A HISTORY OF RESISTANCE INEDUCATION

EARLY RESISTANCE

1658 — The first school in South Africa was set up in Cape Town. The slave society resisted the colonizers imposition of schools which aimed at entrenching the master-slave relationship.

As an act of resistance, a whole school once stayed out for five days and hid in a cave near Hout Bay. The teacher used rum and tobacco to lure the slaves from the cave. But they continued to resist until the school

MISSION SCHOOLS

Between 1920 and 1953 there was periodic unrest in Black Schools. The Government, during this period, took minimal responsibility for the governing of Blacks. Mission Schools provided education to a tiny minority — no more than 2% of the total black population were in secondary or higher education. The schools mirrored the class distinctions of the wider

The "strikes" of the 1920's, 30's and 40's arose mainly out of the poor conditions in the mission schools. Newspapers seldom reported the demonstrations and protests that took place during that period, and even though two official commissions of enquiry were set up to investigate disturbances in black schools, their findings were never published.

In 1920 students at Kilnerton Training Centre went on a hunger strike for more food.

Months later theological students at Lovedale set fire to the building, in protest against the poor quality of food, 190 students were tried in court.

1940

The urbanization that resulted from increased industrialization, together with the events that were happening in the world during 1939 and 1945 had its effect in the dissatisfaction expressed in schools. During this period there were more than 20 "strikes", each of which led to expulsions.

"... the country developed a rash of strikes. A vigorous group of young people with a sharp political consciousness, was in the making. This was later to find an outlet through two political camps: one, the nationalist Youth League of the ANC; the other ... the All-Africa Convention.

"The more intense political feeling became at Fort Hare, the more intractable and ruthless the missionary authorities became. In a great number of their schools certain political journals were banned; topics for school debates were severely censored, so that political discussion became taboo; pupils expelled from one school had not the slightest chance of entering another".

(E. Mphahlele, 1959)

BANTU EDUCATION

1953 — the passing of the Bantu Education Act, marked the formalisation of Apartheid education. The Act stated that all schools for Africans had to be registered with the Government. Opposition to the Act was organised by the ANC, the Unity Movement and

by various teacher and student organisations. In 1954, the ANC launched a "Resist Apartheid Campaign". Bantu Education was one of the six issues taken up. Parents were asked to boycott primary schools.

The ANC set up the African Education Movement to plan and organise alternative education programmes for boycotting pupils. The main work of the AEM was to organise a network of cultural clubs which taught the basic subjects and tried to present an alternative

By 1960, in spite of the success of some of the cultural clubs, children had returned to government schools.

1959 — Bantu Education was taken to the universities through the University Extension Act. This Act set up separate "tribal colleges" for Black university students. Resistance to this act was mainly symbolic. Wits and UCT declared that they were committed to being "open universities". At Fort Hare students and staff passed resolutions condemning the new Act.

1963 — The Coloured Persons Education Act was

1965 — The Indian Education Act was passed.

Resistance during the 1960's was silenced with the passing of the State of Emergency in early 1960 and the banning of several organisations, including ANC

BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

In 1969 an important chapter in education resistance was opened. Black university students broke away from the white dominated student body NUSAS. and formed SASO.

SASO was central to the development of the Black Consciousness ideology which guided the struggle against apartheid in the 1970's.

In 1972, the President of Turfloop SRC, Onkgopotse Tiro was expelled after making a speech rejecting inferior education and the apartheid system. This sparked off a boycott of lectures and Turfloop Administration responded by closing the university. Within two months the boycott spread to all other black universities. The "open universities" launched a "Free Education" campaign, which the police crushed with violence.

SASO, and its counterparts at high school level, SASM, organised resistance on campuses and schools throughout the country. Students were influenced by strikes launched by the emerging black trade unions during 1973 and the victory of Frelimo in

On June 13, SASM held a mass meeting to protest the introduction of lessons in Afrikaans. An action committee was formed, the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC).

On June 16, 20 000 students marched through Soweto in protest. The police opened fire and the first victim, Hector Peterson, died.

Students responded with violence. In the weeks that and Pretoria, further afield to Nelspruit, Jouberton, Bothaville (OFS), Galashewe (Kimberley), Langa and Nyanga (Cape Town) and the universities of Turfloop and Ngoye. By August the "coloured" students in the Cape had joined the protest.

