Joseph, *Tomorrow's Sun* (Hutchinson, London, 1966), pp. 78–79; Joseph, *Side by Side*, p. 52 (the traffic light saga is omitted but the other details are included). See also Wits, William Cullen Library, Ref Ca 1.14: Report submitted to the AEM, April 1956,
- 81 Wits, William Cullen Library, Ref Ca 1,14: Report submitted to the AEM, April 1956.
- 82 Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, p. 176.
- 83 *New Age*, 19.05.1955.
- 84 *New Age*, 2.02.1956 and 09.02.1956.
- 85 *New Age*, 22.11.1956.
- 86 Joe Slovo, *The Unfinished Autobiography* (Ravan Press, Randburg, 1995), pp. 76–77.
- 87 Address by Z.K. Matthews to ANC Annual Conference, NEC Report, 17–18 December, 1955 cited in Karis and Gerhart eds, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 3*, Document 13c, pp. 232–233.
- 88 Z.K. Matthews to ANC Annual Conference, NEC Report December 17–18 1955, cited in Karis and Gerhart eds, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 3*, Document 13c, pp. 232–233.

89 ANC Annual Conference, NEC Report 17–18 December 1955, cited in Karis and Gerhart eds, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 3*, Document 13c, p. 234 (my emphasis).

90 Cited in *New Age* 06.12.1956.

91 *New Age*, 19.01.1956.

92 I represented one of the municipal labour unions at the technical committee of CODESA (the Convention for a Democratic South Africa) which accepted the framework for Affirmative Action we drafted at the Centre for Community and Labour Studies, which I headed at the University of Durban Westville (now the University of KwaZulu-Natal). It was subsequently adopted by the local government associations in the major cities. The framework also informed the Dept of Labour's subsequent Green Paper (later Act) on Employment Equity enacted by the Mandela government.