During the two year nationwide revolt that followed, students made increasing attempts to broaden their struggle. The demands increasingly covered issues relevant to the wider community. By October 1977 virtually all BC organisations were banned.

1979 — AZASO, a national organisation of black university students was formed.

As well, COSAS, a pre-university level organisa-

A RESURGENCE

A new wave of school boycotts started in Cape Town in April 1980. As in 1976, students were challenging the education system; in addition, they focused on how black schools prepare people for a subordinate role in apartheid capitalist South Africa.

At its highest point there were 140 000 students protesting in Cape, Transvaal and Natal schools. Significant developments since 1976 were evident: Teachers came out in public support of the boycotts; students realised the need for efficient organisation and committees were set up in most major towns and cities to coordinate the boycott; alternative education programmes, like the cultural clubs of the 1950's, were sought after.

The boycott ended in 1981, but flared up dramatically again in 1984 when students in Cradock's Lingehlile township protested the transfer of school teacher Matthew Goniwe. The unrest spread rapidly to schools throughout the country.

This time a number of factors generated increased community support for the students: Rising unemployment, increased rent and transport costs and the governments introduction of the Tricameral Parliament. The formation of mass-based political bodies, the United Democratic Front and the National Forum, also raised the level of organisation.

In November '84, a close worker/student unity was seen in the Transvaal. An estimated 700 000 -1 200 00 people participated in the stayaway on November 5 and 6.

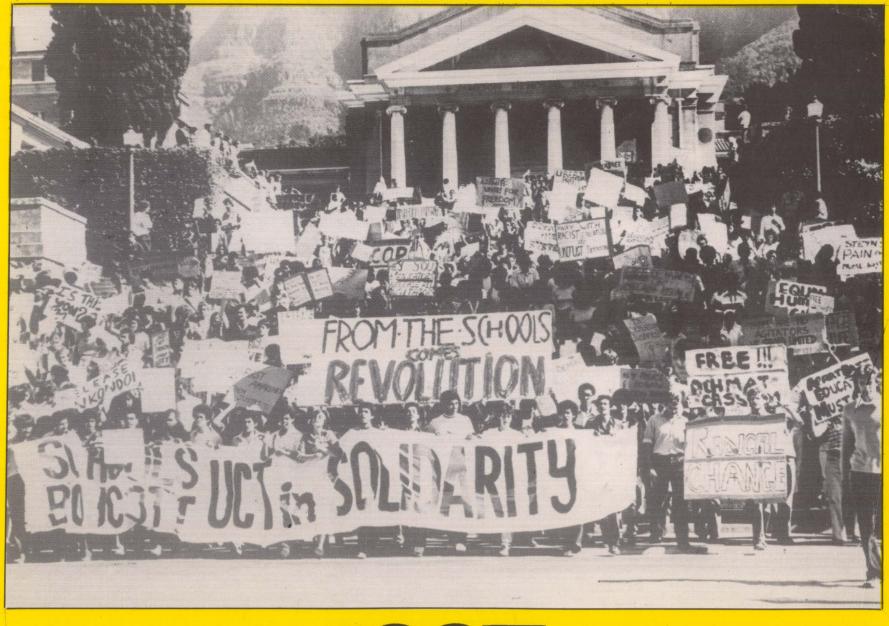
1985 — COSAS, the largest black South African student movement was banned in August 1985.

1986

Resistance in education has taken a new direction. Student, parent, worker and community organisations took part in a National Education Crisis Conference. The Conference presented the following demands to the government: Troops out of the township; and an end to the State of Emergency; release of student detainees; the unbanning of COSAS; the recognition of democratic SRC's; deferment of examinations.

A second conference of the NECC in March, noting that most demands had not been met, encouraged students to organise themselves in their schools and to start people's education programmes in the place of the DET syllabus. Resolutions strongly.linked the education struggle with other struggles and included calls for national stay-aways on May Day and June 16 — 18, rent and consumer boycotts; the establishment of support structures for working women

In July 1986 the government introduced a system of student identity cards and placed troops in the schools. This measure proved an abysmal failure and demonstrated that even by show of force the control that they desired could not be effected.



1987

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ADULT LEARNING PROJECT OF THE SACHED TRUST